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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

21st March 2018

CIRCULAR NJC/3/18

INCLUSIVE FIRE SERVICE GROUP

National Awareness Campaign - A Development in England: Home Office statement

1. As you are aware a group led by the NJC, the Inclusive Fire Service Group, undertook a comprehensive piece of work engaging directly with fire and rescue services and their employees to consider equality, diversity, cultural and behavioural issues with the purpose of developing improvement strategies which could be supported across the board and used at local level to deliver improvement.
2. The group, which is independently chaired by Professor Linda Dickens, includes employer and employee representation from the National Joint Council and representation from the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Fire Officers Association and the Retained Firefighters Union.
3. Following the engagement referred to above, the group issued a number of strategies which will deliver improvements at local level. Circular NJC/1/18 issued in January sets out the widespread support of the strategies from FRAs.
4. However, one of the strategies which the evidence gathered by the group suggested would be fundamental to change in respect of diversity, recruitment and retention was a national campaign covering the full range of the modern firefighter role and what the fire service does in order to inform perception, including helpful information on recruitment requirements e.g. fitness.
5. Recognising that this would need to initially be progressed at national level the IFSG has continued to drive this forward, working together with others.
6. We write to update you on current progress in respect of England. The Home Office late yesterday laid a Written Ministerial Statement in Parliament (the House of Commons and the House of Lords) in respect of a national awareness campaign. The statement is shown below:

Improving firefighter diversity is a key priority for the Government's ambitious fire reform programme. The most recent 2017 operational data, published on 26 October, showed that only 5.2% of firefighters in England are women and 3.9% are from an ethnic minority group. This is unacceptable and needs to be significantly improved so that firefighters are representative of the communities they serve.

While in 2017 we did see movement in a positive direction in terms of new joiners to the firefighter role: 8.7% were women and 5.1% from ethnic minorities, there is still further to go. This is why the Home Office will shortly be launching a national campaign with a focus of 'Join the Team; Become a Firefighter' to raise awareness of the role of a modern firefighter and help improve diversity.

The campaign which is being supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Local Government Association (LGA) and Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) will: (i) target those from underrepresented groups that may not have previously been interested in the role; (ii) provide information on the breadth of role across prevention, protection; and response; and (iii) produce guidance and toolkits to help those interested in the role overcome any challenges they face during the recruitment rounds. The campaign will enhance and not duplicate the work already being undertaken by fire and rescue services in England to improve diversity.

7. We are sure that you, like us, welcome this significant commitment.
8. The Inclusive Fire Service Group will continue to take an active role in this work going forward.

Yours faithfully

SIMON PANNELL
MATT WRACK
Joint Secretaries