

Forward Work Programme

April 2018 - March 2019

The Inclusive Fire Service Group set out a number of general points at the start of its report.

1. GENERAL – EMBEDDING INCLUSIVITY INTO EVERY ASPECT OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

(i) “Inclusivity should be embedded in every aspect of the fire and rescue service.”

Gender Pay Gap	Best practice methodologies have been agreed across all Wales FRSs to ensure a consistent approach to reporting. All have agreed to include disability and ethnicity in their calculations i.e. looking at disability/ethnicity gaps and pay differentials.	Human Resources Manager
Health and Wellbeing day: for Long Term Sick Employees	Employees on long term sickness absence were invited to a Health and Wellbeing day on 3rd December at Rhyl Communities Fire Station. The aim of the day was to provide employees with the opportunity to take part in Tai Chi, Mindfulness and Relaxation, Yoga, Nutrition and Fitness Workshops. These workshops are aimed to target key health messages and are designed to be interactive and informative.	Human Resources Manager
Promoting/adopting the He for She campaign.	This is a global campaign promoting gender equality and encouraging men to make a commitment to stand in solidarity with women. Proposed internal campaign promoting commitment to women in the FRS and an external campaign (primarily digital on social media - with video clips) - with a launch at the Senedd on June 13 th 2019.	Corporate Communications Manager
Promoting career opportunities to the next generation of staff.	The promotion of career opportunities to our next generation is key to recruiting and protecting our communities in the future. In February 2019 Home Safety Support Worker and Ruthin RDS Firefighter were both interviewed and photographed for case studies to be featured on the BBC's online study resource for school-age students, BBC Bitesize which is accessed by young people across the UK.	Corporate Communications Manager

<i>(ii) "There is a need for visible senior ownership and leadership - to lead by example and to ensure that local strategies and initiatives become reality on the ground, thereby embedding inclusion as the norm. Within a service this should be at chief officer level. Within a fire authority a specific member of the authority should hold the portfolio."</i>		
Employer Pledge (Wrexham)	<p>The Service has signed the Wrexham County Borough Council Employer Pledge. This pledge supports the vision that employers from all sectors will work together to maximise employment and training opportunities for young people and adults in the County Borough of Wrexham.</p> <p>This ambition is that by working in partnership we can maximize the life chances of our young people and adults, support business growth and develop Wrexham economy.</p>	Human Resources Manager
Development of senior managers	Through leadership programmes that have inclusivity embedded within them. Executive Leadership Platform/Strategic 'Pioneer' and Middle Manager 'Challenge' programmes.	Service Training and Development Manager
<i>(iii) "Union involvement should be recognised as an important factor in delivering improvement, particularly in respect of peer to peer involvement."</i>		
Increase membership of IFSG	RDS representative, Stonewall Ally representative, Female FBU representative and Female FF Apprentice representative are now incorporated into the group membership.	Human Resources Manager
<i>(iv) "Fire and Rescue Services should ensure the workplace is fit for purpose for all groups of employees including correct Personal Protective Equipment and gender specific station and fireground facilities."</i>		
Review of Fitness Policy	<p>A review has been undertaken of the policy to ensure that it is compliant with current NFCC Firefighter guidance, is up to date with current practices and Service policies, whilst also considering an All Wales collaborative approach to working.</p> <p>It is proposed that the current 6-monthly fitness assessments are changed to yearly. NFCC currently advises testing individuals on a yearly basis, and allowing those who do not achieve the required level of fitness to be tested more regularly and be provided with the support required. This will allow team to have more flexibility to offer interventions.</p>	Human Resources Manager / Fitness Team

2. PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

(i) "Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that all managers are trained in people management including skills such as how to have difficult conversations and that all managers recognise their responsibilities in promoting an inclusive culture."

<p>'Managing Mental Health in the Emergency Services'</p>	<p>Workshop delivered by MIND Bluelight to improve managers' understanding of mental health and how they can support employees to prevent and manage loss of psychological wellbeing.</p> <p>Four workshop training sessions delivered between September and November to Principal Officers, Area Managers, Group Managers, Station Managers and Support Function Managers. A total of 40 people attended. One further workshop session available and will be organised for March 2019.</p>	<p>Human Resources Manager</p>
<p>Working with Compassion toolkit</p>	<p>This toolkit was produced by the Samaritans. It's not emergency services specific but has useful information on people in distress or crisis and tips on dealing with issues and active listening.</p> <p>A Welsh version of the toolkit is available too and this is in the corporate health file in the electronic Information folder.</p>	<p>Human Resources Manager</p>
<p>Mind Blue Light Champions training</p>	<p>Two courses held, 25 attendees in total have attended the initial champions course – Speaking up Speaking Out.</p> <p>Eight champions have attended the second course for Peer Support (October 2018) with a further course being arranged for the remaining champions to attend in March 2019.</p>	<p>Human Resources Manager</p>
<p>Blue Light Champions (communications)</p>	<p>Poster with contact details prepared for distribution to all NWFRS locations. Mind information booklets and wallet cards to be distributed to all locations for employees to access.</p> <p>Further promotions and articles from the Champions to take place to signpost where help is available if required.</p>	<p>Human Resources Manager</p>

(ii) "Senior managers should lead by positive example. They should challenge bullying and harassment behaviours at every level, ensuring where necessary that management styles change in order to drive a different and improved culture."

(iii) "Fire and Rescue Services should promote a culture where challenge is accepted and welcomed as a positive contribution. This should be in both directions."

Update Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures	Policy has been revised and updated to include how employees can raise concerns outside the Service if dissatisfied with the response e.g. to an external auditor, regulator or ombudsman. The Service will provide a direct and confidential, non-switchboard telephone line, which is connected to an answer machine & is available 24 hours per day. Also a dedicated and confidential email address to be provided to receive disclosures.	Human Resources Manager
<i>(iv) "Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that all employees are aware of and understand the relevant policies. Where an incident is reported and found to be accurate it is important that action is taken and is seen to be taken as a result. Everyone needs to be confident in the process."</i>		
Awareness of the Whistleblowing Policy should be a key element of the staff induction programme	Reading and understanding the Whistleblowing Policy will be included in the Employee Induction Programme; it is important as it forms a key part of the relationship between the employee and employer. It is new employees that are most likely to raise concerns.	Human Resources Manager
Whistleblowing Training	The Whistleblowing training will be adapted to Learnpro (LMS) e-learning module to ensure new managers are appropriately trained in the practical application and compliance with the Whistleblowing Policy.	Human Resources Manager / Service Training and Development Manager
<i>(v) "Fire and Rescue Services should monitor the use of discipline and grievance procedures in order to identify and correct any problematic trends. This should also include an element of monitoring at the informal level in order to pick up issues at an early stage."</i>		
Review and update Discipline Handbook	Ongoing	Human Resources Manager/Senior Professional and Service Standards Manager
Discipline and Grievance information provided to FRA	Discipline and Grievance statistics are reported to the Fire Authority annually in the Strategic Equality Plans section of the Services Performance Assessment Report.	Human Resources Manager/Equalities Advisor
<i>(vi) "Fire and Rescue Services should consider the creation of trained Equality and Diversity champions. These are voluntary roles based on enthusiasm and commitment and irrespective of seniority. Champions play a central role in actively supporting the mainstreaming of equality and diversity initiatives and disseminating equality and diversity good practice, whilst also supporting the strategic development of initiatives to create an inclusive culture. Consideration should also be given to the role Allies can play. In relation to LGBT for example,</i>		

<i>'allies' is a term used to describe heterosexual people who believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual people should experience full equality in the workplace and use their role within the organisation to create a culture that is inclusive of everyone.'</i>		
IFSG members to be Equality and Diversity champions	Ongoing	IFSG
<i>(vii) "Fire and Rescue Services should also consider the creation of mediators (and may wish to consider whether they should be provided externally as well as internally)."</i>		
Training of HR staff in Mediation	Training is programmed for January/February 2019 by ACAS	Human Resources Manager
3. RECRUITMENT		
<i>(i) "There should be a national media campaign covering the full range of the modern firefighter role (similar to the current Army campaign) and what the fire service does in order to inform perception. It should be supported by a website which would also include information on recruitment and potentially divert the interested person to their 'home' fire and rescue service; include information on selection (based on national guidance, not prescription) recognising that the skill set needs to be wider than operational i.e. people skills, and provide information on fitness requirements. This suggestion was seen, by far, as the most influential way to alter perceptions and improve diversity. It would be useful in terms of recruitment and retention. Recruitment because it would dispel the myth that the job is just about fighting fires and retention to avoid the job not living up to expectations." Note: This recommendation included here for completeness, but it is recognised that this will be progressed largely at a national level initially, so questions under (i) have been amended accordingly.</i>		
Involvement with NFCC www.oncallfire.uk On-Call Campaign (online resources)	The Service is listed on www.oncallfire.uk and is already processing referrals from the site. The Service is also in the process of ensuring that all hard copy marketing materials from the campaign are bilingual and edited with local information where appropriate.	Human Resources Manager & Corporate Communications
Offline Resources	The Service has produced information leaflets and booklets and DVDs to be issued to those who may not have online access. These are also to be distributed to schools, colleges, careers centres, libraries etc.	Human Resources Manager & Corporate Communications
Open Evenings, Information Sessions and Positive Action Events	The Service is conducting open evenings, information sessions and positive action events throughout the year. These include opportunities to try out selection tests and fitness training.	Human Resources Manager & Training
Review of Selection Tests for RDS FF applicants	Discussions held with both South and Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Services on their processes. Proposal requested for North Wales to administer the revised "All Wales ability On- Call Test".	Service Training and Development Manager

<i>(ii) "Fire and Rescue Services should explore, and where appropriate utilise, recruitment opportunities such as apprenticeships and cadets in order to increase diversity in the workforce."</i>		
Apprenticeships	<p>Ten apprentices have been permanently employed as Wholetime firefighters and a further ten (which includes three females) are continuing with their apprenticeships. The Service is currently in the process of ascertaining the viability of employing another cohort of FF apprentices.</p> <p>Continue to employ ten support role apprentices - three in Business Fire Safety (two of which are female), three in Community Fire Safety (one of which is female) and four in Fleet). Employed one female fleet mechanic from the apprenticeship programme last year.</p>	Human Resources Manager and Service Training and Development Manager
Cadets	A number of stations support Cadet cohorts together with a BTEC qualification. These groups are supported by local On Call firefighters, lay instructors and departmental Watch Managers	Senior Training and Development Manager
<i>(iii) "Fire and Rescue Services should undertake greater and early engagement with specific communities/schools/colleges and not just when recruitment is on the horizon. This would further reinforce understanding of the role as it is today. This should utilise employee role models whilst being careful to maintain a balance with their core work."</i>		
Careers Events	<p>The Service continues to attend careers events at schools, colleges, training centres and job centres to promote the Service as an equal opportunities employer and to inform attendees of the requirements of the roles. The Service also attended a national SkillsCymru event this year and a 'Not Just for Boys' event arranged through Careers Wales.</p> <p>Other examples of Careers Events attended to promote the Service as an equal opportunities employer of choice:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Cymru - Venue Cymru • Flintshire Careers Fair • Denbighshire Central Careers Fair • Denbighshire North Careers Fair • Rhyl Community Fire Station Open Day 	Human Resources Manager
Engagement with local schools	Educationalists attend schools across the region and have recently introduced a more targeted approach to discussing the variety of roles.	Fire Safety
LGBT Events	The Service attended LGBT events to target applications from LGBT.	Human Resources Manager

Regular contact with Coleg Llandrillo Menai	To discuss opportunities within the Service and how they can support e.g. tuition on Essential Skills, pastoral care, Education/Development opportunities for Mentors and Supervisory Managers.	Senior Training and Development Manager
<i>(iv) "Fire and Rescue Services should ensure they have visible family friendly working policies supported by a greater use of flexible working arrangements."</i>		
Flexible Working Policy	Reviewed and updated in line with best practice and current legislation	Human Resources Manager
Flexible Availability for On-call staff	Pilot ongoing – includes the option to provide term time cover	Operations
Ageing Workforce Toolkit	NFCC Ageing Workforce Toolkit now on intranet with additional guidance on Menopause.	Human Resources Manager
RDS availability grids	Review of their availability and one to one discussion with RDS applicants during the interview process	Training Department
Flexible working of T&D staff	Two members of staff with specific flexible working contracts	Training Department
Operational Trainers	Self-rostering of Operational Trainers to provide a flexible approach to the provision of courses and also to support a family friendly/home balance	Training Department
T&D Managers	Both flexi duty system and 42 hour middle managers have the ability to swap duty days with other members of staff, take leave or swap rota/duty days to suit their needs	Training Department
<i>(v) "Fire and Rescue Services should develop an internal communications strategy to explain the difference between positive action and positive discrimination in order to counteract the view of some that an individual has only been employed/promoted because they are female/BME/LGBT. This would be supportive to such individuals and also be helpful in terms of encouraging progression."</i>		
Info Graphics for Positive Action	The Service has produced an info graphic for this purpose and this will be accessible on the intranet.	Human Resources Manager
Power Point Presentation for Positive Action	The Service has produced a Power Point Presentation and this is to be accessible on the intranet and external social media.	Human Resources Manager
Positive Action Strategy	A Positive Action Strategy has been written and this includes notes on Myth Busting, explaining what positive action is and why we need to undertake the positive action work and events and the benefits to the Service.	Equalities Advisor/ Human Resources Manager

(vi) *“Fire and Rescue Services should consider commissioning work in their own areas to identify any obstacles that local communities feel there are to applying to work with the service.”*

4. PROGRESSION

(i) *“Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that promotion processes which are fair and transparent are applied consistently and clearly explained to all employees.”*

Conducting selection process for both RDS Watch and Crew Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going RDS Supervisory selection process – elements are reviewed dependent on individuals qualifications/skills. Single lead ensures a consistent approach is maintained for all assessments 	Training Department
All Wales Assessment and Development Centre for Wholetime/Control Personnel	Supervisory and Middle Manager levels completed 2018 – introduction of a development plan based on their performance at the ADC and cross mapped to the national PQA’s. ADC Tools to be reviewed in 2019 for implementation 2020	Training Department
WDS Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent approach to initial promotion to Crew or Watch Manager which is managed by the Training Department to ensure consistency Assessments undertaken by competent personnel who have been briefed on the scenarios 	Training Department
(ii) <i>“Fire and Rescue Services should develop support networks and meaningful mentor/coaching programmes. (Note - mentors/coaches do not need to come from the particular group e.g. a BME mentor for a BME crew manager).”</i>		
Coaching & Mentoring Qualifications	Level 3, Level 5 & Level 7 Coaching & Mentoring qualifications being undertaken by supervisory, middle and strategic managers	Training Department
(iii) <i>“Fire and Rescue Services should encourage interest in promotion in general and through talent spotting by including leadership training, opportunities for development such as job swaps, taster weeks and acting-up/temporary promotion (so that an individual can experience the different role). This should be underpinned by a fair and transparent policy which sets out clearly the criteria by which such opportunities will be offered.”</i>		
Temporary Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary promotion is open to all Grey Book staff who have expressed an interest in applying for and engaging with the promotion process. Where specialist skills are required individuals may be temporary 	Senior Training and Development Manager

	<p>promoted when not engaged in the promotion process. Support and development if required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership training and courses are available through the Pathways as identified for each role 	
<p><i>(iv) "Fire and Rescue Services should explore the greater use of flexible working arrangements which may also assist with improving e.g. the bottle neck at Station Manager level given the extent of on-call commitment which for some may conflict with caring responsibilities."</i></p>		
<p>5. RETENTION</p>		
<p><i>(i) "Introduction of a national media campaign as set out under 'recruitment' should ensure that recruits are fully aware of the work of the service and the part they will play in that. Therefore they should not become disappointed or disengaged as they progress in their career. Note: This recommendation is included here for completeness. However it is recognised that this is something to largely be progressed on a national level initially. Therefore the questions under (i) below have been amended accordingly."</i></p>		
Interventions – HR contact employees who resign to ascertain if amendments/actions can be undertaken to retain competent staff	Ongoing	Human Resources Manager
Unpaid leave applications (rather than resignations advised and implemented if feasible)	Ongoing	Human Resources Manager
Open Evenings	Open evenings held to provide information to On Call applicants including Service Structure	Human Resources Manager
Selection Process	<p>Selection interviews have been amended to include a discussion with the applicant based on the following points, to highlight the reality of the role of the On Call firefighter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance on modules/courses including residential commitments Attendance on drill nights Requirement to engage with the community Requirement to undertake Safe and Well Checks Call rate is decreasing therefore will probably not be mobilised on a weekly basis but still need to be available Standards of conduct and discipline expected – uniform etc 	Senior Training and Development Manager

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact undertaking RDS duties has – family, friends and requirement to be available • Benefits of being a community RDS firefighter 	
<p><i>(ii) “Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that expectations around fitness levels are clearly explained, and support provided, including the potential impact of female only issues such as maternity or the menopause.”</i></p>		
Positive Action/Taster days	Presentations delivered at Positive Action (Taster) events; highlighting in detail the requirement of firefighter fitness.	Human Resources Manager /Fitness Team
Fitness Sessions	Specific fitness sessions focusing on upper body strength with current employees undertaken and offered to potential female recruits to attend. Programmes have been provided to individuals to support their training and identify where they can improve their currently level of fitness.	
NWFRS website (fitness section)	NWFRS website identifies the tests that individuals are required to undertake during the recruitment process and the entry fitness standard required. Fitness advice about self-testing is provided so individuals can assess their own level of fitness.	
Menopause Guidance	This is within the Ageing Workforce Toolkit and additional guidance has also been developed by NWFRS for staff.	Human Resources Manager
Open evenings	Fitness information available during the open evening	Human Resources Manager /Senior Training and Development Manager
Positive action days	<p>Under-represented groups invited to attend a positive action day which includes the opportunity to participate in the two most failed tests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ladder lift • Equipment carry <p>Where attendees are not successful contact can be made with the Service Fitness Advisors for guidance however fitness information and advice is given to all as part of an overall positive action pack.</p>	Human Resources Manager /Senior Training and Development Manager
Issue of Fitness Plans – Male and Female	For new starters who are not able to complete the FF module due to fitness levels. They are then programed to re attend the FF module within a given	Training Department

	timescale.	
Debrief	End of course debrief for Firefighter Module provides a clear explanation of fitness requirements for the following BA Module	Training Department
<i>(iii) "As with recruitment and progression, Fire and Rescue Services should explore greater use of flexible working arrangements."</i>		
RDS availability grids	Review of their availability and one to one discussion with RDS applicants during the interview process	Training Department
RDS Self-rostering	Pilot introduced to identified stations to utilise self-rostering system rather than availability matrix to support the flexibility of home/work whilst maintaining a crew for appliance availability.	Operations Department
<i>(iv) "Where Fire and Rescue Services do not already conduct exit interviews they should now do so. The outcomes from such interviews should be recorded and monitored to ensure early identification of any themes which can then be resolved for the future."</i>		
<i>(v) "Fire and Rescue Services should consider how best to maintain the interest and commitment of employees through the variety of the work undertaken within the role."</i>		