

Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework Consultation Response

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Paul Raymond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Natalie Hill, Equality and Diversity Officer on 01743 260236.

1 Purpose of Report

To provide the Human Resources (HR) Committee with the consultation response on the new bespoke Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF).

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the content of this report

3 Background

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have been asked to respond to the Consultation survey on the new FRSEF which if agreed will replace the Equality Framework for Local Government which was introduced in March 2009 to replace the Equality Standard for Local Government.

4 Current position

The current Equality Framework document is used by both Councils and Fire Services to audit themselves against this framework. However, some of this framework is very specific to Local Authorities and does not fit with how Fire Authorities operate and is not always relevant. For this reason it was decided that a bespoke Fire Service Framework should be developed that would remove any irrelevant and unnecessary criteria and to ensure that this framework is outcomes focused and easy to follow.

There are no changes to the achievement levels and these will still remain as:

- **Developing**
- **Achieving**
- Moving towards excellence (only for those at Level 4)
- **Excellent**

However there have been some changes to the five performance areas within the Framework and these are now:

- Leadership and promoting inclusion
- Accountability
- Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement
- Employment and Training
- Evaluation and Good practice

It has been recommended that these performance areas are agreed as these are now the same as the **National Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018**, which we have to report on to the Communities and Local Government on an annual basis.

The full details of this consultation response are enclosed at **Appendix A**.

I would like to highlight the following responses:

Question 16

Do you find it useful that the Framework highlights areas of work which will count towards compliance with existing public duties and the FRS equality and diversity strategy 2008-2018? **Yes. However, at present it is not clear in the FRS Framework which actions will help you to achieve this. The FRS Framework needs to be cross referenced to the CAA and the National E&D Strategy the same as the Equality Framework.**

Question 17

Do you consider that the FRSEF now provides greater synergy with other areas of policy and practice in the Fire and Rescue Service? **Yes**

Please give examples of how this could be improved

It has removed some of the unnecessary and inappropriate sections for Fire and Rescue Services. However it is not 100% clear whether all the National E&D Strategy has been included and therefore whether completing all of the FRS Framework will give you compliance with the Strategy – it looks at present like it would not cover it all, this needs to be clearer.

5 Legal Comment

The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), is consulting on a new Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Services. The consultation period will run until

The aim is to develop a bespoke equality performance measure and it has thus drafted the FRSEF.

The framework is based upon the five themes in the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 to 2018. However, it is strongly linked to the EFLG to ensure application across all the governance arrangements, including county-based services. It will also facilitate equality and diversity partnership arrangements, established by FRS, with local authorities and other partnerships.

6 Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not need been completed as this report is on a framework document that is about improving equality and diversity.

7 Appendix

Fire and Rescue Equality Framework consultation response

8 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*



Fire and Rescue Equality Framework comments – Consultation Survey

We welcome your views as part of this consultation.

The Draft Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF) is available from the IDeA Knowledge website (www.idea.gov.uk/frsef). We intend to group together comments that we receive during the consultation process and our responses to them will be published on the IDeA Knowledge website. You can also join the Equalities in Fire and Rescue Services community of practice for further discussion (www.idea.gov.uk/frscop).

If you have any problems completing this survey please contact elizabeth.gardiner@idea.gov.uk.

General

1. Name - **Natalie Hill**
2. Fire Service/Organisation – **Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service**
3. Address – Brigade **HQ, St Michael's Street, Shrewsbury, SY1 2HJ**
4. Email address – **Natalie.hill@shropshirefire.gov.uk**
5. Type of Fire Service / Organisation:
 - Metropolitan
 - Combined Fire Authority ✓
 - County
 - Other
 - Not applicable
6. What is your role within the organisation? – **Equality and Diversity Officer**
7. In what capacity are you responding?
 - As an individual
 - On behalf of an organisation/authority ✓
 - Other (please specify)

Other equality frameworks

8. Has your service used the FRS equality and diversity strategy 2008-2018? **Yes**
9. Has your service used the old Equality Standard for Local Government? - **Yes**
10. If so what level did you reach? **Level 4. We have been externally assessed at Level 3, and used a specific E&D consultant for our Level 4 Assessment**
11. Have you seen the new Equality Framework for Local Government? **Yes**
12. Did you intend to use it? **Yes**
13. Have you had an IDeA Diversity Peer Challenge or an Equality Mark assessment? **Yes – Equality Mark**

The FRSEF

14. Do you consider that it is helpful to have a benchmarking framework? - **Yes**
15. Are the 3 levels proposed – developing, achieving and excellent – appropriate? **Yes**
16. Do you find it useful that the Framework highlights areas of work which will count towards compliance with existing public duties and the FRS equality and diversity strategy 2008-2018? **Yes. However, at present it is not clear in the FRS Framework which actions will help you to achieve this. The FRS Framework needs to be cross referenced to the CAA and the National E&D Strategy the same as the Equality Framework.**
17. Do you consider that the FRSEF now provides greater synergy with other areas of policy and practice in the Fire and Rescue Service? **Yes**

Please give examples of how this could be improved

It has removed some of the unnecessary and inappropriate sections for Fire and Rescue Services. However it is not 100% clear whether all the National E&D Strategy has been included and therefore whether completing all of the FRS Framework will give you compliance with the Strategy – it looks at present like it would not cover it all, this needs to be clearer.

18. Given the current governance arrangements of your organisation do you consider that the Framework guides you in an appropriate and relevant manner? **Yes. Comments as per 17.**

19. The draft FRSEF is organised around the five performance areas set out in the FRSEF Equality and Diversity Strategy.

The five performance areas are:

Leadership and promoting inclusion ✓

Accountability ✓

Effective Service Delivery and community engagement ✓

Employment and Training ✓

Evaluation and Good practice ✓

Do you think that these are the right performances areas to concentrate on? **Yes**

20. Or would you prefer to use the performance areas in the Equality Framework for Local Government? **No**

Comments:

The headings are similar and the content has some of the same action points, we think the new FRS Framework will give more transparency and will be useful for reporting on the National E&D Strategy and for cross referencing other areas.

21. Underneath each performance area are a series of actions. Do you think that these actions are the right ones? **Yes, please see comments below on some of the specific actions that need to be considered.**

1.27 More guidance on equal pay

2.1 Should it make reference to voluntary sector or just make it key partners / stakeholders – as it may not be appropriate to work with the voluntary sector on all areas.

3.23 Should it be significant progress towards “greater equality” rather than achieving its minimum targets.

2.6/ Representative bodies – clarity required – would it be better to

3.6 say contributing to “our” organisational objectives and improvements rather than their own.

22. Do you think that the evidence that can be used for self-assessment will also provide evidence for the new comprehensive area assessment? **Yes, for some of this, particularly with partnership working.**
23. Do you consider that the Framework successfully represents a move away from being process driven to a more outcome focused approach? **Yes, does appear to be more outcomes focussed.**

24. Please use this space for any additional comments.

**More guidance information on actions required.
Case Studies for Fire and Rescue Services would be useful.
Please see comments at question 21.**