

Women misunderstood!

AS a woman in the Fire Service with 29 years service I have noticed over the years quite a few changes (not all for the better). As a member of the NWC I can also say we are very proud (and I think quite rightly so) of what we have achieved so far for our women members and we hope the changes will ultimately benefit every FBU member. Unfortunately we are still getting criticism from some of our members and even from some of the officials of the FBU. Statements such as "well we never had any problems in the Fire Service until they started women firefighters".

PROBLEMS such as privacy in fire stations, (Toilets, Showers, Dormitories etc.). Did male firefighters never want privacy? Did male firefighters never need their own space?

PROBLEMS with PPE, Undress Uniform etc., (Tunic, BA mask, Gloves, Fire Boots, length of Trousers etc.) Correct me if I'm wrong (which I'm sure you will), when I say that over the years the Fire Service have for example changed the height restrictions and I know that there are male firefighters in service ranging from 5' 2" to 6' 4", with very different builds and weights. So, the problem with PPE and Undress Uniform not fitting properly has been around for a very long time and is not a 'new problem caused by women being allowed to join the Fire Service'. I have personally heard this problem raised many times over the years.

PROBLEMS with pre-conceived ideas that the standard at entry into the Fire Service has been lowered to let women into this job. All recruits whether men or women, have to pass the same standard tests. Then after a 16 weeks recruits course and all the other assessments and interviews which follow, whether you choose to go for promotion or not, everyone is expected to reach the same high standard.

PROBLEMS of intolerance which in too many cases has caused severe aggravation or worse for our firefighters before they have managed to get a transfer to another watch or station. Or, our control staff, who also have in many cases suffered severe aggravation or worse, before managing to transfer to another watch. Or, in other cases to a completely different Brigade.

But thankfully it's not all doom and gloom. There are still a lot of fair minded people out there in the Fire Service and not all of our firefighters and control staff feel they have to leave the Fire Service to get away from the intolerance aimed at them and after transferring away from the intolerance go on to settle and



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Future recruits? All entrants to the Fire Service have to pass the same standard tests.

enjoy the career they have chosen.

So, if you have any comments to make regarding the above, please address them to: **The Editors, Siren Magazine, FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 62 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE**