

**South Wales**  
Fire and Rescue Service



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
**De Cymru**

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

# **Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009 Review** and Interim Disability Equality Action Plan 2009-2010

This document is available in alternative formats and languages including Braille, audio, British Sign Language and Easy Read.

If you would like any information in an alternative format please let us know.

We welcome feedback on our Interim Disability Equality Action Plan. You can do this, or request alternative formats, by using the details below:

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# I. Introduction

This review of our Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009 and production of an Interim Disability Equality Action Plan has come at a time of change in equality law. The Action Plan sets out how we will include disability equality in our Single Equality Scheme which we hope to publish by the end of 2010 in anticipation of guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission relating to the new all encompassing public duty, early 2011.

The review has provided us with an opportunity to look at our achievements in relation to disability equality in South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) as well as identify barriers to progress. It sets out what we plan to do over the following year to develop a Single Equality Scheme that clearly sets out our disability equality objectives as part of it.

In order to make this document concise, a background to the disability equality legislation can be found in our Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009 Information relating to our current business, core values, organisational structure and Service objectives can be found in our Improvement Plan and Risk Reduction Plan. These documents are available on our website [www.southwales-fire.gov.uk](http://www.southwales-fire.gov.uk)

The Chief Fire Officer is the lead for equality diversity and directly manages the Diversity Unit. All staff have a responsibility to demonstrate equality and diversity through their behavior and in the work that they do for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

## 2. Equality Policy Statement

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWF&RS) aims to mainstream equality and diversity in everything that it does. It celebrates the diversity of its staff and delivers citizen centered services to the people of South Wales. The Service will promote equality of opportunity, prevent unlawful discrimination, promote good relations between people and will endeavor to take an integral role in facilitating social justice and regeneration in Wales.

## 3. Progress

This section of the report sets out our progress against our Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009 actions. We have established a performance management system that enables us to report on progress against our disability objectives easily and quickly. The system sends an email to an action owner with a link to fill in required fields of a short electronic form. This then immediately updates the status of the scheme enabling us to identify progress and areas that merit attention. It is anticipated as this system gets more sophisticated it will provide the means to report annually or indeed at any point in time.

Our progress is set out below under directorate headings.

### People Services

1. A service level agreement was established with the Coalition of Disabled People to advise on employment matters.
2. The Recruitment Policy and a policy on disability equality in employment, was introduced which includes reasonable adjustments.
3. The recruitment team have developed a number of positive action initiatives and specific, targeted recruitment activities are being undertaken to attract disabled people and people with impairments, such as the establishment of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme as well as work with Shaw Trust to promote employment opportunities to disabled people.
4. A standard paragraph has been incorporated in to the grievance policy stating the need under the DDA to ensure that individuals with conditions that fall under the DDA are given the appropriate support in raising a grievance.
5. The Medical Advisory Panel was renamed the Medical and Fitness Advisory Panel as recommended by disabled people during our involvement process.
6. A Mentoring Scheme has been developed to cover all aspects of mentoring both pre and post employment to include those who join the service from all the under represented groups. Additionally the scheme is designed to offer mentoring to those in the service too.
7. Formal discussions have been held between the Director of People Services and the Service's Medical Advisor to ensure that issues surrounding HIV and AIDS were examined for implications to the Service and established action plans to address them.
8. Employee absence is monitored by disability and reviewed by the HR Manager.
9. HR Manager for recruitment met with Disability Advisors at Job Centres informing them of career opportunities for disabled people at SWFRS.
10. Specialist fitness equipment has been installed in the new HQ gym for wheel chair users as well and signage and instructions in large print highlighted in bright colours for people with sight impairments.

## Service Delivery and Performance Planning

1. Legislative Fire Safety has raised awareness of Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to disabled people via articles for newsletters, attending meetings and events.
2. SMS text has been introduced as a means for deaf people to contact the emergency services and has been promoted by the FRS and BT. Minicom is now obsolete, so Fire Control are working with Gwent Police to implement a texting emergency service for deaf people.
3. Disability Equality Scheme Actions are mainstreamed into business plans and a performance management system established to report on current progress. It also highlights areas that merit attention and creates quarterly reports for the Senior Management Team.
4. The development of the Home Fire Safety Plus scheme comprises of a specialist team to target older and disabled people for home fire safety checks and advise on specialist alarms for Deaf people or people with hearing impairments.
5. Young disabled people are targeted for youth activities for example Fire Con Plus educating young people about the safe driving.
6. Identification of vulnerable people, this includes disabled people, sought through partnership agencies such as Social Services, to identify risk addresses.
7. Home Fire Safety Check Forms include monitoring disability this informs departmental targets for generating referrals.
8. Partnerships in place to ensure that properties with disabled residents are identified on Vision. This encompasses those on home dialysis or on oxygen. We have also introduced a programme of re-visits to premises previously identified as being high risk during a HFSC.
9. Ongoing work in the community via our fire stations.

## Communications and Culture

1. In 2009 the service was nominated and won a Diversity Award for our work with disabled. An event was held at Cardiff castle to celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations and their commitment to progressing disability equality. The event was attended by Cllr Sylvia Jones and the Chief Fire Officer, who received the award on behalf of the service.
2. New website launched September 2008 with accessibility rating of AA2. All ICT equipment provided to individuals (with special access requirements) meets with current regulations and guidance from Equality and Diversity Team.
3. A Diversity Forum has been established involving internal and external stakeholders including Disability Wales.
4. An internal Equality Task Group has been established consisting of middle managers who will go through a process over the next 12 months to assess their functions for impact on equality, including disability equality. This will include an assessment made by a group of 'critical friends', 4 involvement days, an analysis of the survey findings from the Mardi Gras 2009, an internal work environment survey as well as data and statistics. This evidence will inform a Single Equality Scheme action plan.

5. As mentioned above the Critical Friends Group will consist of members of the public that represent, as far as reasonably practicable equality groups. The group will assist the service assess its impact on equalities, including disability equality.
6. Communicate with Confidence – ‘A handbook for working in the community we serve’ has been developed for front line staff in partnership Race Equality First, the Coalition of Disabled People, Age Concern as well as information obtained from Stonewall Cymrus’ website.
7. People Ambassadors is currently being piloted to up skill and empower a number of staff from across the service to champion equality.
8. The Fire Authority (FA) receives regular progress reports on disability equality. Equality Sub-committee of FA disbanded with a new HR and Equalities Committee established.

## Corporate Support

1. The move from HQ at Lanelay Hall to Forest Business Park underwent a full equality impact assessment. All communications systems, IT based or otherwise were equality impact assessed during the planning stage of the HQ relocation and implemented as a result and an access audit was carried out to inform the internal building requirements and plan.
2. All buildings and stations received equality audits and a report was presented to the Director of Finance and asset management 17.10.08 this informed the Budget that was established for making reasonable adjustments under the DDA for existing buildings, including fire stations, which was included in the 5 year capital programme agreed by the Fire Authority on 26 March 2008. This will form part of budget process to CFA.

## Operational Risk Management

1. In collaboration with North Wales FRS and Mid and West Wales FRS, South Wales is exploring the possibility of commissioning a handbook for fire fighters that will enable them not only to communicate with people whose first language is not English but will assist deaf people whose first language is not English involved in a fire or road traffic collision. Negotiations currently underway to extend the handbook to cover all the languages spoken in Wales.
2. The needs of disabled people are considered in developing tactical plans which are formulated to deal with incidents that are deemed to be high risk such as the Royal Mint or Millennium Stadium. A review of the Operational Tactical Plans (OTP) policy is currently being undertaken. Consideration of disabled persons will be an explicit requirement when constructing future OTPs.
3. Staff, the Diversity Unit and equality groups are consulted in order to inform intelligence for policy and standard operating procedures as well as for research and development purposes.

## 4. Things we did not achieve, barriers to progress and what we intend to do about it

We were unsuccessful in recruiting a Participation Officer and due to budget constraints the post was withdrawn. It is anticipated part of this role will be carried out by the Communications Manager, when they are appointed. In the meantime a coordinating group has met to oversee an interim piece of work to map out who we currently consult with and what we plan to consult about.

The Dyslexia Strategy did not eventuate as a specific strategy rather efforts were directed toward assessing the impact of dyslexia on our policy and employment practices.

Progress relating to the roll out of equality and diversity training for supervisory managers and front line staff is slow; this is partly due to the introduction of a new Welsh procurement process, Value Wales.

The Community Grants Scheme in partnership with WCVA was abandoned.

# 5. Equality Impact Assessments

## How do we carry out EIAs?

Our EIA process has been in place for five years and the majority of our policies, standard operating procedures and other such policy and procedural documents have been revised twice and have thus been through the EIA process. Our OPPD 64 Procedure for Developing Policies and Procedures includes the EIA process, which is mandatory and is checked by the Policy Officer. The Diversity Officer carries out dip sample audits of EIAs, providing feedback to managers and referrals for training. EIAs and audit reports are available on request.

All senior managers EIA their decisions at Senior Management Team meetings. For example advice was sought from a local disability group about the impact of diabetes for our firefighters to ensure that the service could maintain the safety of our staff and the public.

All Assessment and Development Centre processes and procedures including role plays are subject to an EIA by the HR Manager and Diversity Officer.

A system is in place to EIA all job descriptions to ensure our job opportunities are accessible to the widest possible audience.

All community safety promotional literature and public information receive an EIA in order to assess that all communication needs relevant to the audience have been considered.

## 6. Staff and recruitment

New software will be procured in 2010/2011 in order to collate and monitor employee data which will include equality data. Data will be captured and analysed for patterns and trends for applicants, promotions, grievances and disciplinary, dismissals, training and personal development reviews.

A number of adjustments were implemented to ensure that the new HQ was accessible and that all communications were assessed to ensure that all our staff feel included and able to communicate.

A confidential database is maintained by the HR Manager for Employee Relations relating to disabled staff. It is anticipated that this question will be asked at point of entry to the service and the individual is then responsible for updating their own profile. This will be linked to a staff number and used to report against applicants and unsuccessful applicants for employment, staff accessing training and development, promotions as well as those who submit or are subject to the grievance or disciplinary procedures.

Due to the current economic climate it is expected that our turnover of staff will be low over the coming months.

## 7. Monitoring

The systems for monitoring staff profile and their access to opportunities as well as identifying patterns or trends is currently via a PS database system which is updated via a staff survey. The Head of HR reviews this information and uses it to inform improvements.

Monitoring service delivery, specifically fires, is recorded by the Incident Recording System, which superseded the Fire Damage Report Form (FDR1). A review of the system by the Diversity Unit noted that disability appears under two sections, the first is whether a 'person's disability is a contributing factor' to a fire and the second is the profile of people who are injured or die. It has been noted to investigate the merits for recording disability as being a contributing factor to a fire and also the terminology in the 'help' section requires a review; appropriate alternatives were put forward. This information is collated by the Fire Policy Unit of Communities and Local Government for audit purposes; it is not clear if and how this information is used to inform risk reduction initiatives or targets.

The FRS is required to work in partnership with agencies such as the Police and Ambulance services to reduce road traffic collisions. The Police have primary responsibility for this. Casualties and incidents are recorded on a Stats 19 form which includes an option for disclosing disability. Work is underway to share this information between agencies in order to inform educational preventative initiatives.

The Quality of Service Survey: After the Incident Survey is carried out on behalf of the service by Opinion Research Services, part of Swansea University. It is a postal survey of selected residential and business addresses which had experienced an incident attended by SWFRS. The survey collates data relating to initial contact, at the scene, information and advice in relation to fire safety advice and home fire safety checks for domestic incidents only. The survey collates information about the persons involved in domestic incidents and this now captures data in relation to disability, age, gender and ethnic origin.

The research for 2009 – 2009 found that of those who spoke to the Fire and Rescue Service themselves, almost all domestic respondents (100%) and all non-domestic respondents were satisfied with the service they received during initial contact.

In relation to service at the scene, respondents were extremely positive about the firefighters who attended. All non-domestic respondents agreed that they were polite, whilst almost all domestic respondents report this. Almost all respondents agreed that the firefighters were helpful, efficient and informative. The majority of respondents agreed they were sensitive. Ninety eight percent of domestic respondents and 99% of non-domestic respondents were satisfied with the service they received at the scene.

In relation to information and advice 38% of domestic respondents had been offered a Home Fire Safety Check and of these 82% accepted it. The conclusion was that when taking everything into account, almost all domestic (98%) and non-domestic (97%) respondents were satisfied with the service they received at the scene.

All questions for incidents at domestic dwellings are analysed by gender, disability, age and ethnic origin. The data is currently used internally but the scope for publishing this specific information will be investigated.

Reports are submitted to the Senior Management Team quarterly and published annually on our website [www.southwales-fire.gov.uk](http://www.southwales-fire.gov.uk)

## 8. Equality and Diversity Training

The programme of equality training commenced in 2005 with senior management. Senior and middle managers training has been completed, supervisory manager training is out to tender with front line staff still waiting to receive training.

EIA training continues but will be refocused to address new issues and trends in 2010.

The Diversity Unit has facilitated workshops for approximately 100 staff about engaging with communities as part of training for Road Traffic Collision reduction training.

## 9. Involvement Activity

### Internal

Staff workshops and consultations were carried out during the planning stage of the HQ move.

### External

During the normal course of business disabled people told us that their biggest concern and need was for information relating to fire safety, specifically their rights at work and in public places. In response to this the fire safety team put articles in newsletters, met with local disability groups, the senior managers participated in involvement days and meetings with disability groups and the team have been instrumental in assisting the Diversity Unit coordinate two Older and Disabled People Involvement Days planned 11th and 23rd March 2010 in Merthyr and Cardiff.

## 10. Conclusion

We are pleased with our progress toward disability equality but are mindful that there is still work to be done. The next section sets out our interim actions for 2010 to ensure disability remains distinct yet integrated into a Single Equality Scheme that should be published in the autumn of 2010.

Action	Directorate	Person Responsible	Deadline	Status
Establish Equality Task Group to Develop Single Equality Scheme	Communications & Culture	Diversity Officer	November 2009	Complete
Publish Single Equality Scheme	All	Equality Task Group Diversity Officer	September 2010	
Establish Critical Friends to conduct EIA of FRS functions	All	Equality Task Group	March 2010	
Coordinate Older and Disabled People Involvement days 11th and 23rd March in Merthyr and Cardiff	Communications & Culture	Diversity Officer GM Fire Safety GM Community Safety	March 2010	4 planning meetings have occurred. Partnership established with Age Concern and Coalition of Disabled People. Venues booked 11th & 23rd March 2010
Work Environment Survey	All	Equality Task Group		
Equality and Diversity Training for Supervisory Managers	People Services	Director of People Services	Training Complete 2010	Tender drafted
Distribute and promote Communicate with Confidence	Communications & Culture, Operations	Diversity Officer	January 2010	Document being proof read
Review EIA electronic system and establish reporting mechanism. Retender for EIA training and introduce to FRS personnel ASAP.	Communications & Culture, People Services	Diversity Officer IT Officer Training Manager	June 2010	EIA audit complete
E&D Internet and Intranet site development as information source				
Investigate scope for publishing equalities data collated in the After the Incident survey	Corporate Support	Director of Corporate Support	June 2010	