

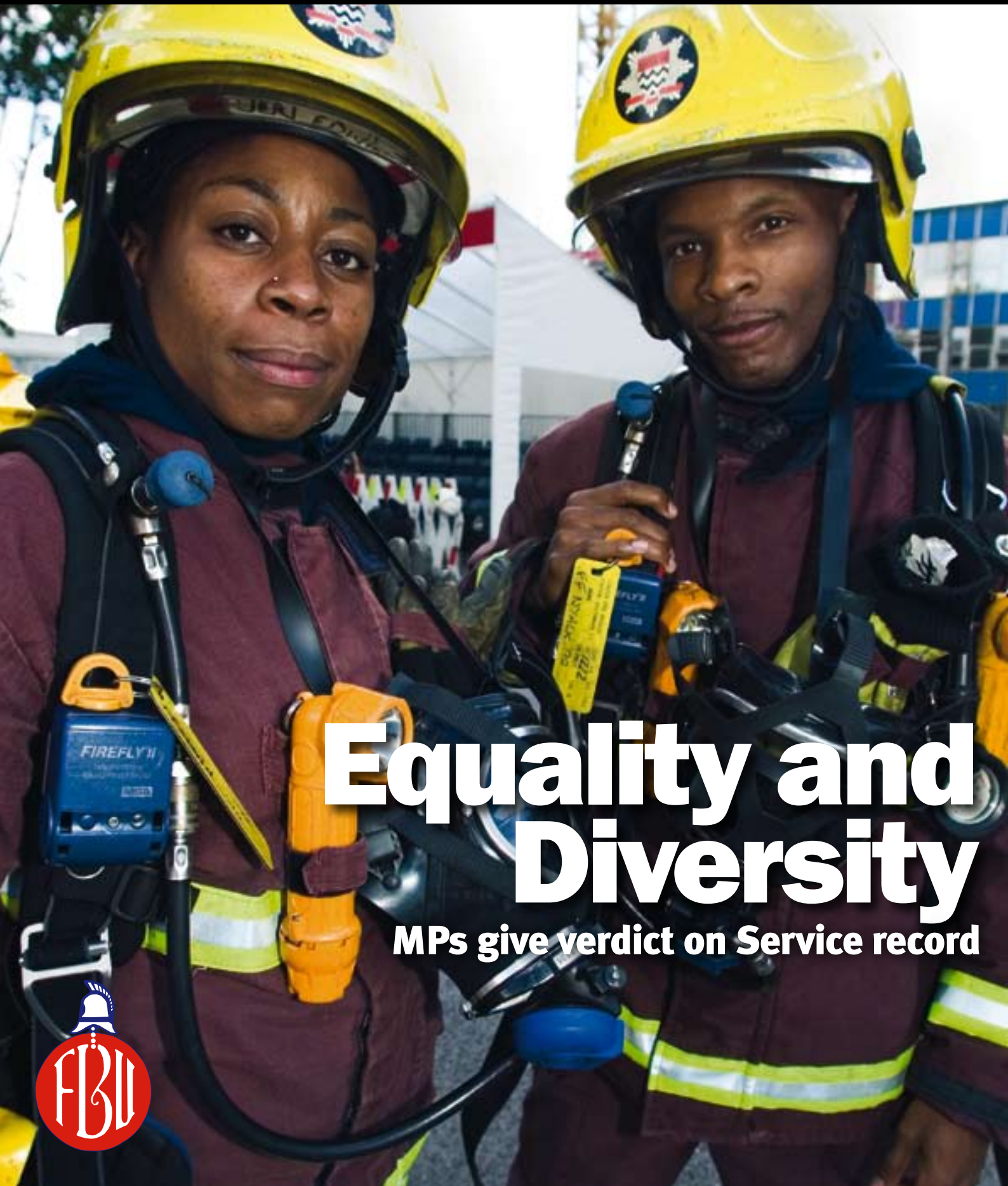
Advisor

**'Why don't
B&EMM members
like asking for
help?'**

See inside, page 5

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union Black and Ethnic Minority Members ♦♦♦ www.fbu.org.uk

Autumn 2006



Equality and Diversity

MPs give verdict on Service record



Foreword

Greetings to you all. I sincerely hope that this 'new look' edition of ADVISOR finds you and yours in good health.

As usual it's been a busy time since we last went to print, and your representatives have been doing their very best to progress B&EMM issues in an ever-changing fire service. And that's the crux of it all – change. For some, the changes are coming far too quickly (shift patterns, etc) and without too much thought about the impact on lives and careers, let alone public safety.

From a B&EMM perspective some changes can't come quick enough especially within the Equalities, Recruitment and Promotion agendas, something the House of Commons Select Committee report so clearly identified. It's difficult to believe, but nonetheless true, that the Fire Service still does not have a modern Fairness At Work section within our national terms & conditions – the Grey Book. This is clearly not acceptable and needs to be resolved. Most fire and rescue services do not have a clear Outreach strategy for the recruitment of BME people and the targets issued in 1999 seem to have been disregarded by all but a few Brigades.

One area that may see improvement for BME staff is within the area of promotion. The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) gives our B&EMM an opportunity to use all our talent and experiences to progress within the fire service. It's an opportunity for which B&EMM need to find a way of encouraging, advising and mentoring those who want to become managers and influence their Brigades from another angle.

Another area in which we are having some success is in finding and helping our members become B&EMM Brigade reps. Now that legislation makes every fire authority responsible for race equality and integration in the workplace, more and more people are expressing an interest in making sure their brigade is monitored and held to account. We cannot do this successfully from the 'centre', so local knowledge and activity is vital in ensuring that our members are properly

Some changes can't come quick enough, as the Select Committee clearly identified

catered for within their employment. Our knowledge and experience within our communities will also help FBU officials carry out their responsibilities as your elected representatives.

Both of these issues will be the focus of workshops at this year's B&EMM School on the 27-29 October 2006 at

Wortley Hall. It has been two years since our last school, so we are looking forward to seeing some new and old faces to progress the B&EMM agenda within our union and our communities.

The school will also be dedicating a whole session to an internal B&EMM 'closed session'. This will be for our members and officials only. I think it's fair to say we are at the crossroads of our development as a section within the FBU. With our union going through a re-organisation review, I think it's appropriate that we have an honest and frank discussion about our role within the FBU and how we can gain more influence to the benefit of the people we represent. We also need to discuss the last 12 months, the internal problems we've had and most importantly, how we intend to resolve issues and move on. The structure of B&EMM needs to be reviewed and where necessary amended. Our evolution is our lifeblood!

Within the trade union movement we have as usual been bringing our issues to the attention of other black representative groups. We had five new delegates at the TUC Black Workers conference in April and they all contributed with speeches on various issues. All of them were speaking publicly for the first time and they were proudly represented!

In London, with the help of the London Fire Brigade, B&EMM and the African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust (ACLT) held a clinic to raise awareness about the deficiency in black blood donors and to register our people to help save many lives within our communities. The B&EMM input was greatly appreciated by the ACLT with whom we have worked with for many years. That partnership must and will continue with hopefully more clinics sponsored by other Brigades.

Until the next time, be safe and stay healthy – Respect and Dignity for all.

Michael Nicholas
Executive Council Member - B&EMM



B&EMM School

'Become the change you want to see' A message to all students to the B&EMM School 2006

It has been 2 years since our last B&EMM School in 2004, following the cancellation of the 2005 School against the express wishes of B&EMM national committee and many B&EMM activists and members.

This has made it even more difficult to organise. There was so much that we wanted and needed to





include. This is a challenge that we hope to rise to and exceed. One thing is clear though and that is the fact that this year's school could be one of the most important for our future.

The theme of this year's school - held 27-29 October in Wortley Hall, near Sheffield - is 'become the change you want to see'.

The gauntlet is well and truly laid down for all those who are attending and who are willing to take part in achieving that change.

To all of those who are attending the school this year and especially those who are attending the school for the first time, please do not be afraid to network and talk to others at the school, and to get to know people from other brigades and areas. There is a wealth of knowledge and support at our School just waiting for you.

The school kicks off with an internal B&EMM closed session for

a full and honest debate among B&EMM members and officials only about what B&EMM has achieved over the last year, where it is now and where it should be going.

There will also be guest speakers and workshops on Community Development and Personal Development, which will focus on your Union activity, your career and your work in your community. And the last day is dedicated to planning how to put commitments made on the previous day into practice.

As usual, feedback forms will be issued before the close of business - and all students are encouraged to fill them out fully and honestly.

Watch this space for a report back - and of course, the obligatory group photograph!



All pictures taken at B&EMM School 2004

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In brief

◆ A two-day seminar for B&EMM reps and activists held in January was well received by the 23 participants, who attended workshops on the Race Relations Amendment Act and Race Equality Schemes. They also worked together on bolstering B&EMM's local organisation and participated in planning B&EMM's activities for the year. All felt that this seminar – which B&EMM pushed for following the cancellation of the 2005 school – should be a regular event. B&EMM aims to have the knowledge gaps identified at the seminar addressed by the FBU's education programme.

◆ The local elections sadly saw a small but further rise in the popularity of that neo-Nazi organisation, the BNP. They are also attempting to start a trade union called Solidarity. The British electorate seem to be sleepwalking towards a political disaster and the mainstream parties must shoulder some of the responsibility for that. There needs to be ongoing, coherent local strategies to show people what these and other racist, fascist groups are really about behind the smart suits. The Unite Against Fascism campaign needs all the support it can get if further gains by the extremists are to be avoided. More info www.uaf.org.uk

◆ B&EMM Executive Council member Michael Nicholas visited South Africa on behalf of the FBU, meeting representatives of firefighters in Johannesburg and attending a conference of the municipal workers union, Samwu. He learned about the progress and challenges they face and briefed them on how B&EMM and the FBU were promoting race equality in the UK. Ideas were also exchanged on how to build international trade union solidarity to combat the negative affects of globalisation on public services. More info on the union's international work: www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/international.

B&EMM firefighter in training



ANDREW WARD

CRE warns authorities after B&EMM probe

RACE EQUALITY SCHEMES

As *Advisor* went to press, the Commission for Racial Equality was awaiting responses from five fire and rescue authorities after it wrote to them about their race equality schemes. Two of these fire authorities were sent letters informing them that the CRE was "minded" to enforce compliance with their race equality duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act.

The CRE took these moves after receiving evidence from B&EMM on non-compliance and jointly agreeing an action plan. B&EMM gathered the evidence last year and in November 2005 wrote to fire authorities informing them that it had questions about

their compliance with the RRA and would be reporting them to the CRE.

Prior to going to the CRE, B&EMM wrote twice to fire authorities, receiving responses to the first request for information from all but three. They all stated that they had race equality schemes, but the majority of authorities had not undertaken impact assessments on any of their policies and function.

B&EMM offered its assistance to all fire and rescue services with the view to providing consultation on race equality schemes, and their review. To date it has provided assistance and comprehensive consultation to 20.

B&EMM investigated brigade compliance by inspecting their websites, examining the accessibility of information and services.



South African firefighters at work

JON HRUSKY/EPICORRIS

BNP IN THE FIRE SERVICE

B&EMM lobbies minister

B&EMM is preparing a submission to the minister of fire, Angela Smith, calling for action over the BNP in the fire service.

The submission, the latest phase in the B&EMM/FBU campaign, details the position of the Union and, thanks to information gathered by B&EMM, other "stakeholders" including fire authorities, the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now the Department of Local Government and Communities).

The campaign against the BNP was launched in 2004, when a member of Hampshire fire and rescue service stood as a candidate for the BNP in the European elections.

B&EMM and the FBU sought to have this employee removed from the Service and then initiated a nationwide effort to win support in the fire service for a zero tolerance of employees who are also members of extremist organisations.

Fire Authorities are under a specific statutory duty to promote race equality under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and their tolerance of staff who are overtly supportive of the BNP runs counter to their statutory duty, the Union has argued.

B&EMM believes that the safety of our members and other members of the fire and rescue service are at risk as long as this issue remains unresolved.

Well done Avon!

THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM

The Union has written to Kevin Pearson, chief fire officer of Avon fire and rescue service, to thank him for sending a senior representative of the brigade to the "Trade Union Demonstration Against Racist Attacks" held Friday 11 August in Bristol City centre.

The demonstration was organised by the Bristol Trades Union Council following the vicious racist attack on Christopher Kasozi which took place in Bristol City Centre on Sunday 30th July and left Christopher with serious brain injuries.

In a letter to CFO Pearson, Tam Macfarlane, FBU Executive Council member for the South West, said:

"The attendance of a senior uniformed representative of Avon Fire and Rescue Service at this demonstration sent out an important message to community leaders, Trades Unions and the general public that the Service takes its role as a leading public service within the community, and the responsibilities that this brings, very seriously. Your representative, ACO John Dando, in his address to the meeting sent this message clearly and powerfully.

"This proactive approach was further reinforced by the attendance of several members of Avon Fire Authority including the Chair, Councillor Terry Walker, who stood alongside the South West FBU banner with our Officials."

"By its involvement in the above event and the message that was put forward, Avon Fire and Rescue Service has shown a commitment to, and understanding of, the important role that our service has in the fight against racism which is both a scourge to society and an attack on the values that we as a fire and rescue service have at our core."



PARDEEP RAW

West Midlands Brigade

B&EMM Rep

During my time as West Midlands Brigade B&EMM Representative these past 18 months I have made representations on behalf of about 10 B&EMM members. I have had highs and lows. Sometimes they have served to strengthen my resolve. Sometimes though they served to disappoint me and make me question why I ever became a representative at all.

Why are ethnic minority members so reticent about asking for help and advice?

I have tried to assist members who:

- Have waited until the very last moment before asking for help;
- Haven't exercised their right of appeal against decisions made against them;
- Have listened to colleagues who said that the member didn't really need a union representative present as there would not be anything to worry about;
- Didn't know what help and assistance the Union could provide.

That's perhaps part and parcel of representing certain ethnic minority members. But the fact is by the time that some ethnic minority members ask for any assistance, they are all too often a long way down the road of any disciplinary action being taken against them. Thus making my job and - far more importantly - making the job of representing that member so much more difficult.

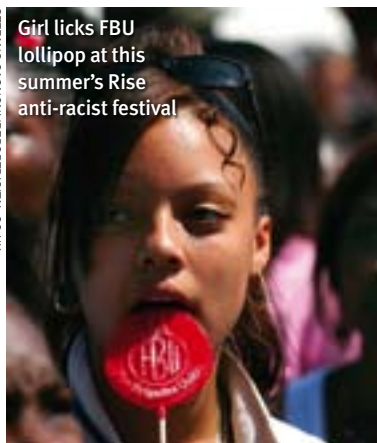
Why are ethnic minority members so reticent about asking for help and advice?

It may be that some ethnic minority members don't want any assistance from B&EMM or other FBU representatives - which is fine until, as is often the case, they do need assistance.

B&EMM is only as strong as its members. It's your union and your future. If you value both I suggest that you start thinking about them.

i'm a rep

Girl licks FBU lollipop at this summer's Rise anti-racist festival



STEFANO CANONNI/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

Select Committee

CARL ST PAUL, B&EMM NATIONAL SECRETARY

In recent years B&EMM have become increasingly concerned that the issue of equality and diversity within the British fire service has been fast slipping down the agenda.

As a Service we have to have the ability to adapt to new challenges, varying dynamics and socio-political developments. The skill, however, in dealing with all these core Service needs, is not to displace one with another but rather to find an appropriate, relevant and valued place to accommodate all and then be consistent, equal and committed in addressing these needs.

The 1999 Thematic Review provided a central stage to the otherwise underrated and unpopular subject matter of equality and diversity (E&D). The Service was forced to face up to its failings and weaknesses in this area and it was made to focus and utilise resources to achieve this aim. But it always felt as if the Service was acting against its will and under duress.

The conclusions of the House of Commons select committee report into the fire service, which was published in July are in the main sadly echoed by those of B&EMM.

It said: "We are disappointed and dismayed at the lack of progress that has been made

The conclusions of the House of Commons select committee report into the fire service, which was published in July are in the main sadly echoed by those of B&EMM

on diversity within the FRS and particularly at the Government's half-hearted and ineffective leadership on the issue.

The report, prepared by MPs from a number of political parties, also called for action to address the problem:

"We recommend that the Government immediately (i) establish support groups for the Diversity Happens forum; (ii) reappoint a national adviser of equality and diversity for the FRS; and (iii) implement the long-promised new selection tests for firefighters.

"We further recommend that the Government conduct a thorough review of its diversity policy and initiatives relating to the Fire and Rescue Service, reporting within the next 18 months.

"We also recommend that the Government, within two years, publish and promulgate a nationwide strategy for promoting diversity within the Fire and Rescue Service that takes into account the experiences and expertise of all stakeholders.

Furthermore, the select committee recommended "that in future, a Fire Authority should not receive a Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating higher than good unless it

can demonstrate that significant progress, in line with any revised Government targets, has been made on diversity issues generally and within the workforce in particular."

B&EMM too are disappointed by the lack of progress by the British Fire Service on Equality and Diversity.

B&EMM also continue to be disappointed with the lack of leadership and direction from the Government and even more so the Service, which appears to content to blame its own poor record on the failure of leadership from Whitehall.

As far as the select committee's recommendation that a fire authority's Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating should be no higher than 'good' if it fails to demonstrate "significant" progress, this would appear a step in the right direction. However, a rating of "failure" should be introduced for those authorities who have consistently failed to progress or show commitment to E&D. The rating should also be publicly announced.

B&EMM reserve judgement on the issue of the national selection tests although we have taken part in the planning process. We remain unconvinced that the selection tests will necessarily benefit potential applicants from the black and ethnic minority community.

B&EMM says:

■ In line with the select committee, B&EMM would endorse the utilisation of support groups for the Diversity Happens Forum; however we would urge the use of the existing support groups via the Fire Brigades Union who have accumulated years of experience, knowledge and empathy.

■ B&EMM would also guardedly support the reintroduction of a Diversity Champion as long as the individual is endorsed by all relevant stakeholders. In addition, we would further suggest that a single Diversity Champion may not necessarily be ideal if a suitable candidate is not identified, and that a small nuclear team of up to four members may suffice.

■ Furthermore, the 1999 Thematic Review should be reviewed in all its component parts and revisited to the review within a specified and realistic time limit. Subsequent Government equality and diversity policies should also be reviewed with comprehensive progress reports published for the scrutiny of all the relevant stakeholders

■ Examples of E&D best practice across the service must be published and encouraged, allowing different fire authorities to adapt them to their own services. Extra financial support should be made available from Government initiatives to achieve this aim.

These are just a few observations from B&EMM and go towards a much larger comprehensive feedback on the Select Committee's findings via the Fire Brigades Union.

B&EMM
firefighters
training





LES BOWMAN, ACTING WATCH MANAGER

Les Bowman's ambition is to manage a station. In the meantime he is helping B&EMM colleagues and recruits make their way in the service

Les Bowman believes positive outreach is enriching the fire service in London, boosting recruitment among black, Asian and other visible minority groups – women included. And Les, now an acting watch manager at Barking, is well placed to know.

As well as working his way up through the ranks since joining the service 20 years ago, he spent four and a half years as a member of the London Fire Brigade's Positive Action Team with a remit to encourage more people from minority ethnic groups within the M25 to consider fire-fighting as a career.

"The scheme has made inroads, successfully boosting the number of

'It's all about giving information so people can make an informed decision'

recruits in target groups by over 115 per cent over six years, though it still falls short of government targets.

"As a black firefighter, I think it's really important to give people the opportunity to consider the service as a career choice where they probably wouldn't have done before. The people in the team are from visible minority ethnic groups, which helps.

"It's all about giving information so people can make an informed decision, telling them about the selection process and inviting them along to open days so they can find out more. If they meet the criteria, they are free to apply, and will go through the same procedures as all other candidates. There are no

favours done once they apply."

But, if successful, mentors and other B&EMM colleagues will be there to offer support. Les enjoys his mentoring work and believes that "role models" can help boost recruitment in areas where communities are under-represented. This also works informally, as more black, Asian and other people from visible ethnic minorities sign up. "For instance, we are finding that we've got black and women firefighters encouraging family and friends to think of joining, which didn't really happen so much ten or 15 years ago. When you get an environment that is welcoming to sections of the community not traditionally represented it becomes self-propelling. Word gets round that it can be a very rewarding career."

Les didn't think about joining the service until a black friend encouraged him to apply. "I was 20 and I'd been an apprentice electrician, an accounts clerk and a computer programmer – but I felt I was just going through the motions. There was no real job satisfaction."

He started out at Dagenham fire station, moved across to Barking where he became a crew manager after returning from the outreach team. Now he is poised to become white watch manager once he completes his development book.

Les has one aspiration he's happy to acknowledge: He would like to manage a station as his career progresses. There aren't that many black or Asian station managers around at the moment. But all that could change as talented firefighters from diverse backgrounds work their way through the ranks.

Personal

SYMPATHY AND CONDOLENCES

- Jay Sharland – B&EMM Member – died tragically.
- Pat Robinson lost her father.
- Mark Ferron lost his father.
- Michael Nicholas' brother died suddenly. Our thoughts are with their families.

GOODBYE

- Ronnie Stanley has left the B&EMM National Committee. We wish him well for the future.

B&EMM PROMOTIONS

- Warren Simpson – promoted to Divisional Officer, West Mids
- Pamela Oparaocha – promoted to Sub Officer (Crew Manager), LFB



Pamela Oparaocha – promoted!

- Dave Reid – promoted to Watch Manager, Training Centre, LFB
- Carl St Paul – promoted to Watch Manager, Acting Up Temporary Station Manager (via The Targeted Development Scheme), LFB
- Dalton Powell – promoted to Crew Manager, Community Safety (BME Support Worker), Nottingham

NEW REPS

- David Pazir – Staffordshire B&EMM Rep – congratulations and welcome

If members have news of congrats and promotions don't be shy about it – please get in touch. Your progress is an inspiration to us all.

Contact B&EMM Executive Council member Michael Nicholas with the details on mickn@fbu.org.uk

DON'T FORGET

to inform your membership secretary of any change of address and write to FBU head office with any changes to next of kin and nominations of benefits.

DIARY

October

11 October

Equality sections of FBU meet with Angela Smith MP new Minister for Fire

27 – 29 October

B&EMM School

30 October

National School through 4 November

November

20 November

B&EMM AGM

December

12 December

B&EMM National Committee meeting