



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
Fire and Rescue Service

# Strategic Equality Action Plan 2020 -24

## Annual Performance Report: Progress against Strategic Equality Objectives 2022-23



**ATAL AMDDIFFYN YMATEB  
PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING**

## **PROGRESS AGAINST STRATEGIC EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2022-2023**

### **What the Act requires the Authority to do**

The Equality Act (2010) requires the Authority to write an equality plan every four years. The Authority's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 identifies five priorities. These priorities are broken down into six equality objectives that the Authority wants to help bring about to make Wales a fairer place to live. The aim of the Equality Act is to ensure that everyone has the right to:

- Promote the equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations.
- Eliminate discrimination.

The categories for the objectives are based on the area headings in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's "How Fair is Wales" document. These headings also align with the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network Strategic Equality Plan; this enables joint objectives to be included in individual public sector organisations' strategic equality plans.

Having identified these objectives, the Authority has a duty to take all reasonable steps to pursue them and to report publicly after the end of each financial year on the progress it has made. The Equality Act lists a number of characteristics which must be taken into consideration when determining the actions to be undertaken. These are the 'protected characteristics' which include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex (Gender) and sexual orientation. Socioeconomic status is also protected in Wales.

A number of processes and practices have been used to develop the Authority's strategic equality objectives:

- Equality Impact Assessments.
- Combined improvement and risk reduction planning objectives.
- Business plans from Heads of Departments.
- Existing strategies and plans, and
- Outcome of EDI related campaigns and engagement activities.

Legislation allows for the objectives to be changed at any time, therefore ongoing evaluation is undertaken to ensure objectives remain current. The Authority continuously examines the most effective methods of communication via engagement with all relevant stakeholders. The Authority is required to publish this assessment of its own performance for 2022-23.

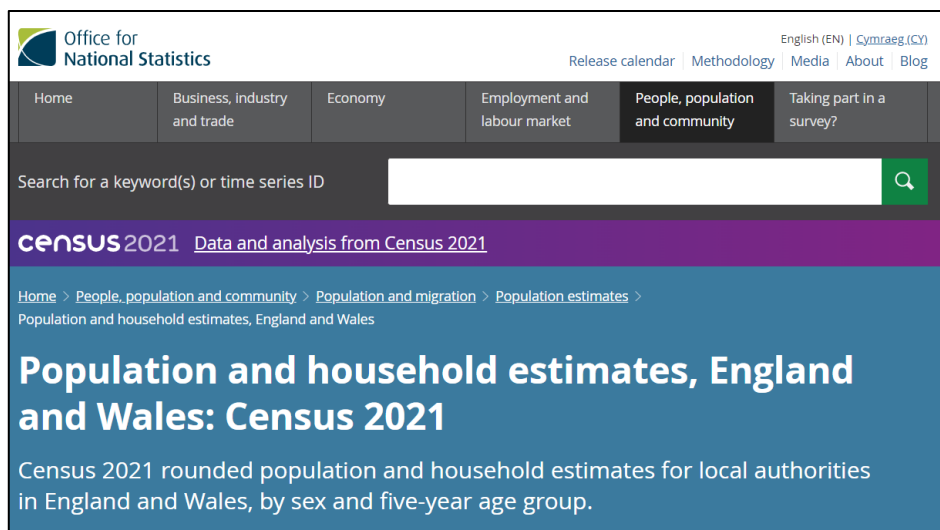
## **Priority 1 – Life and Health**

### **Equality Objective 1**

Reduce dwelling fires and associated casualties through a comprehensive prevention strategy that specifically targets people living in North Wales who can be shown to be at greater risk because they may share one or more particular characteristic.

## Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- NWFRS continues to deliver against its targets. Partnership Managers continue to engage with the most at-risk people in our communities and for the first time ever as an authority we are able to report that we did not attend a fatal for a full financial year, with our last fire death being in April 2022.
- NWFRS continues to increase the number of partnerships with community groups, places of worship and charities in the past year. These partnerships have led to our staff connecting with more people from diverse backgrounds and more people have received key safety information, especially those from 'at risk' groups who we can later engage and support.



- Using data, community profiling and referral methodology, our service has been able to use protected characteristics to identify groups of people that are at an increased risk of fire in the home. This approach has helped us target some equality interest groups and adapt the ways we communicate with them as a means of keeping them safe. For example, we are working closely with the Jewish community to promote key safety messages ahead of the holiday season which sees hundreds of Jews visit and spend time in North Wales. We have engaged with the Muslim community in the North East Wales area to promote fire safety around observances.
- NWFRS ongoing collaboration agreement with Care and Repair continues to deliver direct access to the most 'at risk' people in the community. NWFRS has almost returned to pre-Covid activity levels.

## Priority 2 – Employment

### Equality Objective 2

Through our own employment practices, programmes and schemes, we aim to increase the employment prospects of people who might otherwise find it difficult to gain equal access to the world of work. We will prioritise action to advance gender equality in North Wales.

## Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- Recruitment Information Packs have been created and are bespoke for each vacancy. They include information on the Welsh language requirements, the daily duties of the role, and the person to contact for further information. The aim of these booklets is to provide all the information an applicant would require in one place, as well as highlight a point of contact.



- A North Wales Fire Careers page has been created on Facebook to advertise upcoming and current vacancies across the Service, with all posts created bilingually in compliance with Service Guidelines and Welsh Language Standards. The page went live in early February 2023 and within a month of the page going live it has gained 173 followers. A post highlighting what a typical day in Control room looked like was posted in order to gain interest in the Firefighter Control vacancies and reached 17,989 people with 1,521 people engaging with it. Once the vacancies went live, the post advertising the vacancy reached 24,452 people, and 2,093 people engaged with the post, resulting in 20 applications for the vacancy (compared to 8 received during the previous campaign). The aim of the page is to raise the profile of Green Book roles and encourage more application whilst also supporting recruitment of grey book roles as and when required.
- HR staff have utilised their own social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to promote any upcoming Green Book vacancies to gather interest ahead of the vacancies going live. This approach has helped promote career opportunities through other HR and recruitment contacts.
- Attendance at recruitment events has resumed as many in person recruitment events and job fairs have restarted across the region. Applications have been at a reduced level since the Coronavirus pandemic and attending these events has allowed the Service to engage with job seekers in our local communities and promote the great opportunities on offer. It also gives the HR team the opportunity to discuss with potential applicants any barriers they may be experiencing so these can be reviewed and addressed where possible. For example, the HR team have attended Welsh speaking jobs fair in Bangor to promote vacancies within Fire Safety and Control room, where Welsh language is an essential requirement of the role. Following the service re-structure, the service has appointed dedicated Recruitment and Availability Managers in each of the three areas.



- HR have also worked with the Corporate Communications department to produce short social media videos to promote roles and vacancies within the Service, particularly aimed at improving engagement with Welsh speakers and explaining why Welsh language is needed for some roles and removing barriers to applicants where Welsh is not essential as a day one skill.



- NWFRS have supported the Chair of our Firepride to attend regional LGBTQ+ networking events. This engagement has connected us with local people and this is useful for when the Service want to promote key safety messages and recruitment. Our Firepride network have been actively supporting recruitment events at local leisure centres and pride events.

## Priority 3 – Education

### Equality Objective 3

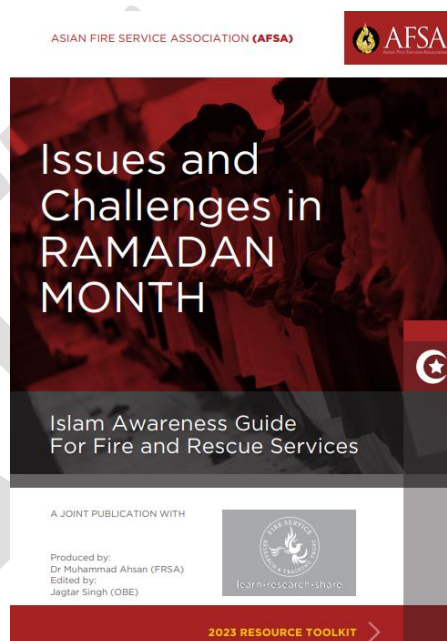
We will progress an inclusive culture where leaders and staff demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality and support for a fair and inclusive workforce.

#### Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- Recruited two Corporate Policy Development Managers who have been working through a policy review which involves re-formatting existing HR policies and procedures. HR specialists are continuing to review the content of our policies, including those relating to discipline, attendance management, grievance, recruitment as well as others. The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is also reviewed once the policy review is in its final stage.
- Two documents have been produced to support line managers with the steps required when conduct matters arise in the workplace:
  - **Conduct Flowchart:** The flow chart is guidance for managers and details the steps that should be undertaken when dealing with conduct matters (from the initial notification of a conduct issue to the completion of an investigation report).
  - **Initial Fact-Finding Form:** The initial 'fact-finding' form was devised as a preliminary step in determining whether a disciplinary investigation is warranted and is used to obtain objective information to aid in determining whether the event merits a more detailed investigation and whether suspension is necessary.
- An anti-sexual harassment policy has been drafted in order to set out the behaviours and expectations of employees and volunteers. The policy also provides guidance to managers on how to deal with complaints of sexual harassment.
- A confidential 'speak up' service is being procured to provide an anonymous means, through an external provider, for employees to report any serious concerns they have regarding inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour or misconduct.
- A guide for employees has been formulated to help translate the Core Values and expectations of the Service into the way that employees should act. The document details the Service's aspirations in terms of the Core Values and signposts employees to policies that can provide further information when issues arise.
- NWFRS take the safety of our staff and communities very seriously, which is why we require all staff to undertake a DBS or Vetting check prior to employment, and request that staff disclose any criminal convictions during the recruitment process and throughout their career with the Service. This initial work means that from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023, the Service will be reviewing staff DBS and Vetting status every three years. The Service will be implementing an amnesty

in April 2023 and during this time, any staff member who has not previously disclosed involvement with the Police will have the opportunity to do so without being subject to disciplinary action for breach of contract due to non-disclosure. Any disclosed convictions will be considered on a case by case basis in line with our core values and disciplinary handbook.

- NWFRS have established three new staff networks to focus on religion, ethnicity and cultural heritage; neurodiversity; and parents and carers. These new networks complement the existing 'Women in the Fire Service' and 'Firepride' networks which enable staff to meet regularly to raise concerns and share ideas to how the service can improve. Some of the staff networks have a senior sponsor and this has reinforced the relationship between senior leaders and staff members.



- NWFRS produced new guidance in March 2023 relating to supporting Muslim colleagues during Ramadan. Similar EDI guidance documents will be developed throughout 2023-24 to create a suite of resources that help raise awareness and enable our people to create a more supportive and inclusive workplace culture. The promotion of guidance documents from external sources also aids cultural awareness and staff development.



- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer delivered a half day session at the supervisory and middle managers combined EDI and leadership Conference in March 2023. This session focused on inclusive practices, workplace culture and leadership theory.
- NWFRS have continued to provide specific EDI training for staff relating to LGBTQ+ inclusion, unconscious bias, neurodiversity and gender equality. This training has helped raise awareness and introduced new concepts to staff. For example, during March 2023, the Service promoted 'Neurodiversity Celebration Week 2023' and this campaign featured multiple informal learning materials include video links, guidance documents and case studies.
- Initial dyslexia screening was introduced to staff in September 2022. Screening has enabled staff to develop self-awareness and the service have considered and implemented some basic reasonable adjustments. A more detailed screening tool has been explored in recent months to ensure the service considers the different ways that staff learn, process and receive information. In line with the Equality Act 2010, this process proactively helps NWFRS identify reasonable adjustments which enable staff to perform to the best of their ability.
- Further work has been completed to ensure the service reduces the gender pay gap. With this gap closing as a result of more women being recruited into the service, including into operational roles, with many of them being successful in recent promotional processes. Gender gap data for 2022-23 has been submitted to the government and the relevant narrative has been included in an annual report which has been published on our website as per the legislative reporting requirements.





- The EDI Officer has attended various forums including the 'AGE in the Workplace' Network during 2022-23 which has been organised by the Business in the Community and Age Cymru. This network has enabled our service to share and identify best practice, policy and processes in terms of creating an inclusive workplace for older people.
- In the past year, NWFRS have become members of the Asian Fire Service Association. Our staff attend their executive committee meetings which enables us to identify best practice. Our staff also benefit hugely from attending the annual AFSA conferences which enable networking and learning around race equality and other interconnecting equality related themes.
- NWFRS have also continued our membership with the Women in the Fire Service and staff attended their annual development weekend in June 2022.
- NWFRS have been actively attending the all-Wales EDI Meetings alongside our counterparts from Mid and West Wales and South Wales Fire and Rescue Services. The first meeting was held in Newtown on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023. This forum enables each Service to provide updates on key priorities, share resources and collaborate together. Meetings will take place on a quarterly basis.



- The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Stewart Forshaw and the quality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Benji Evans attended the NFCC Culture Conference in March 2023. Various speakers highlighted concerns relating to workplace culture in the fire and rescue sector. The London Fire Brigade Culture Review and subsequent culture reports from NFCC and HMICFRS have outlined key actions and recommendations for the FRS sector to consider. As a service, we have used the recommendations to inform our future planning.
- The Employment Monitoring Report will be published in the Autumn of 2023. This includes all employment data identified by the Welsh Specific Equality Duty 2011 ensuring this is reported by contract type, permanent and fixed-term contracts, full-time, part-time and other flexible working arrangements. This information enables the authority to monitor the diversity of its workforce and plan positive action activity accordingly.

#### **Equality Objective 4**

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.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:**

- The number of schools engaged in the 2022-23 financial year are 74 primary schools and 45 secondary schools. This has resulted in 7,324 primary school children and 8,590 secondary school children receiving key safety information.
- In addition to this the NWFRS educationalists have delivered to 20 young farmers, 20 pony club members, 340 young people in seven station visits, 25 students from the Girls' Brigade and 30 home schooled children in one visit.



- The Educationalists have provided two fire setters intervention and 10 sessions of Olivia's Story to 750 students. This means that the Educationalists have provided key safety information to 18,001 children and young people in 139 engagements.
- Additional impacts of this engagement mean that young people are developing their own resilience to ensure they are safer in their home, on the road and in their communities.



- NWFRS in collaboration with road safety partners and the other Welsh Fire and Rescue Services deliver a road safety intervention called Olivia's Story is aimed at reducing those killed and seriously injured on the road, and in particular, young drivers. North Wales Police deliver Oliver's Story to all secondary schools and NWFRS deliver to further education establishments such as colleges, and to apprentices in workplaces, such as Airbus. In the past year, over 5,107 young people and young drivers have received this intervention.
- In the previous year, our service has adopted some resources developed by Dangerpoint Education Activity Centre and the CSSEF charity. These resources have widened access for school age children who are deaf and hard of hearing to access key safety information. The

service will also continue to develop a range of resources that we access via the StayWise Cymru education platform.

- A comprehensive mapping exercise has been conducted to identify equality interest groups across North Wales. This intelligence has enabled our service to target certain groups by adopting appropriate communication and engagement methodology. This piece of work has led to us working in partnership with local community groups and charities which has led to our Service being able to promote our key safety messages. For example, our work with North Wales Women's Centre has enabled us to connect with many women who are often the primary care giver. People who live alone are at an increased risk of fire in the home, so working with women's groups helps us connect with a group of people that happen to make up 90% of single parents in the area.

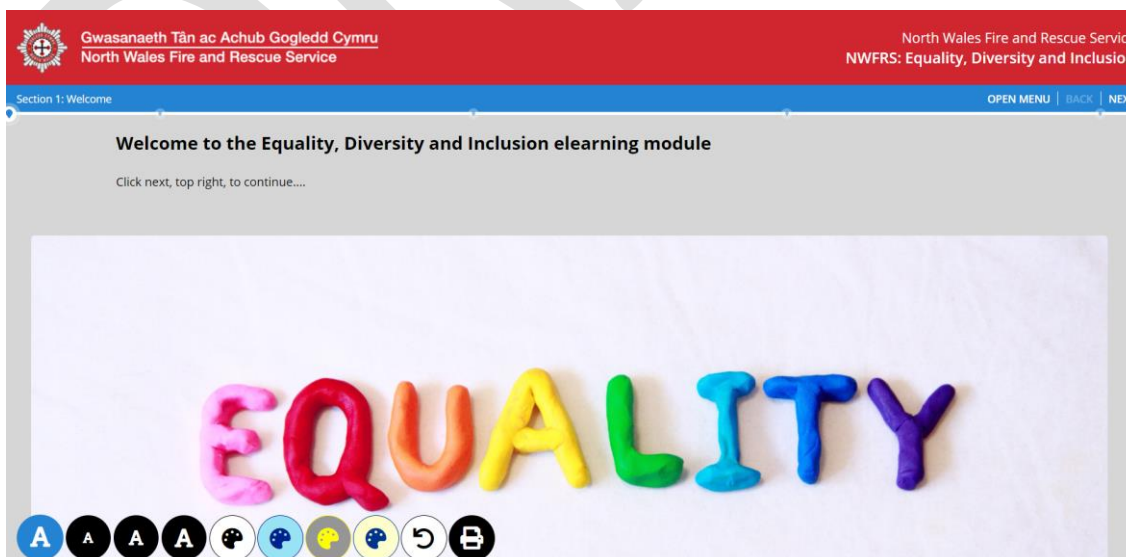
## Priority 4 – Personal Safety

### Equality Objective 5

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.

#### Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- Continued to deliver training in Welsh language to staff, with a view to continue with a training plan for new starters and refresher training for existing members of staff. Welsh speakers in the workforce enable our staff to communicate key safety messages, attend community events, receive emergency calls and to effectively respond to emergencies.



The screenshot shows the top of an elearning module. The header is red and contains the logo of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) on the left, with the text 'Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub Gogledd Cymru' and 'North Wales Fire and Rescue Service' below it. On the right, it says 'North Wales Fire and Rescue Service' and 'NWFRS: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion'. Below the header is a blue navigation bar with 'Section 1: Welcome' on the left and 'OPEN MENU | BACK | NEXT' on the right. The main content area is white and features the text 'Welcome to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion elearning module' followed by 'Click next, top right, to continue...'. Below this is a large image of the word 'EQUALITY' spelled out in colorful, 3D block letters. At the bottom of the image are several circular icons for accessibility and navigation.

All staff access and complete Mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) e-learning to introduce (and refresh) basic knowledge. In addition, all staff complete bespoke EDI training has been developed for each department to provide best practice when engaging with external stakeholders. This training was delivered to Home Safety Support Workers in the East area in February 2023 along with staff from our arson reduction team. This training covers all types of discrimination, harassment and abuse with specific case studies relating to safety in the home which consider intersectionality. Further delivery of this training will commence throughout 2023-24.

- To further develop our understanding around the specific needs of the victims of domestic violence from underrepresented groups, NWFRS is working to revalidate our White Ribbon accreditation. Initial work has been undertaken in recent months to reconnect with relevant partners on the back of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Partnership working with local support groups and charities will enable our service to better support victims of domestic abuse that we come into contact with.



- Partnership managers are given the autonomy to be innovative with their solutions to prevention activity. One pilot project involved installing new fire detection devices in the kitchens of 17 'at risk' people, which happened to be older residents living within different high-rise buildings in Flintshire. Data captured from the devices found that 18 potential kitchen fires were avoided because the devices turned off the cooker when the sensors indicated a person had left cooking unintended for a period of time, the cooker was too hot or when food/oil was burning. This creative prevention activity is saving the lives of our most 'at risk' people. Plans to broaden the pilot to more residents is planned for 2023-24.
- NWFRS is essentially back to pre-pandemic engagement levels and methods e.g. face to face. This has resulted in a positive level of engagement with local businesses.

## Priority 5 – Participation and Communication

### Equality Objective 6

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.

#### Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- NWFRS staff have been actively participating in the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network and All Wales EDI Group which meet bi-monthly and quarterly respectively. These forums help to share best practice and resources and collaborate on organising training, events and other engagement related activities. Attraction and recruitment into the public sector have been a key focus during 2022-23.



- NWFRS Partnership Managers have been very active maintaining existing partnerships and building new relationships to ensure the Service promotes key safety messages to the most at-risk people in North Wales. For example, many new projects have been established during 2022-23 including 'walk and talk' sessions that were developed in conjunction with the national trust to engage with older people with dementia. Similar sessions have been developed with Parkinsons Group and Lymphedema Support Group. This specific engagement helps target people in the 'at risk' category and their wider family members which provides feedback that we use to evaluate and shape our service delivery.

- Specific engagement with colleagues at the North East Wales Interfaith Forum has enabled our service to connect more effectively with religious and humanistic groups. These networks have been useful to communicate key safety messages to older people who are a target audience concerning fire in the home, whilst reaching out to people who celebrate and observe religion benefit from fire safety information relating to cooking, lighting bonfires, lanterns, candles and oil burners.



- The introduction of some additional religious celebrations and observances in our campaigns calendar have been communicated via the website and social media platforms. Collaborations with external partners has enhanced our social media reach across North Wales and beyond through sharing, reposting and liking of posts.



- Staff from the service's Firepride network are active members of North Wales Pride and they attended their annual pride event in Bangor (June 2022) and multiple virtual and physical meetings throughout 2022-23. This engagement has enabled the service to connect with LGBTQ+ communities, communicate key safety information and seek feedback on various matters and work streams.
- NWFRS have attended the Arfon Access Group which reformed in February 2023. This group helps our service connect with a broader network of people with a disability in Gwynedd and Anglesey to communicate information and seek feedback.
- Community safety staff have also been engaging more with food banks and a cost of living campaign was launched across Wales in the winter month with regular messaging on social media – to target vulnerable groups impacted by the current cost of living crisis and from those who are seldom heard in our communities.
- Accessibility improvements have been made to our website to ensure we maintain the standards required and community members find information accessible. Our staff are receiving website accessibility training to ensure that we maintain standards going forward.





- Increased engagement with ethnic minority groups across North Wales have enhanced our reach to some seldom heard people. Actively attending community-based events which are organised by ethnic minority groups and other equality interest groups goes some way to engage and build up a rapport with people that often don't often have a voice. NWFRS sponsored the inaugural Black History Month events held in Wrexham and Bangor in October 2022. Staff also attended Christmas events and multicultural events in February 2022. These events enable staff to engage with African, Caribbean, Portuguese and various other ethnic minority groups that attended.
- During 2022-23, the services Equality, Impact Assessment (EqIA) template was updated to include socio-economic duty, welsh language, geography, a section to highlight any potential impact against on-call staff and 'other' equality interest groups. This new template uses a score matrix which assesses the 'likeliness' and potential 'impact' so there is a clear measure of the risk which enables mitigation to take place. Staff across different departments have completed EqIA training. This training will continue to be delivered to staff throughout 2023-24.

In accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, our annual Gender Pay Gap report and employment information in respect of employees and applicants between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023 have been published on our website.

**To promote equality of opportunity and accessibility, please contact our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer, if you require this report in large print, different language or alternative format.**