



## 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: 2021), the gender pay gap continues to decline and over the last decade has fallen by approximately a quarter. The data has however been affected by the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and the impact to the economy, and the suspension of mandatory gender pay gap annual reporting for the 2019-20 period.

In 2021 the UK gender pay gap among all full-time employees was 7.9 per cent, up from 7.0 per cent in 2020. The data for 2021 is still below the gap of 9.0 per cent before the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in 2019. Among all employees, the UK gender pay gap increased to 15.4 per cent from 14.9 per cent in 2020, below the gap of 17.4 per cent in 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 2021. When comparing the gap over this period, 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	2021
All	19.8	20.2	19.6	19.8	19.2	19.3	18.2	18.4	17.8	17.4	14.9	15.4
Full-time	10.1	10.5	9.5	10.0	9.6	9.6	9.4	9.1	8.6	9.0	7.0	7.9



There are a number of factors contributing to the UK 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, home-schooling and caring commitments
- Lack of opportunities for flexible working
- Attitude and culture
- Confidence
- Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and the impact of furlough, wages and hour worked

This gender pay gap is based on data at the snapshot date of 31 March 2021, which for the Service in 2021 has decreased 5.0 percentage points to 13.8 per cent (18.8 per cent in 2020), and 5.6 percentage points from the first year of reporting (19.4 per cent in 2017). This is positive and takes the Service 1.6 percentage points below the UK average gender pay gap of 15.4 per cent for 2021. For 2021 the Service's median gender pay gap has also decreased to 9.0 per cent (from 15.3 per cent 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 and sustained 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.

Since 2020 the economic impact of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has contributed to widening the UK national average gender pay gap and has impacted on working arrangements within many organisations. Whilst the short-term impact of the pandemic has been to increase the UK average gender pay gap, in the longer term it may have helped. For many, the pandemic has been a catalyst to positive changes within the workplace due to the requirements to embrace alternative ways of working.



During the pandemic the Service has faced many challenges in continuing to support and protect the communities of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, in addition to maximising the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees. The Service is committed to harnessing the benefits of flexible working, which has been largely created by the requirement for alternative working arrangements due to the pandemic. By embracing more flexible and responsive ways of working, it is hoped this will lead to greater equality and encourage a more diverse workforce.

The gender pay gap is generally caused by underrepresentation of female employees in higher paid or senior roles. In order to lower the gap attention must be paid to the recruitment, retention and development of females into these areas, and a range of strategies adopted to support this. It is positive to note, that 2021 has seen an increased representation of females in senior roles, with this year seeing the highest representation since first reporting in 2017.

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 2021/22 Pay Policy (approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 17 February 2021) sets out levels of and elements of remuneration for 2021/22 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.

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.

## 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 2021 compared to 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2017:

Year	Total number of employees in scope	Males	Females	Total
2021	Full-pay relevant employees	371	92	463
	Relevant employees	404	100	504
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 2021, the number of full-pay employees increased by 31 males and 10 females. In comparison, for 2020, the number of full-time employees reduced by 13 fewer males and five fewer 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 41 employees not receiving their usual full-pay within the pay period (for 2020 this was 55 employees).

For 2021, the number of relevant employees has increased by 20 males and increased by seven females. In comparison to 2020, the number increased by 19 males and three females.

Since 2017 the number of full-pay relevant employees has increased by 15 per cent for females and decreased by 5.0 per cent for male, and for relevant employees has increased by 23 per cent for females and decreased by 1.0 per cent for males. The change in employee numbers will directly influence the reportable data and the gender pay gap.

Whilst the Service continues to increase the percentage of females employed, for 2021 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 2021 is 13.8 per cent, this is 5.0 percentage points lower than 2020. Male hourly pay has decreased by 2.8 percentage points (54 pence) and female hourly pay has increased by 3.2 percentage points (50 pence). This is the first year that female hourly pay has increased whilst male hourly pay has decreased. Whilst 2021 has the highest hourly pay for females since reporting, it is still lower than the hourly rate of pay males have received over the same reporting period.

Year	Male hourly pay £	Female hourly pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2021	18.87	16.27	2.60	13.8
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 2020 the mean (average) gender pay gap was 18.8 per cent. This meant that male employees earned £3.64 per hour more than females.

### 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 2021 is 9.0 per cent or £1.53 per hour. As with the mean gender pay gap, female median hourly pay has increased by 2.0 percentage points and male hourly pay has decreased by 5.0 percentage points in the same period. This resulted in an overall decrease of 6.3 percentage points for the median gender pay gap for 2021.





Year	Male hourly pay £	Female hourly pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2021	16.93	15.40	1.53	9.0
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 2020 the median gender pay gap was 15.3 per cent. This meant that male employees earned £2.73 per hour more than females.

### 3. Mean bonus gap

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

For 2021, the mean bonus gap is 100 per cent. This has meant that only males received a bonus payment during this reporting period.

Year	Male bonus pay £	Female bonus pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap % *
2021	0.93	0	0.93	100
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 2020 the mean bonus gap was 90.2 per cent. This meant that male employees received on average a bonus of £12.00 more than females on bonus payments.

### 4. Median bonus gap

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

For 2021 the median bonus gap is 100 per cent, which equates to £125.00. This translates as males only receiving a bonus payment during this reporting period.

# Gender Pay Gap Report 2021



Year	Male bonus pay £	Female bonus pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2021	125	0	125	100
2020	125	120	5	4.0
2019	750	675	75	10
2018	1000	750	250	25
2017	500	1000	-500	-100

In comparison, for 2020 the median bonus gap was 4.0 per cent or £5.00. This meant that male employees received a bonus equating to £5.00 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	%
2021	Males	3	0.74
	Females	0	0
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 2021 reporting period no bonus/merit award payments were made to employees, however Long Service Award payments are included in the bonus payment calculations and were paid to three males 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.

# Gender Pay Gap Report 2021



For the fifth consecutive year, the highest proportion of females is within in the lower quartile, representing 42.4 per cent of the total female workforce. In comparison, the percentage of the total male workforce in the lower quartile is 20.5 per cent.

For the first year, the highest proportion of males is no longer within the upper quartile, but rather the upper middle quartile, representing 27 per cent of the total male workforce. In comparison to females, the upper middle quartile has the lowest representation of females, at 17.4 per cent.

In 2021 there has been an increased representation of females in senior roles, with this year seeing the highest representation since reporting, at 18.5 per cent.

For 2021

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	99	26.7	85.3	17	18.5	14.7	116
Upper Middle (UM)	100	27.0	86.2	16	17.4	13.8	116
Lower Middle (LM)	96	25.9	82.8	20	21.7	17.2	116
Lower (L)	76	20.5	66.1	39	42.4	33.9	115
Total	371	-	-	92	-	-	463

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

# Gender Pay Gap Report 2021



**Buckinghamshire**  
**FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**  
*we save lives*

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

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

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 fifth year of reporting the Service's gender pay gap. As already detailed within this report, many of the issues driving the gender pay gap 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 Code of Ethics Fire Standard for England, published May 2021, complements and supports the Service's vision and values which forms part of everything the Service does. The principles in the Core Code are based on the Seven Principles for Public



Life, known as the Nolan Principles, tailored to suit the Fire and Rescue Service's context. The Code of Ethics Fire Standard specifically requires Fire Services to embed and show their commitment to the five ethical principles and professional behaviours contained in the Core Code

- 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
- The Service recognises family friendly and flexible working practices are good, as they help to attract and retain valuable talent and skills from a wider and more diverse talent pool. We are continuing to develop and update a suite of procedures within this area to help increase gender equality within the workplace. At the end of 2021 we started consultation on an updated Flexible Working procedure. A positive step within the updated procedure is that flexible working can be requested from day one of employment, rather than once an employee has attained 26 weeks employment. This demonstrates the Service's commitment to harnessing the benefits of flexible working and assisting employees to maintain an effective balance between their work and home life
- From Spring 2020 the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic resulted in a significant amount of change within the Service. During the height of the pandemic this was often as a result of balancing work with other caring responsibilities. As control measures have been established and restrictions changed, many employees have opted to continue to work more flexibly in terms of hours or days they work and where they work. The Service is committed with continuing to harness the benefits of flexible working arrangements and adopting a flexible approach to an employee's work location where practicable. At the end of 2021 we started consultation on a new Hybrid Working procedure, which sets out key requirements and considerations to enable employees to undertake hybrid working
- The Service actively encourages employees to consider using flexible working arrangements where appropriate. We appreciate that having a better work-life balance and by promoting flexible working options, the Service can support inclusion, improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, thereby improving employee wellbeing. In addition, we will attract and retain a diverse workforce of talented individuals, thereby helping to reduce the gender pay gap
- Structured groups have been created to drive forward equality initiatives, such as the EDI group, which includes managers, employees, trade union and employee 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 June 2021 an EDI objectives update report was presented to the Fire Authority, along with progress to date and EDI workforce data

- 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
- An external benchmarking exercise was carried out using the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei) Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) self-assessment evaluation and benchmarking tool, and in 2021 the bronze award has been maintained for the second year running
- 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 continue to help the Service in achieving its objectives
  - The results of the 2019 HMICFRS Staff Survey were 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
  - The 2022 culture was launched in January 2022, which will provide a further benchmark for continued improvement. A working group, made up of employees from across the Service agreed on a new marketing and communications strategy and improved ways of measuring results, including a new culture 'road map'
- 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
- The Service's People Strategy 2020 to 2025 was updated and published following approval by the Fire Authority in 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. A year one update on the People Strategy 2020 to 2025, including a 'raising the profile' roadshow was approved by the Fire Authority in October 2021. A six-month plan includes station and departmental visits to engage and consult on the People Strategy. Roadshows include a presentation to employees on the strategy and will highlight through discussion how the Service will meet any challenges and identify risks and opportunities. This is with the intention of raising the profile of the



strategy, encourage engagement and ensure employees from across the Service are made aware of how their work contributes and supports the five key areas

- During 2021 the corporate website, which incorporates the Service's new People Strategy 2020 to 2025 continued to be updated
- 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 signed the Armed Forces Covenant to promise to actively support the armed forces community and in August 2021 was awarded the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award. The covenant acknowledges that we recognise the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans and military families can bring to our Service. At the end of 2021 a youth engagement initiative was launched in the local community, where members of the Armed Forces Cadet associations undertake a programme of activities with the aim of helping cadets gain an understanding of what being a firefighter is about and hopefully encouraging a career within the Service
- Regular systematic and rigorous strategic workforce and succession planning processes are in place, which incorporate current Public Safety Plan requirements and horizon scanning of likely future external and internal challenges. Outcomes from these processes are subsequently translated into timely interventions to ensure the Service continues to meet workforce capacity requirements and build capability. In addition, it provides opportunity to refresh the workforce through the identification of people; internally and where required externally to fill identified key positions





## 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 and be members of the Networking Women in the Fire Service programme and in 2021 funded places on their "have a go weekend" and virtual Choose to Challenge event
- The Service's talent management programme continues to ensure replenished development pools at each level, resulting in employees with the required skills to fulfil the roles when needed. All elements/modules of our promotional process have been reviewed, consulted on, and brought together in one Operational Promotional procedure to provide clarity and consistency to employees on the requirements and route for promotion
- Following the successful pilot of a scheme used to identify and develop future leaders, the Service has embedded this into refreshed appointment and promotion procedures and progressing a new Leadership and Management Development Framework to support and assist with the development of newly recruited or promoted managers
- Wholetime recruitment is structured with the aim of attracting a diverse pool of applicants, reflective of the community



- A review of recruitment within the Service has been commissioned to understand what went well and establish any learns, with the aim of improving future processes, and creating a toolkit to support managers with future recruitment
- To ensure recruitment could continue during the coronavirus (Covid-19) 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 and will continue going forwards
- 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 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
- 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, 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 ensures 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 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 individuals 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
- 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
- An update on Workforce Development was presented to the Executive Committee in September 2021. The report provided an update on the Service's progress in relation to workforce development and set out the outcomes of the 2021 Workforce and Succession Planning review. It offered reassurance to the Executive Committee that necessary safeguards and contingency plans are in place to future proof the Service, mitigate risk and optimise opportunities during a period of significant change and increasing demands; all to continually provide the best service possible to our communities. The report allowed us to showcase the excellent work being undertaken by the Service to mitigate the risks identified and investing in developing its existing workforce to meet the anticipated challenges
- Excellent work is being undertaken by the Service to mitigate future workforce risks by investing in developing its existing workforce to meet the anticipated challenges. An example of this investment is during the 2021/22 Medium Term Finance Planning process, Members approved a £50,000 growth bid to fund a pilot leadership development programme, with an invite to bid for further funding to roll this programme out across the Service, subject to evaluating the upcoming pilot programme. This will help to accelerate the development of employees to ensure the Service has the right people, with the right skills, ready to perform the roles required
- All employees have an annual appraisal, where their commitment to their behaviours, linked to the Service's values, is an essential element. Quality assurance of appraisal returns is undertaken to identify themes, and to assist with any training requirements