

Report to	Executive Panel
Date	18 March 2024
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (EDI Committee Chair)
Contact Officer	Justin Evans, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Subject	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This paper presents to Members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) the draft 2024-2029 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (the EDI strategy). It presents our commitments relating to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and sets out how we propose to meet them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3 Public bodies are required to publish information demonstrating their compliance with this general duty, as well as equality objectives they have set, and progress made toward achieving those objectives.
- 4 This EDI Strategy sets out how the Authority will meet its legal duty to promote equality and outlines its goals for achieving fairness and inclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) **note the content of the report; and**
 - ii) **Approve the draft EDI Strategy for consultation with Fire Authority Members, staff and relevant stakeholders prior to approval at the meeting of the Fire Authority in April 2024.**

BACKGROUND

- 6 The development of this EDI strategy has been supported by staff representatives and staff network leads within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) EDI Committee.
- 7 The EDI strategy sets out the resources, and key responsibilities that will lead to successful implementation. The strategy identifies four key themes that will form the cornerstones of our future EDI action plans. The strategy identifies key deliverables (objectives) for each theme.
- 8 The EDI strategy sets out a commitment to creating an inclusive workplace and providing high-quality services that are accessible and relevant to everyone in our communities. It lays out a comprehensive framework for action, setting out our commitment to embedding EDI within our practices and processes.
- 9 It is essential that public services are representative of the communities they serve, with staff and leadership that understand and can respond to the needs of diverse populations.
- 10 Effective public services rely on trust, and this is formed with every action and interaction that impact upon people's lives. Public services play a critical role in promoting social cohesion and addressing the inequalities that exist within society.
- 11 Shifts in society, such as changing demographics, have raised awareness about the vital role of diversity and inclusion. As we recognise more of the advantages diversity brings, there has been a stronger focus on EDI across the public sector.
- 12 By recognising the challenges within the sector, as well as incorporating government policies and societal drivers into our EDI Strategy, we are demonstrating our commitment to fulfilling our legal obligations and responding to the evolving needs of our communities. This supports our goal of delivering high-quality public services and will also position us as a leader in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within the fire sector.

INFORMATION

- 13 In Wales, the legal framework for equality, diversity, and inclusion is primarily governed by the Equality Act 2010. This legislation sets out the public sector equality duty (PSED), which requires public bodies, including Fire and Rescue Services, to consider the needs of individuals with protected characteristics in the development and delivery of policies, services, and employment practices.
- 14 Under the duty, public bodies must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. They are required to publish information demonstrating their compliance with the general duty, as well as equality objectives they have set, and progress made toward achieving those objectives.
- 15 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Wales to consider the long-term impact of their decisions on the well-being of current and future generations, including promoting equality, tackling poverty, and fostering cohesive communities.
- 16 The Welsh Language Standards were established under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and later refined under the Welsh Language (Wales) Act 2017. These standards aim to ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language in the provision of services by public bodies in Wales. The standards apply to various aspects of service delivery, including communication, promotion, and interaction with the public.
- 17 It is intended that the draft EDI Strategy will follow the Service internal consultation process and include Members of the Fire Authority, staff and other relevant stakeholders to provide feedback, prior to publishing it following the meeting of the Fire Authority in April 2024.
- 18 The publication of an EDI strategy aligns with the Nolan Principles by promoting openness, accountability, and leadership in addressing diversity, inclusion, and equality within public services.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Direct implications towards meeting the Authority's long-term improvement and well-being objectives.
Budget	No known additional budgetary implications from the introduction of this strategy. Equality impacts are already considered within routine planning arrangements.
Legal	Supports compliance with equality, well-being and Welsh Language legislation.
Staffing	The strategy seeks a more diverse, and inclusive workforce, reflecting a commitment to equity and fairness in staffing practices.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Underscores our commitment to fostering equality, respecting human rights, and promoting linguistic diversity.
Risks	Reduces the risk of legal non-compliance. Addressing EDI concerns proactively mitigates risks associated with discrimination, exclusion, and reputational damage.