



ALL WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

People and Organisational Development Strategy 2021-2024



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achul
De Cymru**
South Wales
Fire and Rescue Service



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru**
Mid and West Wales
Fire and Rescue Service



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service**

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 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2024 and underpins the three Services' joint 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 FRSs and provides a framework for innovative thinking and working to support continued collaboration and partnership.

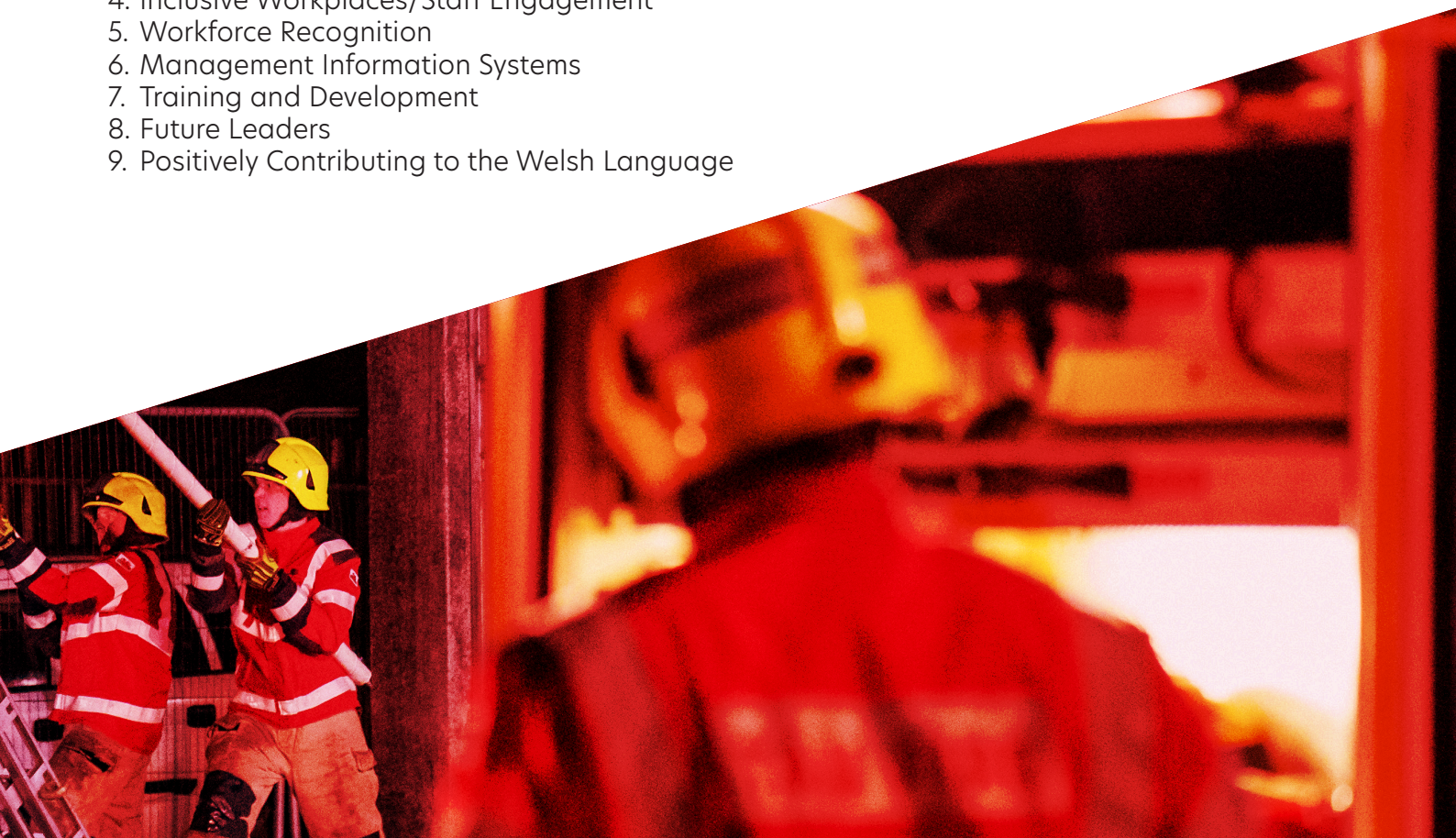
The FRSs support the achievement of applicable national strategies whilst balancing these with a focus on providing a service that puts Wales' safety first within the context of a devolved Government. To that end, the following bodies, strategies and frameworks have informed the development of our strategy,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

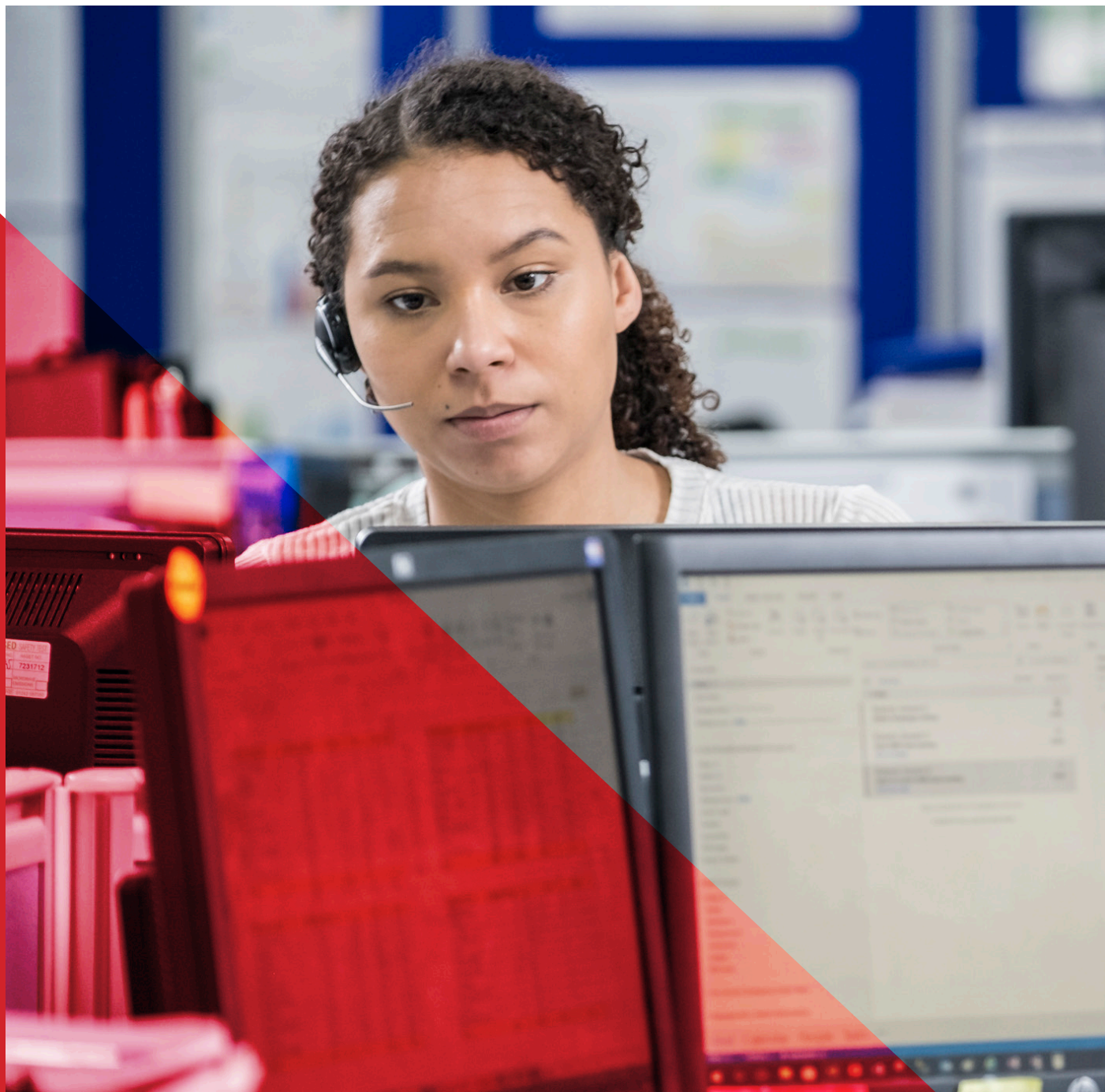
- National Issues Committee
 - Workforce Partnership Council for Wales
 - Strategic Equality Plans and Annual Improvement Reports
 - Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategies
 - Fire and Rescue Service National Framework (2016)
 - Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015
 - NFCC National People Strategy (2017-2022)
 - Welsh Language (Wales) Measures 2011
 - Equality Act (2010)
 - Socio-economic Duty
- 

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 most current Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales. In light of 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 based upon the following nine 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. Mental Health and Wellbeing
3. Physical Health and Wellbeing
4. Inclusive Workplaces/Staff Engagement
5. Workforce Recognition
6. Management Information Systems
7. Training and Development
8. Future Leaders
9. Positively Contributing to the Welsh Language





Consultation & Communication

There will continue to be consultation, where appropriate, 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 each Service's intranet and website.

Responsibility

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

Monitoring and Review

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

Aim

The aim of the strategy is to enable the FRSs 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 all three Services in the achievement of their objectives by ensuring that they strive to create a workforce that has the training, support, resources and resilience to undertake their roles.

The three Services will:

- Continue to work with partners to reduce the risk of fires, incidents and other emergencies and to enhance community wellbeing
- Recognise the way the Fire and Rescue Service is now working beyond its traditional role in an increasingly diverse arena

1. Resourcing the Fire and Rescue Service

One of the seven wellbeing goals from the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is 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.

The recruitment, development and retention of a workforce which has the commitment and skills to deliver the authorities' services, improved communication, effective redeployment and re-training opportunities will be made available by;

- 1.1. Ensuring recruitment and progression processes are fair and transparent and aim to reflect the diversity of the community to meet the future needs of all three services, utilising national approaches where applicable.
- 1.2. Implementing effective redeployment arrangements to ensure any employees facing redundancy or loss of employment (other than for disciplinary reasons) are offered suitable alternative employment, wherever possible, underpinned by suitable re-training opportunities.
- 1.3. Introducing smarter working practices and investigating alternative models for frontline service delivery, addressing cultural barriers and continued streamlining of administration processes and conversion to E-Systems where possible.
- 1.4. Modernising our approach to working arrangements, creating a more flexible approach enabling the services to respond to significant external influences and harnessing the benefits of more agile working practices.
- 1.5. Developing and enhancing the apprenticeship scheme, offering to promote routes to employment that embrace academic and vocational learning.

- 1.6. Continuously reviewing recruitment, selection and promotion policies & practices with a particular emphasis on clarity, fairness, transparency and equality of opportunity. Making use of technological advances to support recruitment and selection processes, where available.
- 1.7. Embracing the benefits of diversity and different thinking styles can bring to the organisations, through broadening deliberate inclusion strategies to include neurodiversity and encouraging applications from people with neurodiversity conditions, in accordance with direction from the National Fire Chiefs Council.
- 1.8. Nurturing talent and ensuring excellence through people, building on effective teams that consist of highly motivated staff who are capable of responding to changing circumstances.
- 1.9. Developing strategies that take account of the increasing normal retirement age including the provision of flexible working options and targeted wellbeing initiatives, which meet the needs of an ageing workforce.
- 1.10. Developing workforce and succession plans for current employees, recognising the need for flexibility and adaptability within the workforce. Planning and shaping the workforce to meet current and future demands in order to build and maintain resilience.
- 1.11. Assessing diversification of the roles of employees, learning from innovative practice necessitated by the pandemic to build robust workforces who can respond to periods of significant change in the future.
- 1.12. 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. The Fire and Rescue Service's National Framework 2019 recognises that recruiting and retaining retained/on call firefighters has become increasingly challenging to maintain in today's environment and, therefore, further underlines the importance of considering other models.
- 1.13. Appropriately developing a workforce that is trained to be safe and to meet the demands of their roles. Provision of a performance management framework which is reflective of the changing employment landscape, taking account of the potential for agile working arrangements and supports managers in meeting the changing demands of their role.
- 1.14. Developing strategies to improve employability and staff engagement. Recognising that emotional engagement is linked to wellbeing and sustainability, whereas purely behavioural engagement is linked to poorer wellbeing and is likely to be sustained over time.

2. Mental Health and Wellbeing

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

In adopting a supportive approach to improving employee mental health and wellbeing within the FRSs, we will provide a culture where employees can talk about their mental health. In doing so, we will:

- 2.1. Take account and act upon recent national initiatives such as evidence-based reports from the Royal Foundation & King's College London when assessing mental health and wellbeing of the emergency responder community.
- 2.2. Recognise that promoting mental health and wellbeing activities may increase absences due to creating a culture of openness and acceptance.
- 2.3. Adopt a more holistic approach to improving employee wellbeing within the FRSs, we will continue to invest in reducing absence and concentrating on health promotion within the service.
- 2.4. Recognise that while absence reduction initiatives have been successful, promoting health and wellbeing is proven to have increased benefits in terms of productivity, motivation and being an attractive employer. Enhancing the physical and psychological environment will improve employee wellbeing and, in turn, employee performance.
- 2.5. Provide a proactive occupational health service committed to identifying and addressing industrial injuries, stress and other causes of sickness absence, as well as promoting healthy living.
- 2.6. Adopt a framework for managers to manage sickness absence which strikes a balance between organisational need and supporting employees.
- 2.7. Foster a culture of participation and involvement based on open communication and inclusion, acknowledging that work plays an important part in promoting psychological wellbeing.
- 2.8. Raise awareness of mental wellbeing among the workforce to reduce the risk of potential negative effects on employees and the organisation, while also reducing the potential for stigma related to those employees with mental ill-health.

- 2.9. Ensure safe working practices, recognising that we are in a changed environment, acknowledging a change in public behaviour and changed expectations from the workforce.
- 2.10. Recognise the Fire & Rescue Services National Framework 2019 progress report which identifies that although there is a decline in incidents to which firefighters respond, firefighters who are less often exposed to such stress are, speculatively, more likely to suffer from poor mental health following serious incidents.
- 2.11. Recognise our obligations in accordance with the National Framework for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. We will ensure 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. It is recognised that home may not necessarily be a safe place for some employees, therefore, future agile working arrangements will not be enforced and will be on a voluntary basis.
- 2.12. Review our Employee Assistance Programme provision to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of employees, recognising that their needs and expectations may have changed following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.13. Enhance the existing financial wellbeing interventions through the provision of financial support and education, recognising that poor financial wellbeing can affect physical and mental wellbeing, which can result in poor performance, absenteeism and lower productivity.
- 2.14. Closely monitor emerging research following the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on employee health, adapting the provision of support where necessary to those employees experiencing long-term symptoms/ complications following COVID-19. Accordingly, we are committed to ensuring mental health is fully integrated within our culture. We will structure, resource and manage our interventions to provide the support our employees need to best equip them to meet the challenges they face.



3. Physical Health and Wellbeing

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 arts, sports and recreation.

It is recognised that firefighting and rescue operations expose operational personnel to stressful, arduous and demanding working conditions, which require a high level of physical fitness. Subsequently, managing physical fitness on both an individual and organisational level is key to ensuring a safe and healthy operational workforce. We understand the benefits of a healthy workforce and will support operational staff in maintaining their fitness to undertake their role as follows:

- 3.1. We will undertake regular routine health and fitness assessments to ensure compliance with the agreed single fitness standard in order to ensure transparency and fairness. In addition, the Services will adopt the National Fire Chiefs Council guidance that is presented as a national standard for aerobic fitness for safe and effective firefighting including aerobic fitness and muscular strength.
- 3.2. We will promote sharing of 'better practice' across the emergency services sector, for example, by encouraging cross-collaboration and the showcasing of effective wellbeing frameworks and initiatives.
- 3.3. Whilst for operational personnel there are contractual and legal obligations for individuals and organisations respectively, all employees are encouraged to be physically active in order to maintain sufficient levels of physical fitness to carry out their roles safely and effectively. 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.
- 3.4. The Services will support all employees by offering guidance and advice from health and fitness advisors on diet, lifestyle choices, fitness and weight management issues and offering access to fitness facilities where possible. Engagement with employees will ensure that the current offering meets the changing needs of the workforce.

4. Inclusive Workplaces and Staff Engagement

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.

- 4.1. Develop employees in accordance with embedded 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, cohesiveness and inclusivity. The strategy will help us create an environment that develops talent and retains a balance in work and life whilst encouraging participation and commitment.
- 4.2. Ensure plans are in place to recruit, develop and retain the employees we need whilst supporting and promoting equality and diversity and encouraging staff to declare disabilities and conditions including neurodiversity conditions, to ensure reasonable adjustments are provided.
- 4.3. Given the percentage of the population being over 50% female, the current gender percentage of the workforce is misrepresentational. The FRSs have undertaken much work in this area in positive action and recognise that more needs to be done, in particular recognising that 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.
- 4.4. Plans and initiatives, such as positive action events, will continue to be developed to help attract, recruit and retain people from underrepresented groups and to help reduce the gender pay gap in the FRS. We are fully committed to improving the diversity of our workforce and are working towards a profile that is more representative of the people and communities of Wales that we serve.
- 4.5. 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.
- 4.6. 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.

- 4.7. 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.



5. Workplace Recognition

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

Workplace recognition is the acknowledgement of the contribution of our staff while encouraging improved performance. We seek to enhance workplace recognition by:

- 5.1. Promoting a fair employment agenda, while introducing policies and workplace practices which actively support the management of change in partnership with our workforce, representative bodies and organisations.
- 5.2. Providing appropriate additional employee benefits e.g. salary sacrifice schemes, retail discount cards etc. which offer value for money for our workforce.
- 5.3. Seeking to collaborate on pension matters whenever possible and create better pathways for joining up information for new employees.
- 5.4. Recognising that pension changes have created longer career paths and ensuring 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.

Management Information Systems are a key component in supporting our Services' decision-making processes in respect of people and organisation development. We will continue to improve and refine our management information systems in order to:

- 6.1. Identify trends and areas in need of attention, and recognise positive results and improvements to enable the sharing of good practice.
- 6.2. Develop a strategic workforce plan which combines workforce change, technology, demographics, turnover and best management practice.
- 6.3. Collect and analyse 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.
- 6.4. 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.
- 6.5. 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.
- 6.6. Ensure that accurate information is recorded for the management of training and development and satisfies legal and statutory requirements.
- 6.7. Provide management information to assist in the planning of training and development activities and meet the needs of internal/external quality assurance and auditing.



7. Training & Development

A prosperous Wales - 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.

A healthier Wales - a society in which people's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised 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 FRS improvement as a whole and not just individual service or personal development within the FRSs. In this respect, we will:

- 7.1. 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.
- 7.2. Commit 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.
- 7.3. 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.
- 7.4. Ensure that learning environments 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.

8. Future Leaders

A prosperous Wales – 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.

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. In addition we will:

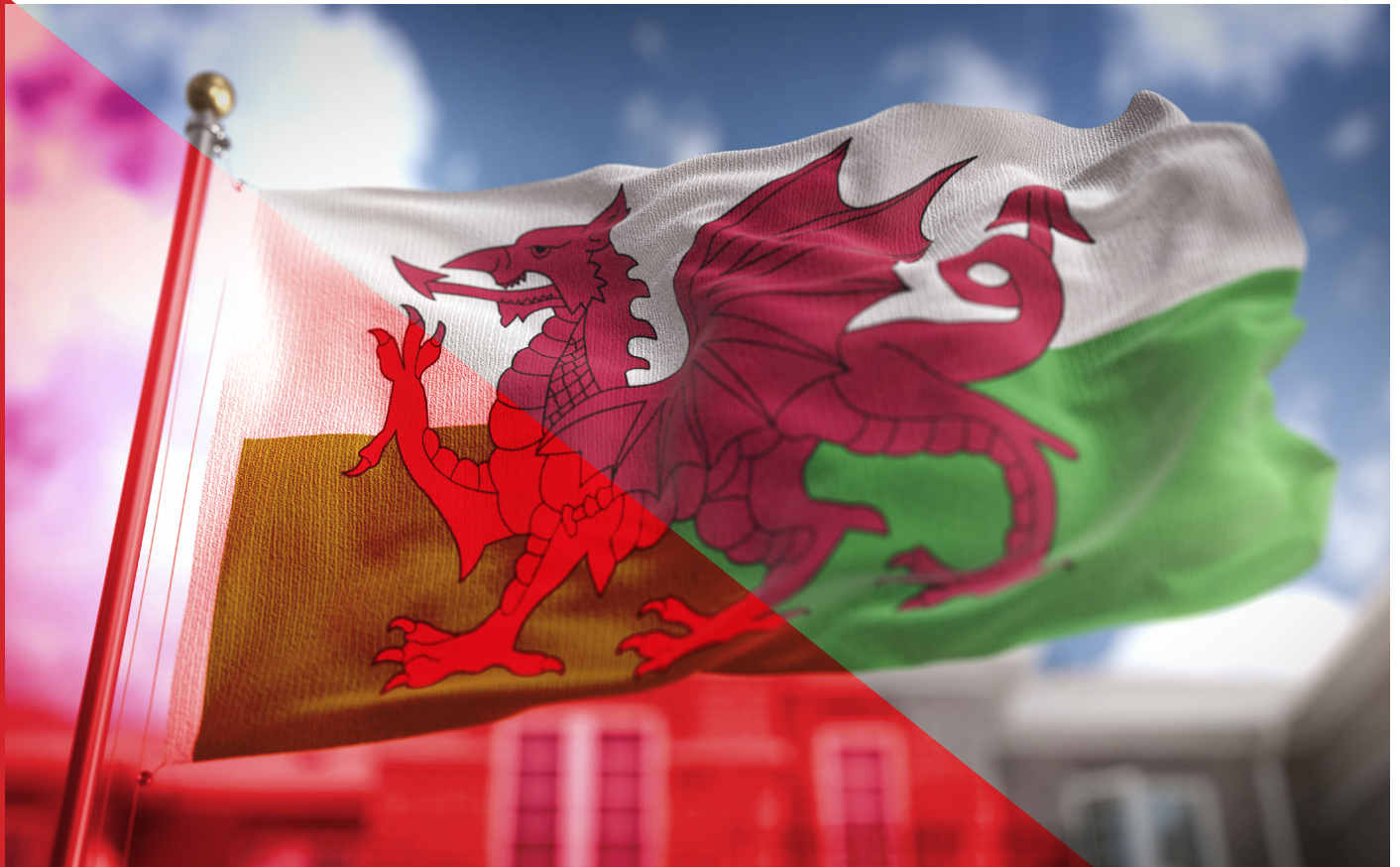
- 8.1. Provide robust quality assurance mechanisms in relation to the delivery of learning and development activities.
- 8.2. Recognise the need to identify and develop future leaders in order to meet current and future challenges. The changing nature of the FRS will require future leaders to challenge existing norms and develop innovative solutions to meet societal risks. As collaboration and partnership working opportunities are further developed, future leaders will also be required to lead without authority and bring influence to bear in order to transcend organisational boundaries. This will 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.
- 8.3. Ensure effective succession planning which will ensure that tomorrow's leaders are identified and provided with the requisite skills and experience in preparation for future organisational challenge and diversification. Those employees identified as having high potential will be developed through strategically managed talent management programmes including a range of innovative methods to train, develop and support future leaders.
- 8.4. Ensure we 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 identified other areas which need review or refinement to ensure that further improvements in efficiency can be achieved.



9. Positively Contributing to the Welsh Language

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, sports and recreation.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993 and as part of the new legislation, in Wales the Welsh language has equal legal status with English and must not be treated any less favourably. Public bodies no longer need to develop and implement Welsh



Language Schemes and must instead comply with a set of national Welsh Language Standards which explain how organisations are expected to use the Welsh language in different situations.

Each FRS has a statutory duty to comply with standards listed in its “Compliance notice – Section 44 Welsh language (Wales) Measure 2011” issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Welsh Language Standards ensure that the public are provided with the opportunity to communicate with all FRSs and receive a service from us through the medium of Welsh wherever possible. Employees also benefit through increased opportunities to utilise or learn the language in the workplace.

We will:

- 9.1 Treat the English and Welsh languages equally in conducting all our public business in Wales.
- 9.2 Adopt Implementation Plans to show how we are complying with the Welsh Language Standards and produce an annual report, in relation to each financial year, which details how we have complied with the service delivery standards, policy making standards and operational standards issued in our Compliance Notice.
- 9.3 Establish a means of managing and overseeing the way in which we comply with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards.
- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 Recruit employees with the appropriate level of Welsh Language skills to be able to provide services to the public and support employees who wish to learn Welsh to improve their Welsh in order to use it in the workplace.
- 9.6 Continue to embed the Welsh Language Standards to deliver services in Welsh and in other areas such as policy making, recognising the significant changes to working practices and ensuring that language choice continues to be offered when operating in a virtual environment.
- 9.7 Promote the importance of our commitment to the Welsh language to our staff, recognising that the Welsh Language is used internally within the Service both formally in delivering bilingual services to the public, and also in offering a language choice to staff as Welsh speakers and learners. Each FRS will produce detailed guidance to all staff in respect of the internal use of the Welsh language.