



North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Strategic Equality Plan

2016-2020

Published April 2016

Index

Foreword	1
Introduction	2-3
The Equality Objectives	4
North Wales Fire and Rescue Profile	5
Fire and Rescue Service Core Values	6
Legislation Framework	7
Welsh Language	8
The Development of Objectives by Engagement	8
Recruitment and Employment Information	9
Training	9
Assessment of Impact	9
Procurement	10
Publication, Monitoring and Review	10
Promoting Understanding of the Strategic Equality Plan	10

**Foreword North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Chief Fire Officer
Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority**

This Strategic Equality Plan is the Authority's second Strategic Equality Plan. The plan explains how North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority will meet its statutory duties to promote equality for all groups in North Wales. The Plan outlines our commitment to achieving equality within all aspects of our service delivery and in our employment practices.

We are committed to ensuring our policies and employment practices are fair, accessible and appropriate for the diverse people we serve and the workforce we employ. This document brings together and strengthens the work we have done on equality over the last four years. We have made important progress towards improving how we incorporate equality and diversity in the policymaking processes within the Fire and Rescue Authority.

This Strategic Equality Plan will support and guide the Authority to become an organisation which is leading by example to ensure fairness, inclusion and respect for all.

- We will continue to ensure everybody has an opportunity to develop in an environment that is positive, safe and supportive.
- We will provide equality of opportunity and will not tolerate discrimination on grounds of:
gender, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, religion, age, disability, working pattern, caring responsibilities, trade union activity or any other grounds which are not justifiable.
- We will strive to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and meet the General and Specific Public Sector Equality Duties, in all aspects of our work.

As an employer we are dedicated to equality and valuing diversity within our workforce, we are committed to enabling staff to achieve a balance between work commitments and their lives outside work. Our aim is to ensure that these commitments, strengthened by our Core Values, are embedded in our day to day working practises with all our customers, colleagues and partners.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to equality of opportunity for all and to providing a professional service which embraces diversity and promotes equality of opportunity.

As Chair and Chief Fire Officer we are committed to ensuring that we take account of our staff, the public, stakeholders and partners views, and that we drive forward progress on objectives and actions agreed in the Plan.

Simon A Smith

Chief Fire Officer

Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies

Chair – North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Introduction

This document is the Fire and Rescue Authority's means of complying with the legislation and a way of measuring the aspiration to achieve equality within all aspects of our service delivery to everyone who lives, works and visits North Wales.

How was the Plan Developed?

The plan is developed with the Heads of Departments from across the Service they were asked to identify Equality Objectives within their individual areas of responsibility, with additional support and advice from the Equality Adviser.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is part of the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network. The network held a consultation event in October 2015, a large number of local groups and individuals were invited to get involved and have their say.

Public consultation on the objectives took place in November and December utilising the Service's website and the Wrexham Hub. Feedback was invited via email or by post – the objectives were provided electronically so that people had the opportunity to complete an online survey.

All of these activities have contributed to our equality objectives. Legislation allows for the objectives to be changed at any time, so the Service is keen to maintain a level of ongoing engagement to ensure our objectives remain current.

Why does this plan exist?

The Equality Act 2010 amalgamated previous disparate pieces of equality legislation, harmonising and strengthening equality legislation under one new Act. The Act includes a public sector equality duty that requires public sector bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
- **advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;**
- **foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.**

The Equality Act 2010 lists a number of characteristics which must not be used as a reason to treat some people worse than others.

When we talk about protected characteristics we mean:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief/Non-Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

What will happen as a result of the plan?

The Fire and Rescue Authority has developed a set of overarching Equality Objectives; each of the objectives will have its own specific actions.

Who will be responsible for delivering this plan?

All Authority Members, staff and anyone who works for, or on behalf of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. The actions and their intended outcomes will be measured and reported on annually.

How will the Plan be monitored?

This will continue to be done annually to the Fire and Rescue Authority via the strategic Equality Plan annual report. The report will be published on the intranet and Fire and Rescue Authority website.

The report will contain progress against the Equality Objectives, including Employment and Service Delivery Data.

Where to get further information

If you would like further information contained in the Strategic Equality Plan and supporting documents please visit North Wales Fire and Rescue Service website or contact:

Sue Jones

Equality Adviser
Fire Service Headquarters
North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Ffordd Salesbury
St Asaph
Denbighshire
LL17 0JJ

Sue.jones@nwales-fireservice.org.uk

The Equalities Objectives 2016-2020

Life and Health

- **Equality Objective 1**

Reduce Dwelling Fires and associated casualties through a comprehensive prevention strategy that specifically targets people who can be shown to be at greater risk because of their particular characteristics and/or circumstances.

Employment

- **Equality Objective 2**

Through our own employment practices, programmes and schemes increase the employment prospects of people who might otherwise find it difficult to gain equal access to the world of work.

Education

- **Equality Objective 3**

Through a comprehensive programme of tailored education and advice provided singly and in collaboration, to empower people living, working and visiting North Wales to continue to reduce their own level of risk from fire and other hazards throughout the different stages in their lives.

Personal Safety

- **Equality Objective 4**

Reduce the risk of death or injury from fires in North Wales by the provision of effective prevention and protection services and emergency fire and rescue response.

Representation and Voice

- **Equality Objective 5**

By being open and accountable about what we do and what our plans are, encourage more people to involve themselves in the process of determining the way fire and rescue services are delivered in North Wales, and aim to increase the range of representative voices that contribute to that process.

Access to Services, Information and Buildings

- **Equality Objective 6**

Improve access to information and communications with the Service, and improve physical access to fire and rescue service buildings which the public use or visit.

North Wale Fire and Rescue Service Profile

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

The role of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is to perform all the duties and responsibilities of a Fire and Rescue Authority in accordance with appropriate legislation and regulations, in particular the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The Authority comprises 28 councillors from the six unitary authorities of North Wales.

Executive Panel

The Executive Panel has a varied role dealing with topics such as the appointments of senior officers, policy and constitutional issues. It considers responses to consultation papers and other policy developments, and makes recommendations to the Fire and Rescue Authority on its key policies including the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan.

Standards Committee

The Standards Committee was established in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000. Its duties include the consideration of complaints against Authority Members and advising the Authority on issues to do with standards.

Audit Committee

The Committee has four primary roles of governance audit and scrutiny, financial and resource management, risk management and assurance and performance audit and scrutiny.

The Committee's membership consists of all non-executive (panel) members.

Operational Service Areas

We provide fire protection and prevention services across North Wales to around 670,000 people over a geographical area of 2,400 square miles. Community Safety offices are located in:

Gwynedd and Ynys Môn

Llanberis Road
Caernarfon
LL55 2DF
Tel: 01286 662 999

Conwy and Denbighshire Community Safety Office

Colwyn Bay Fire Station
Abergele Road
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 8AA
Tel: 01745 352777

Wrexham and Flintshire Community Safety Office

Bradley Road
Wrexham
LL13 7ST
Tel: 01978 367870

The Fire and Rescue Service Core Values

The Fire and Rescue Service is headed by the Chief Fire Officer, who has overall corporate management and operational responsibility for the Service and provides professional advice to the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Service core values summarise the principles by which we operate and the personal values that staff are encouraged to adopt and demonstrate.

These core values are:

Service to the community

Valuing service to the community by:

- ❖ Working with all groups to reduce risk
- ❖ Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- ❖ Being answerable to those we serve
- ❖ Striving for excellence in all we do

People

Valuing all our employees by practising and promoting:

- ❖ Fairness and respect
- ❖ Recognition of merit
- ❖ Honesty, integrity and mutual trust
- ❖ Personal development
- ❖ Co-operative and inclusive working

Diversity

Valuing diversity in the Service and the community by:

- ❖ Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- ❖ Providing various solutions for different needs and expectations
- ❖ Promoting equal opportunities in employment with progression within the Service
- ❖ Challenging prejudice and discrimination

Improvement

Valuing improvement at all levels of the Service by accepting responsibility for our performance by:

- ❖ Being open-minded
- ❖ Considering criticism thoughtfully
- ❖ Learning from our experience
- ❖ Consulting others

Legislative Framework

The Equality Act 2010

The General Public Sector Equality Duty (April 2011)

The Equality Act 2010 amalgamated previous disparate pieces of equality legislation, harmonising and strengthening equality legislation under one new Act. The Act includes a public sector equality duty that requires public sector bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
- **advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;**
- **foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.**

The Equality Act lists a number of characteristics which must not be used as a reason to treat some people worse than others. These are the 'protected characteristics'.

The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

There are also associated specific statutory equality duties for Wales (Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011) that enable a public authority in Wales to meet the general duty. The specific regulations include:

- publishing Equality Objectives;
- publishing a Strategic Equality Plan;
- engagement and involvement provisions for protected characteristic groups;
- ensuring published material is accessible;
- assessing impact of relevant policies and practices;
- training and collection of employment information;
- promoting knowledge and understanding amongst employees of the Equality Act;
- addressing unfair pay differences;
- reviewing progress on the Strategic Equality Plan and associated Equality Objectives;
- procurement practice provisions.

The broad purpose of the specific duties in Wales are to help listed bodies in their performance of the general duty and to aid transparency.

Welsh Language

The Welsh Language Act (1993) places a duty on the public sector to treat Welsh and English on an equal basis when providing services to the public in Wales.

According to the Act, public organisations are required to prepare a language scheme to explain which services they will provide in Welsh.

In February 2011 the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 was passed by the National Assembly for Wales and given royal assent.

It gives the Welsh language official status in Wales such that Welsh should be treated no less favourably than the English language, and led to establishing the role of a Welsh Language Commissioner who is supported by an Advisory Panel.

Public organisations such as North Wales Fire and Rescue Service are in the first cohort of those required to introduce the standards.

Developing Equality Objectives and Engagement

Heads of Departments from across the Service have identified equality objectives within their individual service areas, with support and advice from the Equality Adviser.

In developing our objectives we have used a number of sources:

- Equality Impact Assessments
- Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Planning Objectives
- Business plans from each of the Heads of Departments
- Existing Strategies and Plans
- Outcome of engagement activities

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is part of the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network. The network held a consultation event in October 2015 with a large number of local groups and individuals were invited to get involved and have their say. The feedback gathered was used to develop joint equality objectives.

The Services Equality Objectives were consulted on via the Service's website and the Wrexham Hub. Feedback was invited via email or by post – the objectives were provided electronically so that people had the opportunity to complete an online survey.

These activities have contributed to our equality objectives. Legislation allows for the objectives to be changed at any time, so the Service is keen to maintain a level of ongoing engagement to ensure our objectives remain current.

We will continue to look at the most effective methods of engagement via our existing links with community groups and organisations. We will also endeavour to establish relationships with new groups and local communities making sure we meet the needs and expectations of everyone involved.

Recruitment and Employment Information

Under our legislative duties, we are required to collect and publish a range of recruitment and employment information on an annual basis. This includes data on all of the protected characteristics. The purpose of equality monitoring is to help us identify equality risks and prevent inequality. This information helps the Service to understand the impact of our decisions on different people. This information will be published in our Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Training

Additional monitoring information is published on our training activity – this information is required for all staff organised by protected characteristics, and will be reported annually.

A listed body in Wales must make appropriate arrangements to:

- promote knowledge and understanding of the general and specific duties amongst our employees
- use any performance appraisal processes to identify and address training needs of employees in relation to the duties.

Assessment of Impact

The purpose of equality impact assessment is to identify the potential effect of a policy, procedure, practice, service or function on staff and service users in relation to equality. It is a means to ensure that we identify and eliminate any issues or actions which could, potentially discriminate against or disadvantage individuals, particularly those with protected characteristics. It also helps us to scrutinise our policies and procedures and, therefore, improve the quality of our services.

A specific requirement of the legislative duties is that the Service must ensure:

- that the practice, procedure or policy does not unlawfully discriminate;
- it identifies any adverse impact on protected groups;
- it considers how the practice, procedure or policy could better advance equality of opportunity;
- it considers if the practice, procedure or policy will effect relations between different groups.

We will continue to publish relevant completed equality impact assessments on the Service's website and we will also monitor all completed equality impact assessments on a regular basis. Effective equality impact assessments will enhance our work, ensuring a positive impact on all stakeholders.

Procurement

The Service has a due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance quality of opportunity and foster good relations when spending public money. This applies to all procurement regardless of the value of the contract. It is important to us that the goods and services we purchase are suitable for their intended use. It is equally important to us that the suppliers of those goods and services meet our high standards on equality.

Publication, Monitoring and Review

This plan will be published in full on our website and available in a range of formats on request. We will also publish an Action Plan, Executive Summary of the Plan and an Easy Read Version. We have an obligation to report annually to the Fire and Rescue Authority on the progress of our equality objectives. New action may be identified during the reporting period based on changes in legislation or Service requirements.

Our reports are published on the Authority's website.

We have in place arrangements for service managers to provide regular updates on their Equality Objectives plans and this will be part of the annual monitoring and review process.

Our annual reports to the Fire and Rescue Authority will also contain employment and training monitoring information, as required by the legislative duties.

Promoting Understanding of the Strategic Equality Plan

The Authority will build on the good practice already in place to promote a greater understanding of equality and diversity issues, further steps will include the following:

- Briefings in Y Fflam and the weekly brief on the progress in meeting the objectives set out in the plan;
- Ensure that all managers are trained in the equality priorities, and the way in which the plan will be implemented, along with their duties as individuals;
- Ensuring that equality issues are embedded into the staff induction and appraisal process and that on-going training is provided to keep staff updated on equality issues;
- Promoting understanding of the plan to our external partners through our collaborative work in communities.

Employees and the public have access to this information on www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk

The information will be available in alternative formats upon request.