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NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

**To: Chief Fire Officers
Chief Executives/Clerks to Fire Authorities
Chairs of Fire Authorities
Directors of HR (Fire Authorities)**

Members of the National Joint Council

21 February 2017

CIRCULAR NJC/02/17

Dear Sir/Madam,

Inclusive Fire Service Group

1. You will be aware that as part of its continuing commitment to consider equality, diversity, cultural and behavioural issues within the Fire & Rescue Service the NJC decided to lead on a piece of work to assess the current position and to identify guidance in relation to any further strategies that could be used at local level to further encourage improvement in equality, diversity and cultural issues. It was further agreed to invite interested parties such as the Chief Fire Officers Association (National Fire Chiefs Council), Fire Officers Association and Retained Firefighters Union to be involved. The group has also engaged with a number of special interest groups. The group is chaired by the Independent Chair of the NJC.
2. Since the last update a number of initiatives have been undertaken to inform the group's work and to ensure that the improvement strategies developed by the group are effective, and reflect the needs and experiences of the service and its employees/future employees:
 - (i) Focus groups with a number of female, BME and LGBT employees to gather the participants' perceptions of working in the fire service and any ideas they may have for improvement in areas such as recruitment, progression, retention and bullying and harassment.
 - (ii) A survey open to all fire and rescue service employees to further develop the areas highlighted in (i) above
 - (iii) Four regional workshops with Equality and Diversity staff in fire and rescue services and local union representatives (FBU/RFU/FOA) to draw upon their rich vein of experience and to explore approaches that they felt would deliver results.
 - (iv) Two workshops with senior fire service managers (the majority of attendees being Chief Fire Officers). This provided an opportunity to explore with senior managers the outcomes of the work to date and commitments towards improvement.

3. The Inclusive Fire Service Group will now reflect upon the information gathered.
4. Work is also underway to develop guidance with fire and rescue services on the collection, recording and monitoring of data, putting in place a consistent means of doing so which will assist in terms of both local and national future monitoring.

Yours faithfully

SIMON PANNELL

MATT WRACK

Joint Secretaries