

Equality Standard for Local Government

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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

1 Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with information and an update on progress of activity to meet the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG).

2 Recommendations

That the information in this report is noted and that the Fire Authority understands the different levels and requirements of the ESLG

3 Background Information

The Equality Standard for Local Government:

- Was first introduced in 2001, the need for this was underlined by findings of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (Macpherson, 1999) – it highlighted institutional discrimination and how this influences organisations.
- Is a Framework to mainstream equalities into service delivery and employment.
- Is a way to combat institutional processes that lead to discrimination.
- Has five levels - with checklists.
- Initially only focused on gender, race and disability.
- Has been updated since 2006 and now includes age, religion/belief and sexual orientation.
- Should remove any discriminatory practices in the six strands of diversity through its implementation.

Implementing the Standard:

- Provides a systematic framework for mainstreaming equalities.
- Helps authorities to meet their obligations under the law.
- Integrates equalities policies and objectives with Best Value.
- Encourages the development of anti-discriminatory practice appropriate to local circumstances.
- Provides a basis for tackling forms of institutional discrimination.
- Provides a framework for improving performance over time.

The ESLG has 5 levels and is built on principles of:

Quality
Leadership
Community involvement

Level 1 - Commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy

Level 2 - Assessment and consultation

Level 3 - Setting equality objectives and targets

Level 4 - Information systems and monitoring against targets

Level 5 - Achieving and reviewing outcomes

4 Current Situation

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is currently reporting at Level 2 of the Standard. In order to achieve Level 3 an independent external validation must be undertaken. The Service has already started work to achieve Level 3 of the Standard and has booked the external validation for August 2008. A Steering Group has been created to monitor and steer progress on the Standard and appropriate work is being undertaken to develop action plans and start collecting evidence for this process.

Attached as Appendix 1 are the criteria, against which the Service is measured to achieve Level 3. In order to achieve Level 3 a self-assessment document and accompanying evidence must be produced.

The Steering Group is in place to monitor progress and has fortnightly meetings. The Terms of Reference for this Group are attached at Appendix 2 and the plan of action for progression of the Standard is attached at Appendix 3.

The dates of the Steering Group meetings are as follows:
18/03/08, 10/04/08, 21/04/08, 08/05/08, 29/05/08, 12/06/08, 12/06/08,
24/06/08, 03/07/08, 17/07/08, 07/8/08, 19/08/08, 02/09/08, 16/09/08,
02/10/08, 06/11/08, 11/12/08.

5 Benefits of Achieving Level 3 of the Equality Standard

By working at Level 3 of the ESLG the we can:

- Ensure that we are mainstreaming Equality and Diversity.
- Ensure that the service we provide is not discriminatory on any of the strands: age, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, gender and disability.
- Maintain the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores in this area in the future.
- Contribute to achieving some of the actions in the National Equality and Diversity Strategy.

6 Financial Implications

Financial provision has been made for external verification from the capacity building bid.

Consultant's fees will be taken from the Equality and Diversity budget.

7 Legal Comment

The progression of the Equality Standard does not raise any direct legal implications.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached to this report.

9 Appendices

Appendix 1

Level 3 Assessment Criteria

Appendix 2

Steering Group Terms of Reference

Appendix 3

Plan of Action for the Equality Standard

10 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	*



Shropshire
Fire and Rescue Service

Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service EQIA number
Initial Equality Impact Assessment Form

Directorate	HR, Training and Development	Department/Section	HR
Name of officer	Natalie Hill	Job title	Equality & Diversity Officer
Name of Policy/Service to be assessed	Progression of the Equality Standard	Date of assessment	6 February 2008
New or existing policy	E		

1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy/service	Progression of the Equality Standard for Local Government to level 3.		
2. Are there any associated objectives of the policy/service?	Core Values, Strategic Aims and objectives, CPA, National E&D Strategy, National Framework Document, BVPI's.		
3. Who is intended to benefit from the policy/service and in what way?	All stakeholders will benefit from equality and diversity activities, removal of any discrimination, and increase in involvement.		
4. What outcomes are wanted from this policy/service?	See information in report		
5. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy/service?	All employees, service users		
6. Who implements the policy/service and who is responsible for this?	Managers and EDO oversees this.		
7. Are there any concerns that this policy/service could have a differential impact on the following groups and what existing evidence do you have for this? Yes or No, please detail in boxes below.			
8. Age		N	Will have a positive impact on all six strands of diversity, as this is to introduce change and positive outcomes through action planning, target setting and objectives.
9. Disability		N	
10. Gender		N	

11. Race		N	
12. Religion or belief		N	
13. Sexual orientation		N	
14. Dependant/caring responsibilities		N	Progression of standard will only help to improve practices within the organisation.
15. Could the differential impact identified in 7-14 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact in this policy/service?		N	
16. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or another reason?		N	n/a
17. Have you consulted those who are likely to be affected by the policy/service?	Y		Consultation has been completed through our statutory equality schemes.
18. Should the policy proceed to a full impact assessment?		N	Please detail no
19. Date by which full impact assessment to be completed	n/a		
20. Reason for non completion	n/a		

I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed.

I understand the Impact Assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.

Assessing person	Natalie Hill	Date:	06/02/08
Line Manager	Lisa Vickers	Date:	07/03/08
Please note that this impact assessment will be scrutinised by the E&D Officer			

The Equality Standard Framework External Assessment Evidence

	Level 3
3	Setting Equality Objectives and Targets
3.1	Leadership and Corporate Commitment
3.1.1	Ensure consistency of Corporate Equality Scheme with statutory equality schemes
3.1.2	Develop a system and timetable for reporting the results of impact assessments
3.1.3	Ensure that all departments and service areas set targets based on equality objectives devised through completed impact assessments and participation of designated community, staff and stakeholder groups
3.1.4	Equality objectives and targets for sexual orientation, age, religion and belief to be set by March 2009
3.1.5	Establish corporate guidelines for information gathering and equality monitoring
3.1.6	Seek agreement on equality targets with designated community stakeholders and local partners
3.1.7	Establish mechanisms for ensuring that equality targets are delivered by contractors through contract management
3.1.8	Ensure completion of equality action plans at department and service level incorporating performance indicators
3.1.9	Adopt where appropriate national targets/performance indicators as prescribed by Government departments or by the Audit Commission
3.1.10	Implement systems for reviewing progress and revising the Corporate Equality Scheme and departmental action plans
3.1.11	Members and senior officers to endorse action plans as appropriate
3.1.12	Link action planning to performance management and Best Value processes
3.1.13	Ensure that action on achieving targets has started
3.1.14	Ensure that progress has been verified through self-assessment, scrutiny and audit and have been validated externally through an accredited assessor
3.2	Community Engagement and Accountability
3.2.1	Develop a strategy for all designated community, staff and stakeholder groups to participate in the development of equality objectives, service design and employment practice
3.2.2	Make all service level and employment objectives and targets available for consultation and scrutiny
3.2.3	Make provision of language services appropriate to designated consultation and scrutiny groups
3.2.4	Consultation is systematically built into equality impact assessment, self-assessment and the equality planning process
3.2.5	Involve designated community, staff and stakeholder groups with scrutiny procedures
3.2.6	Consultation on equality to be linked with the continuing development of community strategies
3.2.7	Publicise how, where and when action on targets will start

3.3	Service Delivery and Customer Care
3.3.1	Equality objectives and targets developed within each department/service area for race, gender and disability based on completed impact assessments
3.3.2	Equality objectives and targets developed within each department/service area for sexual orientation, religion and belief and age by March 2009
3.3.3	Service plans to specifically address the importance of barriers, accessibility and reasonable adjustment in the provision of services
3.3.4	Allocation of appropriate resources to achieve targets
3.3.5	Establish structures of responsibility at departmental and service level to progress action plans
3.3.6	Set timetable within action plans for creating/adapting information and monitoring systems within service areas
3.3.7	For agencies delivering services on behalf of the local authority, include within contracts a requirement to deliver an effective and appropriate service, fairly and without unlawful discrimination
3.3.8	Establish monitoring of contracts to secure equal employment and equal service delivery targets
3.3.9	Start action on departmental and service area targets
3.4	Employment and Training
3.4.1	Set employment equality targets for recruitment, staff retention, work force profiles for race, gender and disability
3.4.2	Set employment equality targets for work force profiles for sexual orientation, religion or belief and age according to available data
3.4.3	Conduct an equal pay review and plan for equal pay adjustment
3.4.4	Establish that policies and procedures associated with equality are part of staff handbook and are understood by staff
3.4.5	Establish a system of guidance and training on relevant equality issues to short-listing panels and interviewers
3.4.6	Ensure that staff and members are aware of action plans and the implications for services and employment
3.4.7	Provide training for managers on the implementation of the Standard with contractors and partners
3.4.8	Appraise competency/behaviours to ensure that managers and staff are capable of implementing the Equality Standard, including the new strands of sexual orientation, religion or belief and age
3.4.9	Provide training for all staff on the detailed implementation of the Equality Standard including action plans and updates on legal and other developments
3.4.10	Ensure that Local Government Workforce Strategies address equality issues
3.4.11	Build equality objectives and targets into management appraisal mechanisms
3.4.12	Provide information and appropriate training on action plans to support scrutiny process
3.4.13	Start action on all employment and pay targets

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

Terms of Reference for the Equalities Steering Group

1. Aims

The aim of the steering group is to provide a forum:

- To promote equalities throughout the organisation and to enable SFRS to progress its achievement on the equality standard for local government and its equality schemes.
- To maintain focus and ensure strategic priorities for the organisation in relation to Equality and Diversity
- To ensure that all areas of the organisation understand SFRS Equality and Diversity priorities and support the implementation of these.
- Identify and encourage best practice/positive initiatives
- Provide leadership, strategic direction, development and the resources to ensure progression of our Equality Standard and Equality Schemes.

2. Objectives

The group will:

- Agree any action plans, monitor and ensure progression of the Equality Standard and Equality Schemes.
- Provide a rigorous and structured approach for promoting improvement against the above.
- To ensure that all managers are aware of their equality and diversity priorities and objectives.

3. Membership

The core membership will be 6 individuals representing the ranges of services and department across the Service. The group will be chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.

The core membership will be:

Chief Fire Officer (Chair)

Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Assistant Chief Officer

Head of Resources

Equality & Diversity Officer

Human Resources Manager

Programme Manager (initially for business planning purposes)

Members are asked to identify a deputy to attend in their absence.

4. Frequency

The group will meet fortnightly until such time the group feels that frequency can be moved to monthly meetings. The duration of such meetings will be between 2 – 3 hours.

5. Governance

The group will send update reports to the Audit and Performance Committee.

An update will be given to the Chair of the Fire Authority during Chairs Briefing.

6. Roles of the membership

- To regularly attend meeting and when unavailable to make arrangements for a nominated deputy to attend
- Contribute fully to enable the group to comply with its terms of reference
- To undertake duties assigned by the group
- To act as advocates of the Equality and Diversity Steering group and the broader equality and diversity agenda within their area.
- To ensure that the work of the group and the broader equality and diversity agenda is communicated widely.

7. Review

These terms of reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Equality Standard for Local Government

Plan of Action

Time	Action	Person
11/02/08	Steering Group agree terms of reference	Steering Group
w/c 11/02/08	Review level 1 and identify gaps in line with the revised standard, create action list	Equality & Diversity Officer
w/c 11/02/08	Devise Equality Impact Assessment completion plan for each Directorate	Equality & Diversity Officer
w/c 11/02/08	Equality Standard to be mainstreamed into Corporate Planning Process and Directorate Plans	Programme Manager
w/c 18/02/08	Review level 2 and identify gaps in line with the revised standard, create action list	Equality & Diversity Officer
w/c 18/02/08	Review Race Equality Scheme, Disability Equality Scheme & Gender Equality Scheme action plan to identify outstanding actions for incorporation into Directorate plans	Equality & Diversity Officer & Programme Manager
w/c 18/02/08	Start to draft the self assessment report	Deputy Chief Fire Officer (initially) Equality & Diversity Officer
w/c 25/02/08	Review level 3 and identify gaps in line with the revised standard, create action list	Equality & Diversity Officer
w/c 25/02/08	Cross reference Cultural Audit action plan with level 3 to identify any synergies	Assistant Chief Officer (Human Resources) & Equality & Diversity Officer
12/03/08	External consultant to give advice on progress to date	Equality & Diversity Officer
w/c 03/03/08	Create and implement action plan created from reviews of level 1, 2 and 3, including Equality Impact Assessment action plan.	ALL
w/c 03/03/08	Start collecting evidence	Equality & Diversity Officer & Secondee (when in place)

*16/05/08 or 22/05/08	External consultant informal assessment to advise of any improvement areas and give recommendations	Equality & Diversity Officer
w/c 26/05/08	Implement actions from consultant's report and devise any actions for improvement areas	ALL
w/c 02/06/08	Finalise self assessment report	To be determined
w/c 02/06/08	Steering group to validate self assessment report	Steering group
w/c 02/06/08	Finalise collection of evidence	Equality & Diversity Officer
w/c 16/06/08	Send self assessment report and evidence to Edgehill	Equality & Diversity Officer
23/06 – 04/08/08	External validation lead in time	n/a
5-6/08/08	External validation	Equality & Diversity Officer
w/c 18/08/08 (approx date)	Amendment to external report	Steering Group
End of August / beginning Sept	Confirmation received level 3	Edgehill

* Representative bodies to be invited to the Steering Group, when the action plan has been devised.