



Classification	Official
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A Culture of Positive Action in Recruitment

Background

In May 2020, the Service Leadership Team (SLT) approved a new approach to a culture of inclusion in our recruitment processes. This approach was reviewed in May 2021 to understand how the approach had worked in practice, what had gone well, lessons learned, outcomes and 'what next'.

In May 2022 we planned the new phase of positive action in both our internal and external recruitment processes. The detail below outlines the overarching approach, attraction methodology and selection methodology. The approach incorporates lessons learned from 2020 and 2021.

Approach

We continue to position ECFRS as an employer of choice and career of choice that welcomes all and provides an inclusive public service to the communities of Essex. The approach covers all recruitment and is an extension of our approach in 2020 and 2021.

Inclusive for all

For all our recruitment activity, we ensure that we provide candidates with clear, transparent information about our processes and assessment approach, why we assess in certain ways, and any frameworks we use for assessment (e.g. the NFCC Leadership Framework). We have recently reviewed, updated and consulted on new recruitment, temporary promotion and transfer policies and procedures. In addition, we have, and will continue to:

- Train and develop our recruitment advisors, equipping them with the skills to focus on and articulate positive action approaches
- Review our advertising approach ensuring appropriate and inclusive language
- Ensure our job descriptions (job purpose, role profile, person specifications) are inclusive
- Ensure interviewing and assessments are inclusive (in terms of time / place / method)
- Develop our internal candidates, through access to our Leadership, Resourcing and Succession process, as well as providing development opportunities in an inclusive way
- Review our recruitment processes to ensure our approach is inclusive and has positive action at the heart of each stage, and that the candidate's experience of engaging with ECFRS is a positive one, including undertaking regular quality assurance
- Ask candidates and hiring managers for regular feedback, learning from them how to continually improve our recruitment offer
- Work in a collaborative way to ensure that as many internal stakeholders as possible can input into recruitment activity, and we can best reflect the brand externally

For the current operational recruitment, we have:

- Used open days (virtual and face-to-face)
- Reinstated a weekly employee wholetime stakeholder group and set up a fortnightly positive action in recruitment group to focus on positive action activities
- Utilised a variety of social media options
- Utilised a bespoke and targeted approach to on-call communities
- Reviewed and refreshed communications materials, including
 - Preparation for the fitness / physical activity
 - Myth busting videos (new faces, new stories)
 - Apprenticeship success stories

We have also undertaken People Impact Assessments for our policies and will complete assessments for each of the activities and processes.

Age

Our workforce is under-represented in the younger age groups. As part of our outreach work, we have continued to engage with colleges that deliver public services and uniformed services courses. We also continue to work closely with our fire cadets and Duke of Edinburgh Award cohorts. We are in contact with the cadets who have applied for firefighter roles and have provided targeted support in interview skills.

We have improved our presence at career events, especially those targeted at school, college and university leavers, and continue to engage with events such as the recent Essex County Council [‘Essex Opportunities Live’ event](#), demonstrating the wide range of opportunities within ECFRS. We hosted our first ‘Careers Awareness Day’ on 10th October 2022 and were joined by around 150 college students at Kelvedon Park, who engaged in a range of activities including Prevention, Protection, OCAT, interview skills, USAR and Response, as well as being introduced to the support services based at Kelvedon Park to give greater awareness of career and apprentice opportunities within the service.

Gender

Our workforce is under-represented by women. We have undertaken a series of development events focused on gender decoding our adverts and our marketing / external communication materials. These are being utilised in our review of job descriptions, to ensure our language is fully inclusive, mitigating the possibility of subconsciously deterring non-male candidates.

To continue to build on the work that has seen our intake of new operational female firefighters increase from less than 10% to over 16% over the last 18 months, we will continue to promote our Female Firefighters and Women’s Forum events and involvement, including both groups in recruitment and positive action stakeholder groups and meetings.

We have run a series of targeted virtual events and social media activities, two of which were specifically targeted for females interested in becoming firefighters.

Buddy support is offered at the selection stage to all applicants and diverse representation exists at all stages of the process, including ensuring our assessment panels are as diverse as possible and including a mix of operational and support staff, and ideally a mix of genders, on panels. We endeavour, where there is an applicant from one of our under-represented groups, to provide representation on the panel of assessors.

Ethnic minority groups

In order to build on the work that has seen our intake of new operational firefighters who have declared they are from a minority background increase to 8.1% over the last 18 months, we continue to promote the involvement of our Ethnic Minority Forum in recruitment groups and meetings.

We run targeted and virtual events and social media activities, with one specifically for candidates from a minority background interested in becoming firefighters. Buddy support is offered at the selection stage to all applicants and diverse representation exists at all stages of the process, including ensuring our

assessment panels are diverse.

We are engaging in outreach activity to reach our communities better, having piloted an approach in Thurrock and Basildon that will be expanded further.

Outreach work

Our outreach work has included partner organisations and collaborating with our Prevention and Education teams. We are working on joint events, including schools and college visits, where career opportunities are discussed. This will lead to opportunities being included in the standard Education Team discussions and sessions. Where possible, outreach events include representatives from minority groups and from recent recruits.

Selection

To make our selection activities inclusive, there are a number of activities that we undertake. These include:

- Use of the Arctic Shores personality assessment profiling tools, which are fully objective and anonymised
- Anonymised applications
- Alternative assessments where these are appropriate e.g. treadmill test v. bleep test, face to face interviews v. online interviews
- Interviews that include service values and / or the Code of Ethics
- Disability confident employer status which includes offering buddy support at the selection stage to all applicants together with diverse representation.