



Introduction

Regulations came into effect in 2017 that requires organisations employing over 250 employees to carry out gender pay gap reporting. The two sets of Regulations introduced mandatory gender pay gap reporting on employers; the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 and the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Reporting) Regulations 2017. Both sets of Regulations are similar, however the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 apply to public sector employers, including fire authorities.

Gender pay gap information must be published within 'the period of 12-months beginning with the snapshot date' (Regulation 2(2)). The snapshot date for public sector employers is 31 March each year.

What is the gender pay gap?

The gender pay gap shows the difference between the average earnings of males and females, expressed as a percentage of male earnings, e.g. females earn 10 per cent less than males. The gender pay gap should not be confused with equal pay and this is explained in the next section. The gender pay gap is reported on both the mean (average) and median (mid-point) basis.

According to the Office of National Statistics (Source: ONS - Gender pay gap in the UK: 2020), the gender pay gap for all employees, covering all employment sectors, continues to decline and has fallen from 17.4 per cent in April 2019 to 15.5 per cent in April 2020. This means that, in the UK females earn on average 15.5 per cent less than males. In comparison, for April 2020 the gender pay gap among full-time employees was 7.4 per cent, down from 9.0 per cent in April 2019.

Data from the Office of National Statistics (source: ONS - Annual Survey of Hours and Earning (ASHE)), as detailed below, shows the gender pay gap for median gross hourly earnings in the UK, April 2010 to April 2020. When comparing the gap over this decade, it is evident that progress on closing the gender pay gap is really slow and therefore likely to take years to eradicate.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All	19.8	20.2	19.6	19.8	19.2	19.3	18.2	18.4	17.8	17.4	15.5
Full-time	10.1	10.5	9.5	10.0	9.6	9.6	9.4	9.1	8.6	9.0	7.4

There are a number of factors contributing to the gender pay gap and these include:

- A higher proportion of males working in senior positions



- A higher proportion of females working in part-time roles (therefore normally earning less than their full-time colleagues)
- Skills gap, lack of training and development opportunities
- Occupational segregation
- Lack of role models
- Family, childcare and caring commitments
- Lack of opportunities for flexible working
- Attitude and culture
- Confidence

This gender pay gap is based on data at the snapshot date of 31 March 2020, which for 2020 has increased by 3.7 percentage points to 18.8 per cent, and whilst not as high as the first year of reporting (19.4 per cent in 2017), it is disappointing. This increase takes the Service 3.3 percentage points above the UK average gap. In comparison, for 2019 the Service was 2.3 percentage points below the UK average gap. For 2020 the Service's median gender pay gap has increased by 4.9 percentage points, from 10.4 per cent in 2019 to 15.3 percent in 2020.

The Service has identified a number of key areas of activity to lower the gender pay gap. The Service's action plan on addressing the gender pay gap is detailed from page 13 of this report. Whilst the foundations for improvement have been laid through these initiatives, it may be several years before there is any significant impact on gender parity within pay.

Different to equal pay

Whilst both gender pay and equal pay deal with the disparity of pay females receive within the workplace, it is important to note that the gender pay gap is different to equal pay.

The principle of equal pay is that males and females who carry out the same job, similar jobs or work of equal value, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, should receive equal pay. Equal pay is a legal obligation. Whereas the gender pay gap examines the difference in the average pay gap between males and females expressed as a percentage of male earnings and is not unlawful.

Organisations which are fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 can still have a gender pay gap. This is often due to having more males in senior and highly paid positions and females in lower paid and part-time roles. The gender pay gap is a mechanism by which organisations can examine this data and take positive action to reduce the gender pay gap.



Equal Pay Audit

An equal pay audit is the most effective way of checking the Service is complying with its equal pay obligations, ensuring it delivers a pay system free from bias. An equal pay audit involves comparing pay of employees doing equal work and has three main purposes:

- to identify any differences in pay between those doing equal work
- to investigate the causes of any differences in pay between those doing equal work, and
- to eliminate instances of unequal pay that cannot be justified

In 2020 an equal pay audit was undertaken within the Service. The snapshot date for the equal pay audit was 1 January 2020. The meaningful comparator data included base salary and 12-months' worth of allowance data for protected characteristics of gender, age, disability and ethnicity. For 2020, in addition to gender, analysis was also undertaken for additional protected characteristics of age, disability and ethnicity.

The equal pay audit confirmed the Service is achieving equitable pay between gender, and the other protected characteristics of age and race, however there was insufficient data on disability to be able to analyse effectively.

The reality of the gender pay gap

A workforce, which better reflects the diversity of the public, that is flexible, diverse and inclusive, will create a stronger, more enriched and well-informed organisation, able to meet the expectations for a modern Fire and Rescue Service. The Service will attract, retain, develop and motivate talented people from all parts of the community.

The current limited gender diversity within the Fire Service is a national challenge. This is partly due to a lack of understanding about the role and skills required to be a firefighter by potential applicants. By embracing the need for change and consciously recognising this is a historically male-dominated organisation, and by actively seeking to dispel these myths, it will help to break some of the barriers for females considering a career within the Fire Service.

By demonstrating an understanding of the factors contributing to the gender pay gap and committing activity to address the gap, it will ensure over time the gap is reduced and eventually eliminated. In addition, the workforce will better reflect the diversity of the community. Meaningful embedded change takes time and we recognise this. The Service's ultimate aim is to achieve gender pay parity.



Many of the issues driving pay gaps requires a longer-term view. It has been recognised nationally that the gender pay gap is not going to be fully eliminated within the short to medium term.

Importance of recruitment and development

Job applicants may look at an organisation's gender pay gap as part of their pre-selection process before choosing to work for an employer. To improve the Service's gender pay gap we need to address the attraction and retention of females within the Service and the career progression routes to the higher paid senior Operational and Support Service roles.

The Service has taken positive action to attract and recruit more females into Operational roles. In the longer term, this will assist with lowering the gender pay gap. As the Service nurtures these individuals and supports them through their development and for some, promotions through the ranks to more senior roles, the Service will start to see the impact of this positive action and further reduce and eventually eliminate the gender pay gap.

Terms and conditions

The Service's Pay Policy statement is reviewed and updated annually. Its purpose is to provide transparency to the pay policy adopted. The 2020/21 Pay Policy (approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 12 February 2020) sets out levels of and elements of remuneration for 2020/21 to which this report relates.

The majority of employees are employed under contracts with either the terms and conditions of the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service, 2004 "the Grey Book" incorporated; or with the provisions of the local terms and conditions of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority Scheme of Conditions of Service for Support Services employees. The national terms and conditions for "Grey Book", and the often national bargaining required to bring about change under these terms and conditions, limits the Authority's ability to address some of the areas identified within the State of the Fire and Rescue Service Report 2019. In the State of the Fire and Rescue Service Report 2019, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), provided an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of all 45 Fire and Rescue Services in England based on inspections carried out between June 2018 and August 2019.

Pay and allowances differ under each set of terms and conditions. A number of allowances and additional payments are available for Operational employees, for example with the different duty systems, specialist roles, temporary promotions, opportunity to undertake additional hours through the bank system. Whilst some



allowances are paid to Support Services employees, the majority are paid to Operational employees, which is the largest group of employees, with the majority being males. This directly influences the gender pay gap.

Benchmarking

With organisations being required to publish their gender pay gap data in the public domain (gov.uk website), this allows greater comparison with other organisations and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures. Greater transparency in pay will help to attract and retain talent and will provide the information to allow organisations to improve workplace practices, policies and procedures that will promote gender equality and ensure any remedial action is prioritised.

As detailed in Appendix 1, employer comparison data is provided covering 32 Fire Services for 2019, as detailed on the gov.uk website.

When compared to the 32 Fire Services, Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is ranked 24th with a mean gender pay gap of 15.1 per cent for 2019. The range is (-) 8.4 per cent to 37.2 per cent. A negative pay gap indicates that females earn more on average than males, and a positive pay gap indicates that males earn more on average than females. Of the 32 Fire Services, only six have reported bonus gender pay gap data. This indicates that bonus arrangements were not in operation within the majority of Fire Services in 2019.

What information must be reported

The gender pay gap calculations are drawn from specific data each year and based on full-pay relevant employees. To be included as a full-pay relevant employee, the employee must be:

- Employed on the snapshot date; 31 March each year
- Paid their usual full-pay in the pay period ending on the snapshot date

The table below details the total number of employees in scope for 2020, compared to 2019, 2018 and 2017:

Year	Total number of employees in scope	Males	Females	Total
2020	Full-pay relevant employees	340	82	422
	Relevant employees	384	93	477
2019	Full-pay relevant employees	353	87	440
	Relevant employees	365	90	455
2018	Full-pay relevant employees	377	78	455
	Relevant employees	392	81	473
2017	Full-pay relevant employees	392	80	472
	Relevant employees	407	81	488



Full-Pay Relevant Employees - This is the number of employees who received their normal full-pay within the snapshot date. This informs the mean and median hourly pay gap calculations and the proportion of employees within the Quartile Pay Bands.

For 2020, the number of full-pay employees reduced by 13 fewer males and five fewer females. In comparison, for 2019, the number of full-time employees reduced by 24 fewer males and increased by nine more females.

Relevant Employees - This is the number of employees employed by the Service on the snapshot date. This informs the mean and median bonus pay gap calculations. The difference in numbers between relevant and full-pay relevant employees is due to 55 employees not receiving their usual full-pay within the pay period (for 2019 this was 15 employees).

For 2020, the number has increased by 19 males and increased by three females. In comparison to 2019, the number was reduced by 27 males and increased by nine females.

Whilst the Service continues to increase the percentage of females employed, the gender split for employees shows that overall females continue to be under-represented within the Service. This is due to the under-representation of females in Operational roles rather than in Support Service roles.

Below details the standard information to be disclosed by organisations as part of the gender pay gap reporting as detailed in Schedule 1 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

Pay: This refers to the ordinary pay received by each full-pay relevant employee in the pay period at the snapshot date. Ordinary pay includes basic pay, allowances, paid leave and shift premium pay and calculated before deductions are made at source. This data examines:

- The difference in the mean hourly pay between male and female relevant employees as a percentage of male pay
- The difference in the median hourly pay between male and female relevant employees as a percentage of male pay
- The proportion of male and female full-pay relevant employees in the lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper quartile pay bands
- Ordinary pay does not include overtime, expenses, benefits in kind, arrears of pay, salary sacrifice schemes (such as childcare), tax credits or redundancy pay.

Ordinary pay, expressed as hourly pay, is used to calculate the mean and median gender pay gaps and the pay period informs the calculation for ordinary pay. For those employees who do not work a consistent working pattern, e.g. 37-hour week, our calculation has been averaged over a 12-week period as per Local Government Association, ACAS and Government Equalities Office guidance.



Bonus: Bonuses paid to full-pay relevant employees in the 12-month period ending on the snapshot date (31 March). Year on year bonuses will vary and a small movement could have a big impact on the data. This data examines:

- The difference in the mean bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees in the 12-months before the snapshot date
- The difference in the median bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees in the 12-months before the snapshot date
- The proportion of male relevant employees who were paid bonus pay and that paid to female relevant employees in the 12-months before the snapshot date



Reportable data

In accordance with the Regulations, the Service is required to annually publish six pieces of prescribed data about the pay and bonuses of males and females employed by the Service:

1. Mean hourly gender pay gap

The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay for male and female full-pay relevant employees, as a percentage.

The mean gap provides an overall indication of the size of the gap. A high mean indicates that the remuneration structure disadvantages female.

The mean (average) gender pay gap for 2020 is 18.8 per cent. Both male and female hourly pay increased in the period ending on the snapshot date of 31 March 2020, however males saw a bigger increase with 6.8 per cent when compared to 2.2 per cent for females. This resulted in an overall increase of 3.7 percentage points for the mean gender pay gap for 2020.

Year	Male hourly pay £	Female hourly pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2020	19.41	15.77	3.64	18.8
2019	18.18	15.43	2.75	15.1
2018	17.36	14.47	2.89	16.6
2017	18.10	14.59	3.51	19.4

In comparison, for 2019 the mean (average) gender pay gap was 15.1 per cent. This meant that male employees earned £2.75 per hour more than females and therefore, on average, females earned approximately 85 per cent when compared to male earnings.

2. Median hourly gender pay gap

The difference between the median hourly rate of pay for male and female full-pay relevant employees.

The median gender pay gap for 2020 is 15.3 per cent or £2.73 per hour. As with the mean gender pay gap, both male and female median hourly pay increased in the same period, however male hourly pay increased by 7.7 per cent compared to 1.8 per cent for females. This resulted in an overall increase of 4.9 percentage points for the median gender pay gap for 2020.



Year	Male hourly pay £	Female hourly pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2020	17.83	15.10	2.73	15.3
2019	16.55	14.83	1.72	10.4
2018	16.16	14.26	1.90	11.8
2017	15.74	14.07	1.67	10.6

In comparison, for 2019 the median gender pay gap was 10.4 per cent. This meant that male employees earned £1.72 per hour more than females and therefore, on average, females earned approximately 90 per cent when compared to male earnings.

3. Mean bonus gap

The difference between the mean bonus paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.

For 2020, the mean bonus gap is 90.2 per cent. This has meant that on average, males earn £12.00 more than females on bonus payments.

Year	Male bonus pay £	Female bonus pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap % *
2020	13.29	1.29	12.00	90.2
2019	83.81	167.89	-84.08	-100.3
2018	235.71	327.16	-91.45	-38.8
2017	230.04	354.01	-123.97	-53.9

* *Negative pay gaps occur when females earn more on average, positive pay gaps are used when males earn more on average*

In comparison, for 2019 the mean bonus gap was -100.3 per cent. This meant that female employees received on average a bonus of £84.08 more than males.

4. Median bonus gap

The difference between the median bonus paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.

For 2020 the median bonus gap has been reduced to 4 per cent, which equates to £5.00. This translates as males earning on average £5.00 more in bonus payments than females.



Year	Male bonus pay £	Female bonus pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2020	125	120	5	4
2019	750	675	75	10
2018	1000	750	250	25
2017	500	1000	-500	-100

In comparison, for 2019 the median bonus gap was 10 per cent or £75.00. This meant that male employees received a bonus equating to £75.00 more than female employees.

5. Bonus Proportions

The proportion of male and female employees who were paid a bonus during the relevant 12-month pay period:

Year	Gender	Number of employees	%
2020	Males	7	1.82
	Females	1	1.08
2019	Males	32	8.8
	Females	18	20.0
2018	Males	38	9.7
	Female	22	27.2
2017	Male	44	10.8
	Female	20	24.7

In the 2020 reporting period no bonus/merit award payments were made to employees, however Long Service Awards and Honorarium payments are included in the bonus payment calculations and were paid to seven males and one female within this reporting period.

6. Quartile Pay Bands

The proportions of male and female full-pay relevant employees in the lower (L), lower middle (LM), upper middle (UM) and upper (U) quartiles and the equally distributed pay bands.

To determine quartiles, employees are ranked in order of their hourly rate of pay; from lowest to highest, and divided into four equal groups, according to the guidelines.

For the fourth consecutive year, the highest proportion of females are within in the lower quartile, representing 48.8 per cent of the total female workforce,

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which is the highest percentage over the last four years. In comparison, the percentage of the total male workforce is 19.4 per cent, which is the lowest percentage over the last four years.

The highest proportion of males continues to be within in the upper quartile, representing 89 per cent of the total workforce. For the first year since reporting, there has been a decrease of females within the upper quartile. In order to improve the gender pay gap there needs to be an increased representation of females in senior roles across the Service.

For 2020:

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	94	27.6	88.7	12	14.6	11.3	106
Upper Middle (UM)	90	26.5	85.7	15	18.3	14.3	105
Lower Middle (LM)	90	26.5	85.7	15	18.3	14.3	105
Lower (L)	66	19.4	62.3	40	48.8	37.7	106
Total	340	-	-	82	-	-	422

For 2019:

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	92	27.1	86.0	15	17.6	14.0	107
Upper Middle (UM)	92	27.1	86.8	14	16.5	13.2	106
Lower Middle (LM)	85	25.0	80.2	21	24.7	19.8	106
Lower (L)	71	20.8	67.0	35	41.2	33.0	106
Total	340	-	-	85	-	-	425

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For 2018:

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	99	26.3	87.6	14	17.9	12.4	113
Upper Middle (UM)	104	27.6	91.2	10	12.8	8.8	114
Lower Middle (LM)	95	25.2	83.3	19	24.4	16.7	114
Lower (L)	79	21.0	69.3	35	44.9	30.7	114
Total	377	-	-	78	-	-	455

In comparison, for 2017:

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	107	27.3	90.7	11	13.8	9.3	118
Upper Middle (UM)	105	26.8	89.0	13	16.3	11.0	118
Lower Middle (LM)	100	25.5	84.7	18	22.5	15.3	118
Lower (L)	80	20.4	67.8	38	47.5	32.2	118
Total	392	-	-	80	-	-	472



Action plan: Addressing our gender pay gap

This is the fourth year of reporting the Service's gender pay gap. As already detailed within this report, many of the issues driving pay gaps requires a longer-term commitment and will be dependent upon the Service working together to drive change. The Service is committed to addressing the gender pay gap. Through the three key areas, the Service will strive to achieve a more representative workforce:

Leading transformation

The Service will ensure that all employees are aware of the vision, values and behaviours expected within the workplace, improve the Service's performance through building a diverse workforce and ensuring employees understand how the Service operates, in order to be as effective as possible within their role

- The Service has a transparent approach to pay. On an annual basis the Pay policy is updated and following consideration and approval by the Fire Authority, published on the intranet and external website. This policy sets out the Service's approach to pay for all roles, including the approach to senior pay and bonus payments
- The Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy demonstrates the Service's commitment to EDI, by ensuring that EDI is embedded in its culture and reflected in its people and behaviours, all of which will help to better serve the public
 - By embracing equality, we promote the policy in both employment opportunities and in the delivery of its services
 - By embracing diversity, we acknowledge the full breadth of people within the community and seeks to reflect that variety within the workforce
 - By embracing inclusion, we recognise that everyone that works for the Service has a valuable contribution to make
- The Service's Code of Conduct provides individuals with an understanding of the standards expected of employee and guides behaviour, placing an obligation on all to take responsibility for their own conduct. The Code states the Service will:
 - Ensure all employees are aware of the vision, values and behaviours expected within the workplace
 - Improve the Service's performance through building a diverse workforce
 - Ensure employees understand how the Service operates, in order to be as effective as possible within their role
- The Service strives to be a family friendly workplace, which recognises and supports employees in balancing their responsibilities of work and home. The Service's Maternity, Adoption and Parental Entitlements procedure helps to demonstrate



our commitment and support to employees and being an attractive, family friendly employer. The Service offers enhanced benefits, by going over and above statutory entitlements, and includes offering the same enhanced pay for shared parental leave, therefore encouraging individuals to share childcare more equally

- We recognise family friendly and flexible working practices are good for the Service as they help to attract and retain valuable talent and skills from a wider and more diverse pool. We are continuing to develop and update a suite of procedures within this area to help increase gender equality within the workplace
- Whilst just outside of the 2020 Gender Pay Gap reporting period, from Spring 2020 the Covid-19 global pandemic resulted in a significant amount of change within the Service. Many employees worked more flexibly in terms of hours or days they worked and where they worked. This was often as a result of balancing work with other caring responsibilities. Following the pandemic, some employees may wish to continue to undertake a degree of flexible working and by promoting flexibility the Service can support inclusion, help to reduce its gender pay gap, attract and retain talented individuals, increase productivity and support wellbeing
- We actively encourage employees to consider using flexible working arrangements where appropriate
- Structured groups have been created to drive forward equality initiatives, such as the EDI group, which includes managers, employees, trade union and staff representatives. The group supports and promotes inclusion and engagement and increases dialogue about topical issues. The group review progress against the Service's EDI objectives which are reported to the Fire Authority. In 2020 the EDI objectives were reviewed and refreshed and a report was presented at the June 2020 Fire Authority
- An equal pay audit is the most effective way of checking the Service is complying with its statutory equal pay obligations and ensuring we deliver a pay system free from gender bias. During 2020 an audit was undertaken which confirmed the Service is achieving equitable pay between genders
- We continue to strive for an inclusive culture, helping to ensure employees will want to remain with us and progress through the Service:
 - The 2017 Culture Survey results formed an action plan that managers and employees were tasked with addressing
 - In January/February 2020, the Service invited employees to complete a follow up Culture Survey, the results of which will continue to help the Service in achieving its objectives
 - The results of the 2019 HMICFRS Staff Survey are being compared against the 2017 and 2020 Culture Survey results. This will be an additional data source to help the Service develop a more inclusive culture



- We continue to make greater and more targeted use of social media to effectively promote the positive work of the Service and of our recruitment campaigns
- We continue to focus on positive action for female and BAME recruitment, with investment in social media and digital streaming marketing as part of our recruitment campaigns to target this demographic
- The Service's People Strategy 2020 to 2025 was updated and published following approval by the Fire Authority on 14 October 2020. The People Strategy provides the framework for engaging and developing employees to enable the cultural changes which will help the Service better deliver its vision and strategic priorities, whilst ensuring behaviours, values and standards are adhered to
- During 2020 we launched the new corporate website which incorporates the Service's new People Strategy 2020 to 2025
- We will continue to collaborate with other Fire Services and will increasingly collaborate with organisations who are in a position to help us reach and influence our target audience. In addition, we will collaborate more widely and with those organisations who have developed inspiring initiatives and best practice that we may learn from
- The Service has signed the National Armed Forces Covenant to promise to actively support the armed forces community. It acknowledges that we recognise the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans and military families can bring to our Service



Attracting talent

The Service is committed to ensuring its resourcing attracts, selects, and recruits the right calibre of people to deliver its corporate priorities, aligned to workforce planning requirements. The Service will ensure it retains the skills and capability needed and employs them productively to support its corporate objectives. It is committed to establishing the right working arrangements and conditions of employment for all its employees.

- The Service's Recruitment and Selection procedure places emphasis on ensuring the right skills, attitudes and behaviours are available to deliver the Service's priorities throughout its recruitment and selection and promotion processes and includes the Service's pledge to all candidates:
 - Recruitment and selection will be fair, transparent and consistent
 - Commitment to providing processes that offer equal opportunity and avoids unlawful discrimination
 - Equal and reasonable access to information about the role, its requirements and the selection processes to be used
 - Support will be provided throughout the process, which can be tailored to individual requirements
 - Selection will be based on relevant and consistently applied criteria, using methods which are reliable, objective and guard against bias. All those involved in the recruitment and selection process will be appropriately trained
 - Selection will be based on merit and focus on candidates meeting the essential criteria and required behaviours
 - Individuals will be encouraged to develop their skills and have the opportunity to learn and develop
- We continue to support the Networking Women in the Fire Service programme, hosted by the Fire Service College. In 2019 four places were funded and a further four places were approved for 2020, however due to the Covid-19 global pandemic the event did not go ahead
- Apprentice recruitment is structured with the aim of attracting a diverse pool of applicants, reflective of the community
- A review of apprentice recruitment has been commissioned in order to understand what went well and establish any learns, with the aim of improving future processes
- To ensure recruitment could continue during the Covid-19 global pandemic, whilst adhering to the strict guidelines, the Service optimised virtual recruitment awareness evenings and introduced online psychometric testing to remove the need for physical attendance. This has increased the number of applicants due to its accessibility and flexibility



- A structured interview process is used in all recruitment and promotion activity. Structuring interviews so the same questions are asked to all candidates, in the same order, format and responses assessed using a standardised criterion in order to reduce unconscious bias in processes
- We continually review and update our recruitment processes, using fair and transparent processes, ensuring any learns are fed into future recruitment activity
- In July 2020 a number of senior management level assessment and development centres were held. These were opened up to internal and external applicants to enable the Service to sufficiently replenish its development pools and implement its established succession plans
- We ensure through the applicant sifting processes that information on protected characteristics is removed to eliminate the possibility of unconscious bias
- To reduce potential prejudice and bias in recruitment and selection, unconscious bias training is delivered to those who undertake interviewing
- The three Thames Valley Fire Services are progressing common approaches to operational On-call firefighter recruitment. This joint working initiative is an opportunity to promote careers within the Fire Service and raise awareness across community groups with the aim of improving employee diversity
- Collaboration with Thames Valley Police on apprenticeships and promoting careers for young people is well established
- The Service has pledged to support the Armed Forces Covenant within its recruitment strategy, including Career Transition Partnership's, establishing a tailored employment pathway for veterans, service leavers and supporting the employment of armed forces spouses and partners. Advertising job opportunities through armed forces friendly recruitment agencies and charities and recognising relevant military qualifications in our recruitment/application processes



Supporting development

The Service strives to create a sustainable workforce through medium to long term strategic planning, treating employees as assets enabling the Service to plan for the future with regards to the workforce requirements. By creating and maintaining a sustainable workforce requires the Service to take appropriate action to:

- Recruit and retain the right workforce
- Address key future and occupational skill shortages
- Promote jobs, careers and the concept of employability
- Identify, develop and motivate talent
- Address diversity and inclusion issues

- Workforce diversity data is collated, reviewed and reported, which ensure the Service is focused and able to make decisions to improve results, the data details:
 - The numbers of males and females within the Service
 - The numbers of males and females at each level of the Service
 - The proportion of males and females applying for roles and being recruited
 - The proportion of males and females applying for assessment processes and being promoted
- There is a commitment to improve the breadth of diversity-related data available about the workforce. Submitting sensitive personal information is optional, however it is encouraged, as this data is an important component to identifying inequality, initiating activity and evaluating progress to meet legislation under the Equality Act (2010)
- Our aim is to continue to improve diversity data and the utilisation of the data across all parts of the existing workforce. For example, at various stages of the employee lifecycle and during recruitment processes to see why females and BAME's are de-selected from the process. This data will be used to inform decisions
- We will extend our evidence gathering to include data on the following additional areas:
 - Analysis of fall-out rates during recruitment processes and exploration of alternate recruitment practices, which will include direct entry recruitment
 - The proportion of males and females leaving the Service and the reasons why
 - Analysis on training spend broken down by males and females



- Determine any structural barriers to promotion opportunities
- First time/newly promoted managers are supported through a structured induction programme; developing skills and self-confidence through core management modules and individual coaching
- Leadership training and opportunities for development are available to all employees, such as job shadowing and acting up/temporary promotion, so that individuals can experience the variety of roles within the Service, providing wider organisational awareness and benefiting both the individual and the Service
- We support the Service and its employees, promoting high performance and continuous improvement. Working collaboratively and inclusively, we ensure employees perform the best they can by supporting them to acquire, maintain and continuously develop the appropriate technical and professional skills and underpinning knowledge specific to their role
- In September 2020 a report detailing the outcomes from the most recent 2020 Business Continuity and Resilience Workforce and Succession Planning review provided reassurance to the Executive Committee that the necessary safeguards and contingency plans are in place to future proof the Service, mitigating risk and optimising opportunities during a period of significant change and increasing demands
- In 2020 we launched a renewed and refreshed appraisal system. The revised process is electronic, promoting accessibility and ease of completion. This system enables managers and employees to have more meaningful and productive conversations about their performance and development, incorporating the Services core values and behaviours