

Strategy 2025-2030

Positive Action



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

Contents

1. Introduction and Purpose	2
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1. Introduction and Purpose

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) is fully committed to becoming an employer of choice for people from all backgrounds, with a goal of having a workforce that is truly representative of the diverse county that we serve.

At NFRS, there is significant under representation of female, ethnic minority and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) employees.

Members of some communities do not see the Fire and Rescue Service as a career for them; the reasons are varied and complex. NFRS employees from under-represented groups are minimally and, in some cases, not at all represented at management and leadership levels, indicating barriers to progression.

Using positive action to increase representation within NFRS enables us to recruit from a wider pool of talented, skilled people to create a more forward thinking, inclusive and positive working environment. It helps us to understand the diverse needs of the communities we serve, and this supports NFRS to achieve its statutory requirements.

Purpose

This Positive Action Strategy & Plan take account of these issues and acknowledges where we want to be and what we want to achieve. As such positive action will contribute to these two overall success outcomes:

- To become an employer of choice for all communities
- To become truly representative of the communities we serve

This strategy and plan, sets out how NFRS will utilise positive action principles to encourage under-represented members of the community and employees to engage with recruitment and promotion activities. This reflects our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

The strategy supports the Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services in England and underpins the Service's ability to deliver NFRS' Equality Diversity and Inclusion and People and Culture Strategies.

The positive action activity in this strategy and plan is time-bound, skills-focused, and developmental. Measures are designed to minimise disadvantage and widen participation, not to exclude others.

“I UNDERSTAND THAT UNLESS YOU SEE YOURSELF REPRESENTED IN A WORKPLACE THEN IT’S HARD TO IMAGINE A CAREER WITH THAT ORGANISATION. THAT’S WHY I’M DETERMINED THAT NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE WILL ACTIVELY SEEK TO RECRUIT FROM ALL OF OUR COMMUNITIES AND ENSURE THAT THE SERVICE IS INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE.”

CFO, Nikki Watson

What is Positive Action?

If an organisation can show it is under-represented within certain groups in the past 12 months, it is allowed under the Equality Act 2010 to carry out what is known as ‘positive action’ to encourage applications from people in those groups.

Positive action is a range of lawful initiatives to improve equality for people who share a protected characteristic, through reducing disadvantages, meeting the differing needs and increasing participation.

Positive action gives individuals from under-represented groups opportunities to overcome barriers and to compete with others on a level playing field. It supplements the support the Service provides to all staff to reach their full potential, and positions are awarded to the best candidate regardless of whether they fall into a particular group or not.

How is positive action different to overall community engagement and recruitment and promotion activity in NFRS.

Positive action uses engagement as a key tool but is best described as targeted outreach with communities and staff from underrepresented backgrounds. Through positive action, underrepresented people can be targeted to encourage them to apply and supported through the process of employment and promotion.

Community engagement in Fire and Rescue Services involves a proactive approach to work with communities to build trust, share information, and collaboratively address local risks, primarily through safety education and advice.

In NFRS there are overall recruitment strategies and processes that apply to all communities and support for all staff; part of these strategies and processes will include mass engagement with all the county's communities Community Engagement Positive Action Recruitment & Promotion as part of attraction



The Five Key Principles of Positive Action

The strategy is built on five key principles which will enable NFRS to deliver positive action work.

These are:

- Understanding our communities & our staff
- Working with partners, communities & internal stakeholders
- Attract diverse communities into roles in our service
- Create an inclusive recruitment process
- Ensure equity in internal career opportunities for underrepresented employees.

Understand our communities & our staff

- Analyse information that tell us about our existing communities and emerging communities.
- Undertake targeted outreach with communities across the county to understand informal networks and evolving needs.
- Commission new and utilise existing research and consultation that provide insights about the experience of underrepresented employees and barriers to recruitment for diverse communities.
- Work with staff networks to understand issues/barriers to recruitment and progression.

Attract diverse communities into roles in our service

- Create inclusive advertising and utilise social media to target diverse communities.
- Attend events with diverse communities to promote NFRS as an inclusive employer.
- Deliver bespoke discovery events that are aimed at underrepresented communities
- Support recruiting managers wishing to increase the diversity within their departments.

Work with partners, communities & internal stakeholders

- Build relationships with community organisations, cultural leaders, schools and HE to deliver positive action activity.
- Partner with community organisations and educational establishments to cascade information about working for NFRS.
- Working internally with leads and teams across NFRS and Enabling Services to deliver positive action.
- 6 • Attend stations and buildings across the Fire Estate to meet with employees to talk about Positive Action and how it can benefit them.

Create an inclusive recruitment process

- Utilise the appropriate and proportionate positive action initiatives to increase participation and recruitment of underrepresented groups at each stage of the recruitment process.
- Ensure regular contact is maintained with candidates throughout the recruitment process.

Ensure equity in internal career opportunities for underrepresented employees.

- Support the development of underrepresented groups through positive action initiatives, such as coaching and mentoring.
- Use appropriate and proportionate positive action initiatives to increase participation of underrepresented groups at promotion processes.
- Evaluate promotion data to measure positive action success.

The Positive Action Plan 2025-2030

- This plan sets out priority actions for each year of the strategy for the Positive Action Team; the plan is not fixed to allow for flex, adaptation and the introduction of new actions.
- The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Evaluation of actions/activity will be undertaken at key points e.g. end of a recruitment process. This will inform assessment of outcomes and KPIs.
- Not all activity will be undertaken purely by the Positive Action Team; there will be workstreams where collaboration between PAT and other departments will deliver this activity.
- There are other positive action activities that would not be led by the PA Team that can be considered for inclusion in the plan.

Plan 2025-2026	Team/Resource	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2029/30
<p>Develop and implement a continuous approach to positive action starting with Wholetime Recruitment. The offer for 2025/26 for wholetime recruitment is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bespoke Discovery events for under-represented communities Support at each stage of the recruitment process including new for 2025/26 a fitness package including practice sessions for multistage test for PA candidates. <p>This will evolve each year in line with some of the interventions below.</p>	Positive Action Team.	X	X	X	X
Every year positive action support offer to On Call recruitment (this will not be everything offered to wholetime due to timing and other constraints).	Positive Action Team/Recruitment	X	X	X	X
Consideration of the summer internship programme for underrepresented communities (based on Leonard Cheshire Change100 programme).	Workforce Planning with support from PA Team and EDI.	X			

Development and launch of PA external website	Positive Action Team	X			
PA support to other recruitment that has an external element – Station Manager and above and fire staff. This will include review on job descriptions and adverts of language to balance out bias (e.g. gender).	Positive Action/Recruitment	X	X	X	X
Internal career academy aimed at women, those from an ethnic minority, LGBT and neurodiverse employees: this would include mentoring from equality allies as well as senior leadership.	Positive Action Team and Operational Support		X	X	X
Potential pilot of the Summer Internship	Workforce Planning/EDI/PA Team		X		
Development of quality recruitment allies (building and aligning to White Ribbon) Use as mentors and buddies during recruitment process.	PA Team and EDI		X		
Schools' discovery events (held at Fire Stations).	PA Team	X	X	X	X

Measuring Success: Strategic Outcomes and KPIs

To become an employer of choice for all communities

- **Application-to-hire ratio by demographic group** – tracks how inclusive and attractive the organisation is to diverse applicants.
- **Diversity of candidates in leadership pipelines** – shows progress in inclusive career/talent development.
- **Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS)** – measures how likely employees are to recommend the organisation as a great place to work.

To become truly representative of the communities we serve

- **Workforce demographic profile vs. local community demographics.**
- **Representation in leadership and decision-making roles** – ensures equity at all levels.
- **Community engagement participation rates** – especially from underrepresented groups.

Measuring success: KPIs, measures and success indicators

KPI	Objective	Measure	Success Indicator
Increase Representation of Diverse Communities in Service Roles	Ensure positive action activity effectively attracts candidates from underrepresented and diverse communities.	No. of events attended with diverse communities to promote NFRS as an inclusive employer.	Diversity in expressions of interest
		No. of expression of interests to recruitment activity (through PA attendance at events).	Diverse applicant pools Diverse community engagement
		No. of Positive Action Discovery Sessions.	
		No. of signups to recruitment from positive action discovery events.	
Develop and Implement an Inclusive Recruitment Process	Ensure recruitment practices attract and support diverse talent, reduce bias, and promote equity throughout the hiring lifecycle.	Applicant diversity ratio: % of shortlisted applicants from targeted underrepresented group to move to recruitment stage. % of PA candidate applicants to move to recruitment stage.	Diverse Candidate Pools Representation in Hires Positive candidate experience
		Applicant diversity ratio: % of applicants from targeted underrepresented group who pass multistage fitness test. % of PA candidates that who move to multistage fitness test.	
		Applicant diversity ratio: % of applicants from targeted underrepresented group who pass Recruitment Day (written assessment and group exercise) to move to next stage. % of PA candidates who pass the Recruitment Day.	

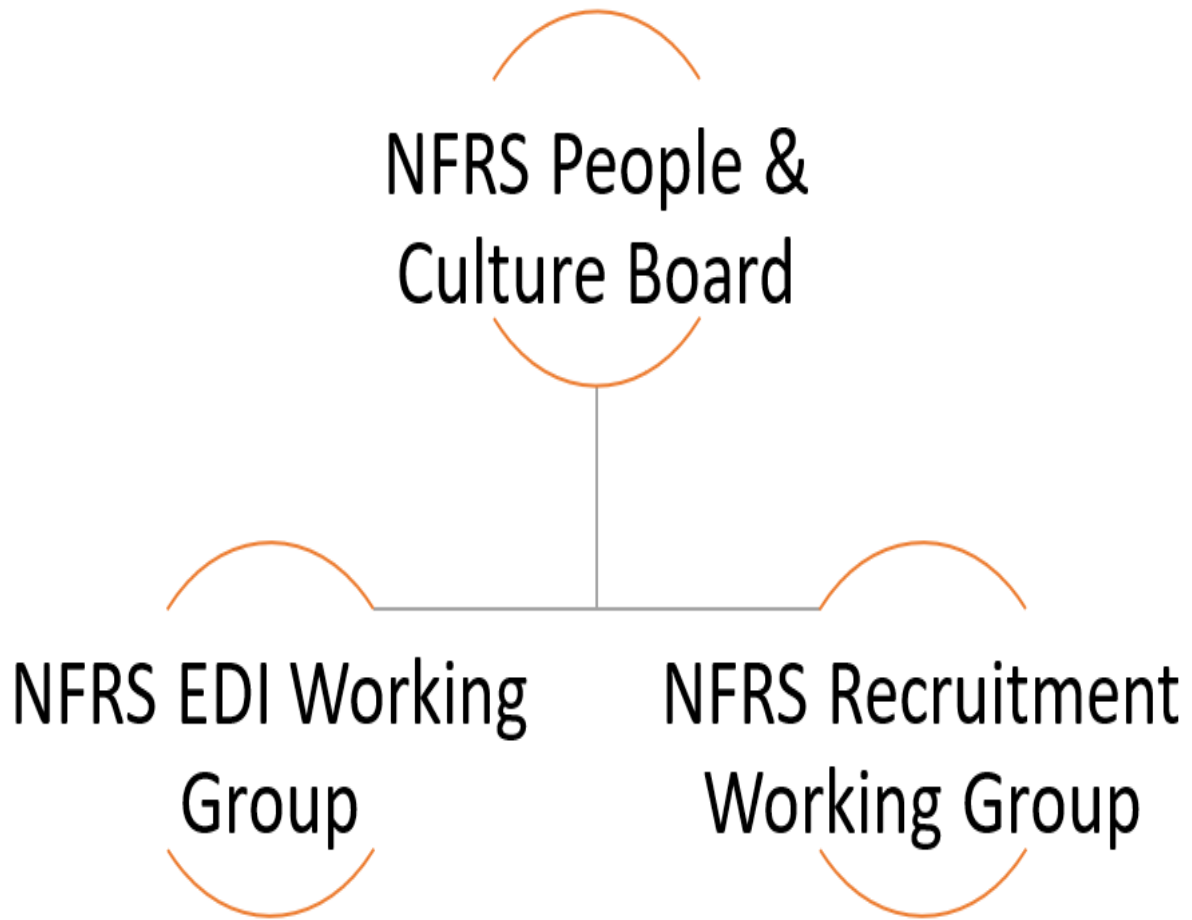
Develop and implement an Inclusive Recruitment Process	Ensure recruitment practices attract and support diverse talent, reduce bias, and promote equity throughout the hiring lifecycle	<p>Applicant diversity ratio:</p> <p>% of applicants from targeted underrepresented group who pass Job Related Tests.</p> <p>% of PA candidates who pass Job Related Tests.</p>	<p>Diverse Candidate Pools</p> <p>Representation in Hires</p> <p>Positive candidate experience</p>
		<p>Applicant diversity ratio:</p> <p>% of applicants from targeted underrepresented group who pass confidence in water test.</p> <p>% of PA candidates who pass confidence in water test.</p>	
		<p>Applicant diversity ratio:</p> <p>% of applicants from targeted underrepresented group who pass Assessment Centre</p> <p>% of PA candidates who pass Assessment Centre</p>	
		<p>Applicant diversity ratio:</p> <p>% of applicants from targeted underrepresented group who pass pre-employment checks.</p>	
		<p>Applicant diversity ratio:</p> <p>% of successful hires from underrepresented group.</p> <p>% of successful hires from PA candidate pool.</p>	
		<p>Candidate experience rate – Feedback (through survey) on PA support through the recruitment process</p>	

Promote Equity in Internal Career Progression for Underrepresented Employees	There is fair access to promotions, lateral moves, and development opportunities for employees from underrepresented groups.	Progression rate: The % of underrepresented employees promoted at different levels.	Achieve proportional representation of underrepresented employees in promotions.
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Positive Action KPIs: considerations and caveats

- Annual updates will be provided as activity is largely tied to recruitment and promotion timelines.
- There is a ceiling on how much we can increase representation. We need to understand the pool of people that we can recruit from.
- KPIs measure both PA and recruitment activity – some applicants may become PA candidates but were attracted through mass engagement route.
- We need to understand the interconnectivity of all the processes and forces beyond the control of the PAT and their activities may impact (usually negatively) on a candidate's experience.
- PA activity must be seen in the context of the wider social and political landscape. E.g. anti DEI rhetoric will have an impact on potential candidates, as well as emboldening challenges to what we are trying to achieve.

Governance





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