

Circular number	55/2008	Date issued	23 October 2008
This circular is	For information	Response required by	3 December 2008
This circular is	Relevant to the National Framework		
Status	This circular provides further information on the submission of proposals for local minority ethnic recruitment targets, on applying for additional capital grant payments to support commitment to achieve higher recruitment targets, and proposals for the annual Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Report.		

Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Recruitment Targets (2)

Issued by:

John Dackombe
Fire and Rescue Service Development Division

Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
The Chief Fire Officer**

Please forward to:

**Heads of Human Resources
Equality and Diversity Professionals**

Summary

This circular follows up FRS Circular 44/2008, informing Fire and Rescue Authorities of the date for submitting their proposals for local minority ethnic staff recruitment targets and commitment to higher targets, advising on proposals for setting higher targets for FRAs with very low minority ethnic working age populations. The circular also describes proposals for the first national Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity report.

For further information, contact:

John Dackombe or Erin Richardson
Fire and Rescue Service Development Division
Communities and Local Government
1st Floor, Zone A3 Ashdown House
123 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6DE

Direct line **020 7944 5707 or 020 7944 8142**
Fax **020 7944 5664**
E-mail john.dackombe@communities.gsi.gov.uk
erin.richardson@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Website www.communities.gov.uk

Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Recruitment Targets (2)

1.0 Workforce Diversity Targets

- 1.1 Circular 44/2008 reminded Fire and Rescue Authorities of the requirement set by the National Framework 2008 -11, and the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018, for each Authority to meet recruitment, retention and progression workforce diversity targets for women and minority ethnic staff by 2013.
- 1.2 Every Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for setting its own local minority ethnic recruitment targets. To support them in doing so, Communities and Local Government has drawn up guidance material (Annex A) and a Q & A brief (Annex B) reflecting the issues highlighted at the Recruitment Targets Workshops held in London (12 September) and Coventry (17 September). In addition, as discussed at the workshops, a table of statistical data drawn from the Labour Force Survey has also been attached (Annex C) for use as a basis for the calculation of local targets.
- 1.3 **All Fire and Rescue Authorities will be required to submit in writing proposals for their recruitment targets by no later than 3 December 2008 to:**

**Gill McManus
Head of Equality and Diversity Team
Fire and Rescue Service Development Division
Communities and Local Government
1st Floor, Zone A3
Ashdown House
123 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6DE**

- 1.4 We expect to approve most targets as submitted. However the Equality and Diversity Team will be reviewing the targets proposed in the light of local workforce data to ensure that they are soundly based, robust and challenging. We understand that the issues are complex and will work through any issues that arise with the Fire and Rescue Authority.

2.0 Higher Recruitment Targets

- 2.1 The Equality and Diversity Strategy encourages Fire and Rescue Authorities to commit to the achievement of higher recruitment targets (i.e. 18% for women in the operational sector and between 2 and 5% above the local working age population for minority ethnic staff across all sectors of the workforce).
- 2.2 Communities and Local Government has allocated an additional capital grant payment of £2 million in total to support those Fire and Rescue Authorities that commit themselves to the higher targets.
- 2.3 The grant payment will provide a minimum of £42,000 to each Authority committing to achievement of the higher targets and will be paid in two instalments (April 2009 and April 2010).
- 2.4 To receive the additional grant payment Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to submit a letter of commitment, signed jointly by the Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority and the Chief Fire Officer, to the Director of Fire and Resilience at Communities and Local Government.

- 2.5 The letter should detail the Fire and Rescue Authority's proposed local minority ethnic recruitment target, and the higher target to which the Authority wishes to commit. The higher targets will need to be between 2% and 5% above the local minority ethnic working age population.
- 2.6 However, a few Fire and Rescue Authorities with very small local minority ethnic working populations (e.g. less than 1% or 2% in the first instance) may wish to commit to the higher targets, but may consider an additional 2% to 5% above their existing target to be unrealistic. In these circumstances, Fire and Rescue Authorities may identify and submit for consideration proposals for higher targets for their area which are reasonable yet challenging, and to which they would be ready to commit. Due consideration would be given to the proposed higher targets and Fire and Rescue Authorities will be informed as soon as possible whether their proposals are eligible for grant payments.
- 2.7 **Letters of commitment to the higher targets should be submitted by no later than 28 November 2008 to:**

Shona Dunn
Director
Fire and Resilience Directorate
Communities and Local Government
1st Floor, Zone D1
Ashdown House
123 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6DE

3.0 Fire and Rescue Service Annual Equality and Diversity Report

- 3.1 In accordance with the provisions of the National Framework and the Equality and Diversity Strategy, Communities and Local Government will be producing an annual report on progress made on Equality and Diversity issues by each Fire and Rescue Service.
- 3.2 An initial report will be compiled by CLG for publication early in 2009 and will include the following:
- The **National Action Plan** – details of the initiatives to be undertaken at national level by key stakeholder organisations to support the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Strategy
 - **Good Practice Initiatives** - details of good practice, drawn from across the Service, linked to the five priority areas set out in the Strategy
 - **Local Recruitment Targets** – publication of the minority ethnic recruitment targets agreed for each Fire and Rescue Authority, including details of those Authorities which have made a commitment to achieve higher recruitment targets
 - **Statistical Information** – publication of statistics on performance on equality and diversity, as submitted under the IRMP monitoring process for year ending 31 March 2008

3.3 Fire and Rescue Services will be contacted in due course with a request for good practice examples to be included in the report.

4.0 Audit Commission – Direction of Travel Report

4.1 The National Framework requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy. Communities and Local Government and the Audit Commission will be working together to review and assess the progress achieved by each Fire and Rescue Authority towards delivering the Strategy's aims and vision, and to minimise the burden on the Service.

4.2 Fire and Rescue Authorities will be aware that the Audit Commission is currently visiting Fire and Rescue Services to collect information on progress, details of which will be published in their final Direction of Travel Report due in February 2009. This report will include an assessment of each Fire and Rescue Service's performance on equality and diversity across all areas of the organisation, from employment practices to service delivery. The Commission will be focusing on outcomes and will be looking for clear evidence of action against the requirements of the Equality and Diversity Strategy. It is envisaged that the findings will form a baseline report indicating how each Authority is performing.

4.3 It is anticipated that in this first reporting year, the combination of the report by Communities and Local Government and the Audit Commission's Direction of Travel report will provide a clear indication of performance on equality and diversity issues and an effective method of highlighting and sharing good practice.

4.4 Arrangements for the future annual reporting process will be reviewed during Spring 2009, following which Fire and Rescue Authorities will be informed of the proposals for the next annual Equality and Diversity report.

John Dackombe
Fire and Rescue Service Development Division