FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES IN WALES

PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2018-2021
Introduction

There are three Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in Wales:

• North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
• Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
• South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

This strategy has been developed for implementation from 2018 to 2021 and underpins the Welsh FRSs commitment to lifelong learning and workplace competence.

The strategy will ensure there is consistency in the approach to people development and support across the three Fire and Rescue Services and provides a framework for innovative thinking and working to support continued collaboration and partnership.

The FRSs support the achievement of applicable national strategies whilst balancing this with a focus on providing a service that puts Wales's safety first within the context of a devolved Government. To that end the following strategies and frameworks have informed the development of our strategy and where appropriate direct reference is made to them:

• National Issues Committee
• Strategic Equality Plans and Annual Improvement Reports
• Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategies
• Fire Service National Framework Document (2016)
• Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
• Making the Difference Needed - CFOA Strategic Direction 2015-2019
• Fire and Rescue People Strategy (2017-2022)
• Welsh Language (Wales) Measures 2011
• Workforce Partnership Council for Wales

Innovative thinking and new ways of working will ensure that we provide a service that safeguards individuals and the communities of Wales and reflects the priority areas of the Welsh Government’s Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales. Given continuing budget pressures and increasing public expectations this strategy supports the search for new ways of working to utilise the skills and professionalism of the FRS workforce for the benefit of the public in Wales.

Whilst the strategy is written providing 7 key elements, it is clear that the elements are interdependent and should not be read or applied in isolation:

1. Resourcing the Fire and Rescue Service
2. Health and Wellbeing
3. Fitness
4. Inclusive Workplaces (Equality and Diversity)
5. Reward and Recognition
6. Management Information Systems
7. Training and Development
Consultation and Communication

There will be ongoing consultation with the Representative Bodies regarding the implementation of specific elements of the strategy.

The strategy is available to all employees and will be published on services' intranets and websites.

Responsibility
All employees have responsibility for implementing the principles contained in this strategy, together with the Fire and Rescue Authority Members.

Monitoring and Review
The strategy will be periodically reviewed by the People and Organisational Development Group.

Aim
To enable the Welsh FRSSs to meet evolving current and future expectations in achieving organisational aims and objectives by recruiting, developing and retaining a highly skilled, motivated and bilingual workforce that represents and champions the diversity of the communities we serve. The strategy also aims to identify and maximise potential through effective people management and development, leading to a high-performance culture whilst making the most effective use of public funds.

Purpose
The purpose of the strategy is to support the organisation in the achievement of its objectives by ensuring that Welsh FRSSs strive to create a workforce that has the training, support and tools to do their job and is:

- Service and community focussed
- Committed to our Core Values
- Representative of the communities they serve
- Motivated and skilled.

We will continue to work with partners to reduce the risk of fires, road traffic incidents and other emergencies and to enhance community wellbeing. We recognise the way the FRS is now working beyond its traditional role in an increasingly diverse arena.
1. Resourcing the Fire and Rescue Service

One of the seven well-being goals from The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is a prosperous Wales. An innovative and productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately; and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.

The recruitment, development and retention of a workforce which has the commitment and skills to deliver the Authority’s services; improved communication and effective redeployment and retraining opportunities being made available by:

- Ensuring recruitment and progression processes are fair, transparent, aim to reflect the diversity of the community and meet future needs of the organisations and utilise national approaches where applicable.

- Supporting the Welsh Apprenticeship Programme and the Welsh Government objective to engage 10,000 young people in apprenticeships by 2022.

- Constantly reviewing recruitment, selection and promotion policies and practices with a particular emphasis on clarity, fairness, transparency and equality of opportunity.

- Implementing effective redeployment arrangements to ensure that all employees facing redundancy or loss of employment (other than for disciplinary reasons) are offered suitable alternative employment, wherever possible, underpinned by suitable retraining opportunities.

- Developing strategies that take account of the increasing normal retirement age.

- Developing workforce and succession plans for current employees.

- Assessing the future diversification of the roles of employees.

- Assessing the future viability of the retained/On-call duty system and to consider the use of other flexible working models to provide operational response.

- Improve efficiency with smarter working practices, investigating alternative models for frontline service delivery, addressing cultural barriers and continued streamlining of administration processes and conversion to E-Systems where possible.

- A workforce that is appropriately developed and trained to be safe and to meet the demands of their roles, and a performance management framework which also supports managers in meeting the demands of their role.
2. Health and Wellbeing

A healthier Wales - a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

In adopting a more holistic approach to improving employee well-being within the FRS's, we will continue to invest in reducing absence and concentrating on health promotion within the Service.

Absence reduction initiatives have been successful but promoting health and wellbeing is likely to have increased benefits in terms of productivity, motivation and being an attractive employer. Its purpose is to enhance the physical and psychological environment to improve employee wellbeing and, in turn, employee performance. If this is achieved, we can expect a reduction in days lost to sickness and an increase in individual and collective performance.

Providing our employees with a healthy and safe workplace is essential for them to feel safe and secure. The Services’ approach to Health and Safety will continue to be proactive making full use of leading indicators rather than reliance on lagging indicators to identify and inform where further improvement may be potentially made. Such an environment has the potential to improve service delivery through reduced accidents, lower sickness absence levels and the possibility of fewer ill health retirements.

Adopting the National Framework for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. Our employment practices universally support employees who disclose abuse by acting to keep employees safe at work and supporting them to stay safe outside work and addressing behaviours of employees perpetrating these issues.

Providing a pro-active Occupational Health service committed to identifying and addressing industrial injuries, stress and other causes of sickness absence, as well as promoting healthy living. The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2016 identifies that the population of Wales is living longer and the working age is increasing and therefore further underlines the importance of healthy living.

Adopting a framework for managers to manage sickness absence which strikes a balance between organisational need and supporting employees.

Foster a culture of participation and involvement based on open communication and inclusion. Work has an important role in promoting psychological wellbeing, because it promotes self-esteem and social interaction. This is likely to help employees feel that they have control over their work and foster mental well-being. The FRSs will raise awareness of mental wellbeing among the workforce to reduce the risk of potential negative effects on employees and the organisation as well as importantly reducing potential for stigma related to those employees with mental ill health.

Provide an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). This is intended to help employees deal proactively with personal problems/and or work-related problems that might adversely impact their work performance, health and well-being.
3. Fitness

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language - a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

Firefighting and rescue operations expose firefighters to stressful, arduous and demanding working conditions, which require a high level of physical and mental fitness.

Managing fitness on both an individual and organisational level is key to ensuring a safe and healthy operational workforce. It is recognised that the contractual commitment for all operational staff is to be responsible for their own performance (including personal health and fitness). The Services understand the benefits of a healthy workforce and will support operational staff in maintaining their fitness to undertake their role.

The Services will undertake regular routine health and fitness assessments to ensure compliance with National standards. (The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2016 states that FRSs should continue to operate an agreed single fitness standard).

Furthermore, the Services will adopt Firefit recommendations that are presented as a national standard for aerobic fitness for safe and effective firefighting including aerobic fitness and muscular strength.

Whilst for operational personnel there are contractual and legal obligations for individuals and organisations respectively, all employees will be encouraged to be physically active as it is essential that they maintain sufficient levels of physical fitness to enable them to carry out their role safely and effectively. However, it is also important to understand the health behaviours of our employees and identify associated lifestyle and occupational risks to health and wellbeing. Helping staff understand these risks to their whole lives as well as the workplace is crucial in this.

The Services will support all employees, both operational and support employees, by offering guidance and advice from Physical Fitness Advisers on diet, lifestyle choices, fitness and weight management issues and offering local access to fitness facilities.

4. Inclusive Workplaces (Equality and Diversity)

A more equal Wales - a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).

Ensure plans are in place to recruit, develop and retain the employees we need whilst supporting and promoting equality and diversity.

Develop employees in accordance with Service Core Values to build a culture that respects and values personal development and provides an understanding for employees of where they fit into the organisation and to create an environment of value and cohesiveness. The strategy will help us create an environment that develops talent and retains a balance in work and life whilst encouraging participation and commitment.
Given the percentage of the population being over 50% female, the current gender percentage of the workforce is hugely misrepresentational of this with, at best, just over 5% of firefighters being female. The FRS have undertaken much work in this area in positive action however more needs to be done. Engagement needs to be undertaken at earlier ages than previously thought as gender stereotyping in employment roles occurs early in the development of a child. Work needs to be completed to address this so that more of the population consider the FRS as a career of choice.

Address cultural barriers to ensure the workplace environment is accessible to a diverse workforce. Value diversity in the Service and the community by promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression and by challenging prejudice and discrimination. Undertaking the Implementation of the Inclusive Fire Group Implementation Strategies.

By equality of pay, all employees are paid the relevant rate of pay for the role and their conditions of service. The Services will regularly monitor pay equality in line with legislative requirements (Gender Pay Gap Reporting) and its pay policy.

Provide timely positive action events to encourage under-represented groups to consider a career with the FRSs.

Remain firmly committed to strengthening our values and upholding a culture which ensures that employees are treated with fairness and respect to promote the Service as an employer of choice.

**Welsh language**

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language. A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh Languages and which encourages people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation.

This strategy is written in accordance with the core values of the FRSs and recognises their responsibilities under the Welsh Language Standards 2012, which are reflected in the individual Welsh Language Policies produced by each organisation.

The FRSs remain committed to the Welsh language and to investing in improving skills and standards, as we continue to highlight the importance of a bilingual workforce and providing a bilingual service to the public of Wales.

The recruitment of employees with the appropriate level of Welsh Language skills to provide services to the public and support employees who wish to learn Welsh or improve their Welsh in order to use it in the workplace.

Embedding the Welsh Language Standards to deliver services in Welsh and in other areas such as policy making and promoting the Welsh language.
5. Reward and Recognition

A prosperous Wales - which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.

Promoting a fair employment agenda and introducing policies and workplace practices which actively support the management of change in partnership with our workforce, representative bodies and organisations.

The provision of appropriate additional employee benefits which offer value for money for the three Services.

Pension changes have created longer career paths; we will seek to collaborate on pension matters whenever possible and create better pathways for joining up information for employees. Early engagement with staff to raise awareness and provide support for personal development, opportunities, rationales and pathways for progression.

6. Management Information Systems

A prosperous Wales - an innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.

Developing a strategic workforce plan which combines workforce change, technology, demographics, turnover and best management practice.

The collection and analysis of employee and workforce data required by the Authorities and relevant external organisations to support effective and well-informed people management practices, leading to measurable improvements in quality based workplace performance.

Analyse operational and strategic workforce data, and collecting and analysing data for statutory and other external workforce surveys, producing regular reports for managers at all levels.

Maintain accurate and up-to-date employee record files and other employee records, always having regard to issues of confidentiality and in accordance with Data Protection Principles.

Ensure that robust systems of assessment and verification are in place to allow recording of training and development activities and workplace performance and ensure that such activities are aligned to individual and organisational need.

The systems must also ensure that accurate information is recorded for the management of training and development and satisfies legal and statutory requirements.

The systems must provide management information to assist in the planning of training and development activities and meet the needs of internal/external quality assurance and auditing.
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A healthier Wales - a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximized and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

A more equal Wales - a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic circumstances).

A Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language - a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation.

The strategy provides a coherent framework for our corporate improvement activity. A broad approach to organisational development has been taken ensuring that we consider Fire and Rescue Service improvement as a whole and not just individual service or personal development within the Fire and Rescue Services.

To this end, it is important that Fire and Rescue Services continue to collaborate with each other, educational establishments and other external training and development providers, ensuring that we can operate in a multi-agency and changing environment.

The FRS's in Wales are committed to supporting the ongoing development of a professional workforce by ensuring that people have the opportunity to maintain and improve their skills. In addition, they aspire to create a working environment that is safe, inclusive, encouraging lifelong learning and free from discrimination.

There is a need to devolve more responsibility for performance management, development and progression of staff to line managers. The empowering of managers will assist in providing an increased range of experience and skills to support core skill maintenance.

The geographically diverse nature of Wales and the reliance on the On-call Duty System necessitates learning environments that are both flexible and easily accessible. The use of e-learning modules to assist centralised learning and development delivery provides one such flexible delivery method. An increase in the use of technology and flexible working supports our commitment to environmental and sustainability agendas. In addition, operational training activities and procurement protocols are aligned to Service environmental strategies and policies.
To ensure consistency the National Occupational Standards will continue to be used to review existing and develop new programmes. This will ensure that development is delivered to a nationally recognised level and is in line with the role requirements.

The FRS in Wales will provide robust quality assurance mechanisms in relation to the delivery of learning and development activities.

**Future Leaders**

The need to identify and develop future leaders throughout the FRS is seen as a key component in order to meet current and future challenges. The changing nature of the FRS will require future leaders to challenge existing norms and develop innovative solutions to meet societal risks. As collaboration and partnership working opportunities are developed future leaders will also be required to lead without authority and bring influence to bear in order to transcend organisational boundaries. This should be supported by the sharing of best practice and continuation of the collaborative development of and engagement on, leadership programmes in Wales and the wider UK as appropriate.

Effective succession planning will ensure that tomorrow’s FRS leaders are identified and provided with the requisite skills and experience in preparation for future organisational challenge and diversification. The FRS will use a range of established and innovative methods, including the assessment and development of technical skills and behaviours to train, develop and support those with the potential to become future leaders.

There is a need to ensure that the FRSs have a workforce in place with the right skills and competencies, that is sufficiently flexible when and where required. New ways of working have been explored and the building blocks of these have already been laid down. This work has undoubtedly identified other areas which need review or refinement to ensure that further improvements in efficiency can be achieved.