

# **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority**

## **Strategic Equality Plan**

### **Annual Report 2020**

Published 2020

## Legislative Framework

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### The Equality Act 2010

#### The General Public Sector Equality Duty (April 2011)

The Equality Act 2010 amalgamated previous disparate pieces of equality legislation, harmonising and strengthening equality legislation under one new Act. The Act includes a public sector equality duty that requires public sector bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
- **advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;**
- **foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.**

The Equality Act lists a number of characteristics which must not be used as a reason to treat some people worse than others. These are the 'protected characteristics'.

When we talk about protected characteristics we mean:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief/Non-Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

#### The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

There are also associated specific statutory equality duties for Wales (Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011) that enable a public authority in Wales to meet the general duty. The specific regulations include:

- publishing Equality Objectives;
- publishing a Strategic Equality Plan;
- engagement and involvement provisions for protected characteristic groups;
- ensuring published material is accessible;
- assessing impact of relevant policies and practices;
- training and collection of employment information;
- promoting knowledge and understanding amongst employees of the Equality Act;
- addressing unfair pay differences;
- reviewing progress on the Strategic Equality Plan and associated Equality Objectives;
- procurement practice provisions.

The broad purpose of the specific duties in Wales are to help listed bodies in their performance of the general duty and to aid transparency.

Heads of Departments from across the Service have identified equality objectives within their individual service areas, with support and advice from the Equality Adviser.

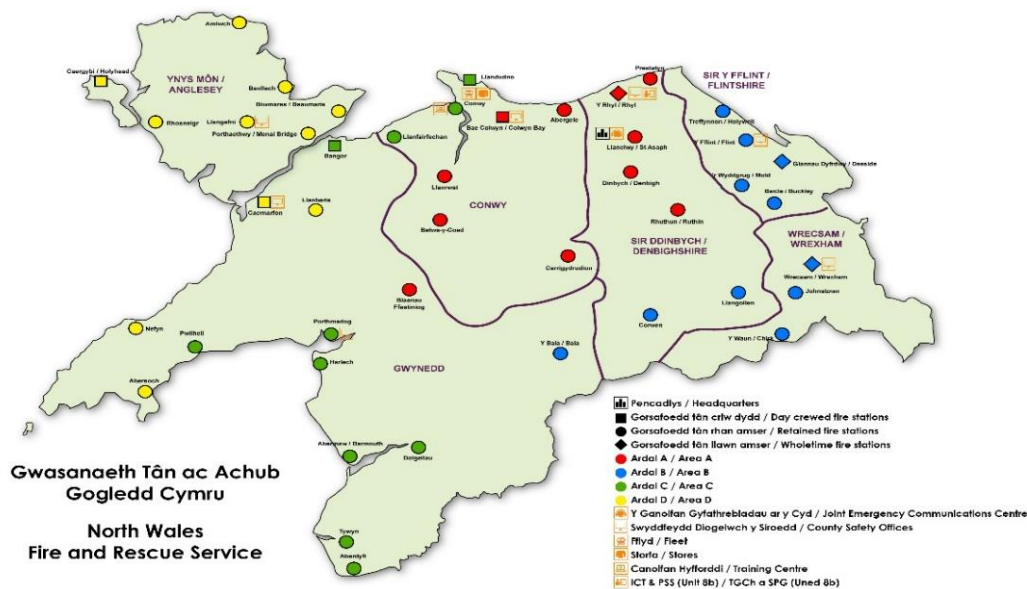
In developing our objectives we have used a number of sources:

- Equality Impact Assessments
- Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Planning Objectives
- Business plans from each of the Heads of Departments
- Existing Strategies and Plans
- Outcome of engagement activities

Legislation allows for the objectives to be changed at any time, so the Service is keen to maintain a level of ongoing engagement to ensure our objectives remain current.

We will continue to look at the most effective methods of engagement via our existing links with community groups and organisations. We will also endeavour to establish relationships with new groups and local communities making sure we meet the needs and expectations of everyone involved.

## North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority



**Map of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Area**

The role of the Authority is defined in a range of laws and regulations but the Authority has always sought to improve and enhance the services it provides and to do more than meet the minimum requirements.

The Authority has a legal duty to provide a fire and rescue service that meets the needs of local communities. The Authority has to be prepared to deal with a wide-range of emergencies, from house fires and road traffic collisions to floods and chemical spills. It also has to deliver fire prevention to help keep people and property safe from fire.

**FIRE PREVENTION:** Fire and rescue authorities must arrange for fire safety to be promoted in their area. This includes informing people about fire prevention and advising them how best to react if a fire does break out.

**FIRE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT:** Fire and rescue authorities have a duty to enforce fire safety in non-domestic premises (hotels, schools, shops and offices, etc.). This duty includes exercising powers to issue alteration, enforcement and even prohibition notices if they find that fire safety arrangements in premises are unsatisfactory.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE:** Fire and rescue authorities must make arrangements for receiving 999 calls and for sending trained and equipped personnel to extinguish fires and protect life and property at those

fires. They must also make arrangements for rescuing people from road traffic collisions and for protecting them from serious harm. In April 2017 the Welsh Government also created a statutory duty to respond to flooding or water rescue incidents that pose a threat to life.

**PLANNING AND RESPONSE TO OTHER EMERGENCIES:** Fire and rescue authorities must make arrangements for mass decontamination of people after chemical, biological or radio-active incidents, and for rescuing people from trains, aircraft and collapsed buildings. They must also be prepared to assist with large-scale emergencies elsewhere in the UK.

The Service is also committed to actively engaging with other organisations to improve the safety of the community, including providing wide ranging education programmes. The Service helps support and signpost people who are vulnerable to risks not directly related to the fire service, such as older people who may be at risk from severe weather, households at risk of crime, or people at risk of domestic violence.

## **North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Profile**

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Executive responsibility for running the Fire and Rescue Service rests with the Chief Fire Officer who provides strategic leadership, manages the overall coordination of the Service's activities and optimises its use of resources. The Chief Fire Officer also provides professional advice to the Authority.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service contributes to the achievement of this vision in numerous ways including through active participation in Community Safety Partnerships.

It supports other fire and rescue services in the UK when required and remains continually prepared to protect in the event of large scale disasters.

### **Executive Panel**

The Executive Panel has a varied role dealing with topics such as the appointments of senior officers, policy and constitutional issues. It considers responses to consultation papers and other policy developments, and makes recommendations to the Fire and Rescue Authority on its key policies including the Combined Improvement and Well-Being Plan.

The Panel's Terms of Reference were set in 2001 and are reviewed as and when required. It consists of the chair and vice chair and two members from each constituent authority (fourteen members in total). It is chaired by the Chair or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chair.

It meets four times a year, between each meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority, although additional meetings may be held depending on workload and, in particular, what personnel issues require its involvement.

### **Standards Committee**

The Standards Committee was established in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000 and its Terms of Reference were set in 2003. Its duties include the consideration of complaints against Authority member's referred to it by the Ombudsman and the granting of dispensations. It also advises the Authority on issues to do with standards.

The committee consists of seven members, five of whom are independent. The Fire and Rescue Authority representatives on this Committee cannot be an office holder on the Authority. The Chair and Deputy Chair are drawn from the independent members.

## **Audit Committee**

The Committee has four primary roles of governance audit and scrutiny, financial and resource management audit and scrutiny, risk management and assurance audit and scrutiny and performance audit and scrutiny.

The Committee's membership consists of all non-executive (panel) members and meets a minimum of twice per year. The Chair and Deputy Chair are appointed from different constituent authorities in the interests of representations of the communities of North Wales.

The Committee has the facility to set-up time-limited task groups to undertake reviews and the discretion to co-opt Executive members with relevant expertise onto these groups.

## **Operational Service Areas**

We provide fire protection and prevention services across North Wales to around 696,000 people over a geographical area of 2,400 square miles. Community Safety offices are located in:

### **Gwynedd and Ynys Môn Community Safety Office**

Llanberis Road  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55 2DF

### **Conwy and Denbighshire Community Safety Office**

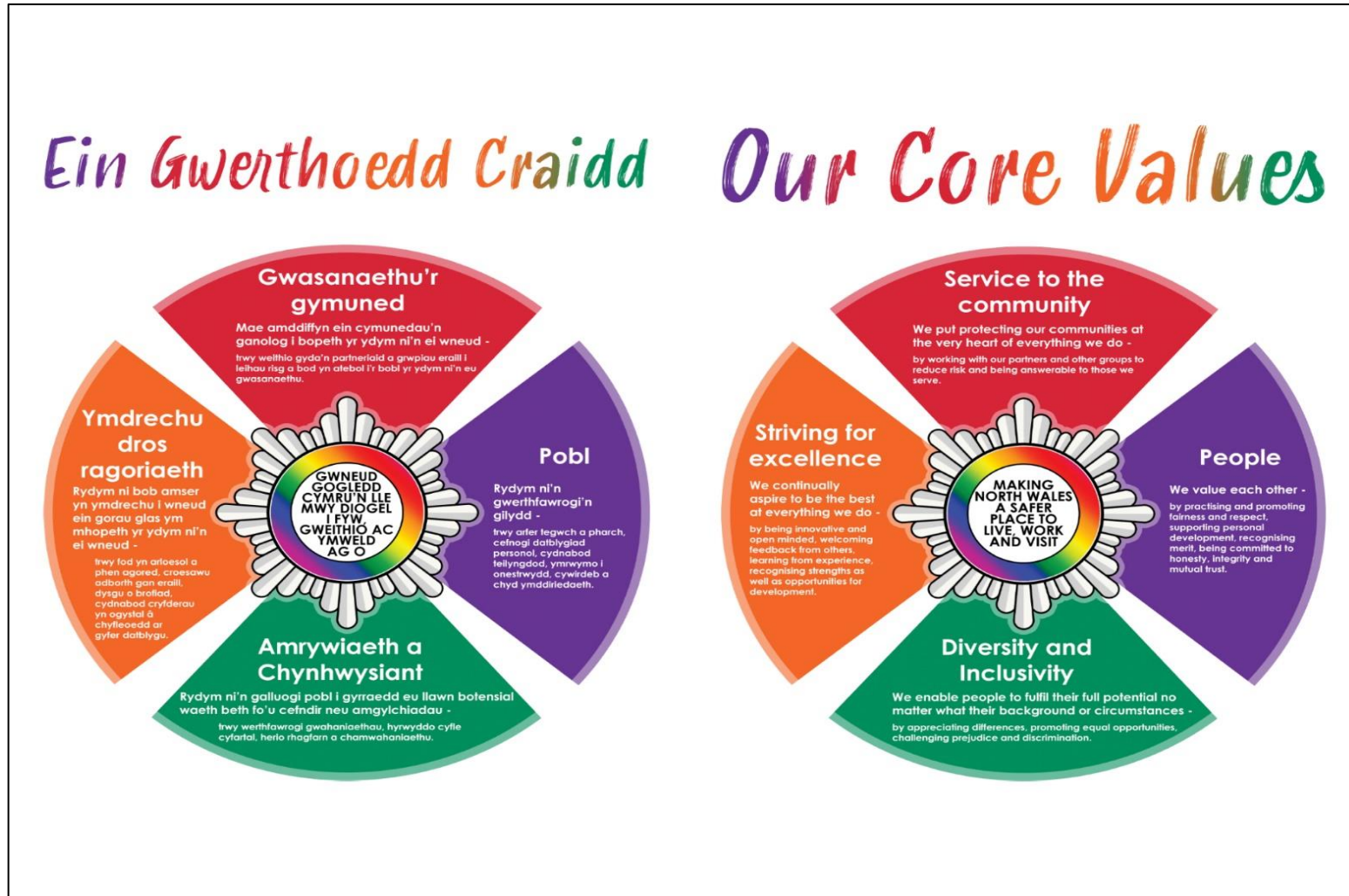
Colwyn Bay Fire Station  
Abergele Road  
Colwyn Bay  
Conwy  
LL29 8AA

### **Wrexham and Flintshire Community Safety Office**

Bradley Road  
Wrexham  
LL13 7ST

## The Fire and Rescue Service Core Values

The Service Core Values summarise the principles by which we operate and the personal values that staff are encouraged to adopt and demonstrate. The core values are:



### **LIFE AND HEALTH**

#### **Equality objective 1 – Life and Health**

Reduce dwelling fires and associated casualties through a comprehensive strategy that specifically targets people who can be shown to be at greater risk because of their particular characteristics and/or circumstances.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, we have:**

- Updated the equality impact guidance and assessment process to include the Welsh Governments Socio-Economic Duty around strategic decisions.
- Continued to develop the well establish relationship with partner agencies to refer high-risk individuals and families, the quality of referrals remains high. In 2019/2020, 30% of all Safe and Well Checks that were carried out were referred to North Wales Fire & Rescue Service by a partner agency. 52.6% of all high priority referrals came from an agency. Agencies are not only key in referring but are also crucial in conveying the Services key messages when interacting with their clients.
- Through the Services Campaign Steering Group planned targeted campaigns and events throughout the year, this brings the Service into direct contact with the targeted groups through a wide range of planned activities from face to face activities to print and electronic media. The campaigns seek to include not only those who are more at risk from fire, but also those who have an immediate contact or caring responsibility for them.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

#### **Equality objective 2 – Employment**

Through our own employment practices, programmes and schemes increase the employment prospects of people who might otherwise find it difficult to gain access to the world of work.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, we have:**

- Attended Skills Cymru and a number of other school careers and Communities First 'Help for Work' events in North Wales to raise awareness of Firefighter and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) careers available within the Fire and Rescue Service.
- Attended various events to promote upcoming Fire Fit and positive action events. This included attending park runs, half marathons and triathlons across North Wales as well as raising awareness at rural groups, such as Young Farmers, youth clubs and rugby clubs 3 x Positive Action days were held in 2019. 28 female's attended. 3 x 8-week Fire Fit programmes ran at 3 venues (Rhyl, Wrexham and Caernarfon) for under-represented groups to follow a prescribed fitness plan to enable them to reach the required fitness level of a firefighter.
- Launched a Whole-time Duty System recruitment campaign in March 2019 we received 1100 applications, from the outset the emphasis was towards achieving a workforce which reflects the diversity of our communities. As a result of the success of our positive action work, 166 (15%) of applications were from females candidates the national average is 5%. Following the completion of 256 interviews the Service recruited 20 full-time firefighters consisting of 11 males, 9 females, 3 BAME, 5 LGBTQ and 2 with a Disability, all achieving the requisite standards.

- Appointed ten apprentices from the second cohort of Firefighter Apprentices who joined the Service in April 2017 and conclude their apprenticeship in April 2020. Three of the cohort who secured a permanent post are female.
- Launched **Firefighter and Future Leader Apprenticeships** in January 2020, the interview process was scheduled to be complete by the end March 2020 for commencing in July, however the process has been placed on hold due to COVID 19.
- The Service has committed to a number of initiatives to support staff:
  - The **Dying to Work Charter** training was undertaken by HR staff dealing with those who are terminally ill, be it employees or supporting employees with a family member.
  - **Financial Wellbeing** was introduced to the Service. These offer education programmes on managing personal finances to support employees to manage their finances in the most efficient way and to deal with financial matters. One of the seven wellbeing goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The Future Generations Minister highlighted providing debt advice and access to credit unions and other community development initiatives is one of '80 simple changes' public bodies can make towards meeting the goals of the Act.
- Members of the Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) have pledged to be Services Diversity Champions. Each member is encouraged to champion and promote individual protected characteristics.
- During 2019 the IFSG carried out a refresh the Service's Core Values and consulted with staff across the Service. The refreshed Core Values were unanimously well received by staff. Executive Group approved the final version and the refreshed Core Values were implemented in December 2019 supported by an internal communication plan, to support and enable embedding of the new Core Values.

## EDUCATION

### Equality objective 3 – Education

Through a comprehensive programme of tailored education and advice provided singly and in collaboration, to empower people living, working and visiting North Wales to continue to reduce their own level of risk from fire and other hazards throughout the different stages in their lives.

#### Working to achieve this objective, we have:

- Introduced a new appraisal process and aligned it to the new Fire and Rescue Service Leadership Framework.
- Established a Wales Ambulance Service Trust secondee and established the delivery of initial and refresher training courses.
- Created bespoke training plans for recruit Whole-time Duty System staff, and for a variety of different cohorts
- Delivered the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) E-learning training package, the current Service personnel completion rate is 93%. We continue to attend VAWDASV training group meetings. The next stage of training Ask and Act is ongoing.
- Created and adapted Assessment Development Centre scenarios that are bespoke to the Fire and Rescue Service in operating environments.



- Delivered online incident and command assessment, development and familiarisation sessions, as part of the All Wales Incident Command Strategy.

## **PERSONAL SAFETY**

### **Equality objective 4 – Personal Safety**

Reduce the risk of death or injury from fires in North Wales by the provision of effective prevention and protection services and emergency fire and rescue response.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, we have:**

- Continued with full workplace audits carried out face to face until the end of 2019. Due to Covid-19 restrictions we have developed a new phone based audit system this includes a section relating to safeguarding ensuring we maintain awareness and knowledge across the Service. Where knowledge gaps are identified, support and direction is given.
- Presented Fire RMS risk information in the Command and Control system during 999 call taking where the addresses are a match. This risk information is referenced as a back-up for operational crews who can access the same high risk information via the Mobile Data Terminals in fire appliances.

## **REPRESENTATION AND VOICE**

### **Equality objective 5 – Representation and Voice**

By being open and accountable about what we do and what our plans are, encourage more people to involve themselves in the process of determining the way fire and rescue services are delivered in North Wales, and aim to increase the range of representative voices that contribute to that process.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, we have:**

- As a member of the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network we held a consultation event in May 2018, members of protected characteristic groups from across North Wales were invited to take part, the comments were collated from the participants during the event, and have been fed into the next Strategic Equality Plan.
- Collaborated with local partners who were asked to share and retweet our messages on social media.
- Used social media as engagement: with tailored Facebook and Twitter messages and reminders issued, these were linked to the consultation document on our website, and a bespoke video.

## ACCESS TO SERVICES INFORMATION AND BUILDINGS

### Equality objective 6 – Access to Services, Information and Buildings

Improve access to information and communications within NWFRS, and improve physical access to fire and rescue service buildings which the public use or visit.

#### Working to achieve this objective, we have:

- Consulted on the Service's strategic objectives for 2020/2021 this was carried out between September and December 2019.
- Developed a bespoke landing page with all consultation details in one place on our website - including the full consultation document, video and details of how to take part in our questionnaire hosted on the consultation Hub.
- Issued a press releases that contained a link to the consultation page on our website
- Participants who signed up for updates on consultation information via our website were issued with a letter from the Authority Chair inviting them to take part in our consultation, with links to the accompanying explanatory document and to the video – all Local Authorities and Town Councils were also issued with the information in the same way.
- Following an accessibility audit of the website training has been provided to key staff. We are currently working to introduce ReciteMe which allows for access to the information in multiple languages
- We ensure that the appropriate means and methods of communication are adopted in promoting priority safety messages identified by the Fire Safety department taking into account multi languages, accessibility, collaboration with established representative forums and groups to help ensure NWFRS is accessible to all.
- Analysed of risk factors that were present at our dwelling fires, this confirms that our approach is targeted at the right risk group and that our use of this information in prioritising our delivery is appropriate.
- Focussed on specific campaigns this year, keeping language simple and supporting key messages with supporting visuals.
- Increased the use of social media, with eye catching campaigns with pictures and videos captured from fire scenes that has resulted in widespread positive 'likes' and sharing of our messages.
- Trained a member of the Professional and Service Standards department in Complaints Handling in the Public Sector. This will assist the authority with ensuring we handle complaints with a customer centric approach and improve service user experience.
- During the year 2019 to 2020 the Service received:
  - 25 complaints - received and resolved.
  - 6 complaints - substantiated.
  - 3 relating to - conduct
  - 2 relating to - driving standards
  - 1 business fire safety related

In accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, specified employment information in respect of employees and applicants as at 31 March 2020 will be published on our website as soon as available (no later than 31st March 2021).