



# THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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*28 May 2008*

## **MAKING THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE A BETTER PLACE TO WORK**

### **FBU welcomes government strategy to make fire and rescue service more representative of the community it serves, and to put an end to bullying and harassment**

The Fire Brigades Union today welcomed the government's strategy to bring more women and members of ethnic minorities into the Fire and Rescue Service, and to make the Service a better place for everyone to work.

At the launch of the strategy in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre today, FBU National Officer John McGhee said:

"The FBU supports this strategy; we have advocated this for the past ten years.

"The survey commissioned by the government produced some disturbing results. Half the firefighters interviewed had seen or heard bullying and harassment. One in five (21 per cent) reported instances of gender discrimination, and more than one in 10 (13 per cent) reported instances of race discrimination.

"It is unacceptable that almost a third (31 per cent) of senior managers and almost three quarters (73 per cent) of all managers believe that attracting a diverse workforce is unimportant, or is neither important nor unimportant.

"So the FBU supports the strategy to tackle inequality, promote equality, diversity and fairness and to assist in establishing a culture of inclusion.

"We will play our part in ensuring that all senior managers are committed to delivering, and we will work with those who take a positive approach."

"More must be done to reach women and minority ethnic communities, and a national positive action strategy should be developed using the skill, knowledge and experience of women and ethnic minority firefighters, to be used in Fire and Rescue Services where numbers are low."

Vicky Knight, FBU executive member for women, said:

"The government's survey findings make terrifying reading.

"More than half of women firefighters have nowhere to change privately at work. Maternity provisions are inadequate. And if we want the Fire and Rescue Service to reflect the community it serves, we are failing – only three in 100 firefighters are women.

"The target is to have 15 women trainees in every 100 by 2013. It's not radical, but it's a move in the right direction.

"The FBU welcomes a strategy which will encourage a better gender balance, and a Fire and Rescue Service which better reflects the society it serves."

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