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Scene Setting

Introduction
Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS) works with communities and individuals to prevent emergency situations and to provide a response to fire, major flood and road traffic collision emergencies. To help people to stay safe it's important that we understand, talk to and listen to the communities we serve. We need to consider the differing needs of everyone to be able to deliver our services effectively.

We are working hard to embed the principles of equality and diversity in every area of our work. There are some areas where we feel we are making a real difference to the communities we serve, and for the people who help deliver our service. In other areas, we know we need to improve. We have come a long way since we became the first Fire and Rescue service to undergo a voluntary combination process, and emerge as one authority, in 2007. This is our assessment of where we are in our journey towards meeting the Achieving level of the Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Services.

Our equality and diversity journey
Equality and Diversity has, since combination, developed significantly from its initial stages concentrating on Human Resources issues, to beginning to be embedded and established as part of our core business. When the services of Devon and Somerset combined, there were many risk-critical policies to be harmonised rapidly to maintain our readiness for responding. This has presented huge challenges but, more importantly, opportunities for us to develop a wide reaching infrastructure which integrates equality and diversity. There is much more to do, but we are developing and communicating our commitment with a visible equality and diversity agenda, which puts an emphasis on both communities and the workplace.

This assessment comes at a time of national political and financial challenges, and of business transformation in the Service. We have re-structured our senior management team and undertaken service reviews including a baseline and follow-up assessment of the whole organisation against the European Foundation for Quality Management model (EFQM). The organisation is going through an extensive transition to a process management framework. Human resources is about to undergo a comprehensive review, in consultation with staff and rep bodies. All processes are being mapped, and all projects aligned under a programme board, providing a unique opportunity to embed equality considerations into every process and project in the organisation. This process, and the recommendations from this peer challenge, will inform our equality strategy and objectives in 2012.

Our purpose
The purpose of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service is to do what we can to help keep everyone safe from fire and road traffic collisions. We develop a bespoke Local Community Plan (station plan) for each community area around our fire stations. Each plan is unique to that area and contains the actions we will take to reduce risk and improve community safety. The plans are informed by a community risk profile which brings together historic incident data, demographic, lifestyle, commercial and infrastructure risk factors.

Our mission is: Acting to Protect and Save.

Our vision is: Devon and Somerset – a safer place for people, communities and businesses.

Core values
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service support and promote the principles and practice of the nationally developed Core Values for the UK Fire and Rescue Service. You will find more information about our Core Values in our work throughout this narrative.

The Authority
The Authority is made up of 25 Members appointed by the four constituent authorities, Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council. In addition, there are
currently three Independent Members of the Standards Committee. The equality and diversity champion member is Cllr Sara Randall-Johnson.

The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority operates with the following committee structure: Resources Committee; Human Resources Management and Development Committee; Audit and Performance Review Committee; Community Safety and Corporate Planning Committee; Standards Committee; and the Capital Programme Working Party. As we are developing our commercial capability to help address the financial challenges faced by all public bodies, we also have a Commercial Services Committee. Equalities currently sit under the governance of the HRMD Committee, and the Director of People and Organisational Development.

**Organisational Structure**

Our Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) and Senior Management Board (SMB) of directors oversee the strategic direction of the Service. The Service Improvement Group (SIG) is a group of senior managers who monitor performance and drive continuous improvement. The Community and Workplace Equalities Manager is a member of SIG. Service Delivery Group (SDG) informs and links strategy and performance to service delivery. There are several other groups driving service improvement and engagement with employees, including the Corporate Equalities Group.

**Our Workforce**

We have 85 fire stations, the second largest number in England, and 2,300 committed and dedicated staff. The extensive rural aspect of our counties means that the majority of our operational workforce - 1,229 - are retained and usually have a primary occupation in addition to fire fighting. 513 of our operational personnel on stations are wholetime, and we have 17 volunteers. We have corporate staff and uniformed staff with a wide range of professional skills delivering our business support functions. Service headquarters (SHQ) is in Exeter, and we have two major administrative centres in Taunton and Plymouth, where we also have a training centre. Our Training Academy is developing new sites and facilities, and we also have a national resilience station at SHQ.

**Our counties and communities**

Within the two counties of Devon and Somerset, which cover 10,000 sq kilometres, the population of 1.6m is focused in the principal cities and towns of Plymouth, Taunton, Torquay, Exeter, Bridgwater, Barnstaple and Yeovil. The remainder of the population lives in widely spread, relatively small towns and villages and extremely rural locations. This situation presents challenges were response times are critical, and makes the targeting of vulnerable groups, who may be doubly disadvantaged by the impact of living rurally, all the more important.

Ethnic minority representation in the area was 1.7% according to the ONS census 2001. The Labour Force Survey shows us that this has increased significantly in urban areas, with wide local variations across the counties. The working age population of ethnic minorities for example, which we based our recruitment targets on in 2009, is 5.29%. This ranges from almost 0% in some rural areas to 13% in an urban centre, such as Plymouth. Latest schools data indicates an increase across all groups in the ethnic minority population. The largest migrant worker population in the Southwest is Polish.

In Devon as a whole, 21% of the population is over 65 years of age. In Somerset 20%, of the population is over 65. Based on further information from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) census 2001, it is indicated that approximately one in five people in the southwest are living with a disability. New data is awaited from the recent census. The southwest has the largest percentage of Gypsy/Traveller caravans on unauthorised sites. Details about how we use and share different data, map and target communities at risk are discussed in Community Engagement and Delivering Effective services.

**Leadership, Promoting Inclusion and Accountability**
Setting our Priorities
To ensure we deliver our services to communities, three strategic principles focus all our work:

- Work with people, communities and businesses to make Devon & Somerset a safe place to live, work and visit
- Respond to local, regional & national emergencies with the appropriate skills & resources
- Work hard to be an excellent organisation.

These are set out in our Corporate Plan. The Equality Framework is a performance indicator in our Corporate Strategy. The integrated risk management plan (IRMP) forms part of the DSFRS Corporate Plan.

The activities in the Corporate Plan inform the Department Plans and Local Community Plans All the local community plans are available on our website.

Performance reports are considered monthly by the Service Improvement Group, the Senior Management Board and relevant reports quarterly at member’s committees such as the Human Resources Management and Development, Audit and Review, and Resources committees. Performance is reviewed annually in the end of year performance report.

The key driver to addressing risk and providing an effective service is a requirement to consider individual needs and target the most vulnerable groups to deliver our services effectively. To help us, our Single Equality Scheme, Making the Connections, is integrated into our department objectives.

Sharing our vision of equality with communities, partners and our people
The format and content of the single equality scheme was developed with input from members of staff from across the organisation and influenced by external groups reflective of different strands of diversity, detailed in the report, Who informed Making The Connections.

Our key equality objectives are:

- Equality mapping: building profiles of our communities so we know where to target our prevention work
- Building relationships with community partners and reflective groups and networks
- Ensuring that from a planning stage to the point of service delivery, and from authority member to frontline firefighter, we exhibit respect for all difference whether social, economic, cultural, religious or national
- Being tough on bullying and harassment
- Promoting positive images of all kinds of difference
- Encouraging external and internal communities to be involved in our Service improvement journey
- Assessing all our policies and practices to find out the impact they might have on any particular community or on human rights

Making the Connections is a 100 page document, and details our priorities by function, for example, Prevention, Protection, Response and Human Resources. To promote both our equality objectives and our commitment to equality and diversity, we also produced an overview, Considering Needs. We raised awareness of the equality scheme and the development of the overview by launching a competition for the children of Devon and Somerset to design the front cover with an illustration themed ‘People are different’. The judging panel included the previous equality and diversity member champion, Cllr Andrew Eastman. Considering Needs was distributed across Devon and Somerset to community hubs and networks and is available on our intranet and website along with other equalities information.

Our website carries a news desk which features community stories, information and safety campaigns. We will be using facebook and twitter in our consultation and encouraging the public to ‘join our conversation.’ Our stories, information and safety campaigns are regularly communicated to communities via targeted media. Examples of press releases are included throughout this report.
The Service Magazine, Your Shout! is the printed internal magazine produced to keep staff informed of activities taking place throughout the organisation. The magazine regularly includes community and workplace equalities related articles. The Alert Newsletter is a regular newsletter that issued for distribution of news on projects or key issues for the Service, such as the leadership contract. We have an intranet site featuring all departments. This site has some improvements to be made, but it is easily accessible to staff and keeps them up to date on the latest news by video cast as well as written text. Our community safety and consultation departments have set up discussion boards for remote working staff to talk through the latest developments in their areas of expertise. The plan will be to evolve these discussion boards to other departments to enable teams in across the service to work more closely with teams at SHQ.

**Demonstrating Leadership**

The Service is a corporate member of Networking Women in the Fire Service, National Disabled Fire Association and Asian Fire Service Association. Examples of annual events where the service has recently engaged with, and demonstrated its commitment to, diverse communities are:

- Exeter and Plymouth Respect festivals
- Chinese Business Association Regional event, attended by the CFO
- Diwali / Eid celebration event, attended by the CFO
- Glastonbury festival
- Exeter, Torbay and Brighton Pride
- Gypsy Traveller History Month
- International Women’s Day – Sponsorship of Exeter event and Firefighter Donna Nelmes took part in panel discussions at ‘Jobs for the Girls’ event and ‘Women and Ambition’
- Networking Women in the Fire Service – Corporate Members and support staff to attend the annual conferences
- Sponsorship of Exeter University Netball Club
- Marie Curie Ladies Driving Challenge.

This year the Senior Management Board, along with LGB equality champion firefighters, raised the rainbow flag on **IDAHO day** (International Day Against Homophobia). The service has a senior LGB equality champion on the SMB, and the DCFO and ACFO marched along with FFs at the Pride Festival. The service is a Stonewall Diversity Champion and the leadership support for this community and our LGB colleagues is measured annually with the Stonewall Equality Index. The Communities and Workplace Equalities team have designed a guide, launched by the SMB LGB champion ACFO Pete Smith, to instil a better understanding of how we can improve and build relationships to support our lesbian, gay and bisexual friends, colleagues and communities.

The CFO also supported the launch of WANDS, the Women’s Action Network Devon and Somerset. This network was established to help women, who make up a small percentage of the total workforce, to reach their full potential and to learn from and support each other. WANDS can also help the development of the Service by identifying any cultural issues, linked to women being a minority, which might need to be addressed. WANDS is linked to Networking Women in the Fire Service.

A recent report into rising racism in Plymouth, one of our main urban areas, has prompted the CFO to spend a day with the Plymouth and Devon Race Equality Council, to see how can work with the REC to improve our engagement with BME communities and work with them to address hate crime.

The DSFRS Leadership Expectations Contract was launched in August 2011. The concept was borne out of the sharing of good practice between Devon & Cornwall Police, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service and Devon and Somerset. The original drive was applied from the Chief Fire Officer. We took the models in use with D&C Police and DFRS and began a consultation process with SMB, SIG, our own Leadership trainers and a cross section of employees.

**Member Engagement**

We have an induction programme for new Members, based on a regional model that we were instrumental in developing, which includes equality and diversity. All Members are provided with an Information Pack. Additionally, Members have attended the Leadership Workshop run by the Fire
Service College and all members are required to sign up to LGA Equality Charter. Members have a role profile which refers to our core values.

In addition to public meetings, a Members Forum is held each month to which all Authority Members are invited. The Forum provides a very useful opportunity for discussion on a wide range of strategic issues facing the Authority. All members are to take part in a workshop on considering equalities risks and benefits in decision making in December. In 2010, we developed a role description for an Equality Champion member. The purpose of the role is to assist the Authority in fulfilling the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and to assist the Authority to achieve Excellent against the EF FRS by 2014. All members are being involved in this current assessment process so we can improve their engagement and capacity to challenge further. Members attended a voluntary seminar on Gypsies and Travellers arranged in 2010. The Chair, Cllr. Mark Healy has worked with Fire Kills on a film for Social and Private Landlords.

**Monitoring the equality action plan and the PSED**

Importantly, all the actions in our equality action plan form part of department plan objectives, which inform the delivery of our three strategic principles. They are monitored by department heads, and the progress of the scheme was monitored by the HRMD committee and the Senior Management board in January 2011. As we are developing new ways of working in our business transformation project, which means some remaining actions form part of new projects, the scheme actions will be monitored and reported corporately again by December and published by the specific duties information deadline. Our developing Corporate Equalities Group will review progress and set and monitor new objectives to meet the specific duties, referring and reporting to the Authority, SMB and SIG. Any outstanding actions in Making the Connections will be completed. The Community Safety action, to tailor and target community safety advice was influential in developing the new approaches in delivering a targeted and tailored prevention service. (page 9)

In addition to the review of our progress against our equality action plan, we are improving both our internal and external accountability. The Audit & Review Team will be carrying out a review of the Community & Workplace Equalities Team in early 2012. This will include examining how the equality action plan is implemented and monitored. Equalities are also to be integrated into internal audits. Our equalities performance overview was published in the CLG annual report.

The Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Services has been built into our corporate strategy as an indicator of success (with a target of attaining the Excellent level by 2014) as it is considered the best way to attain a thorough assessment of how we are meeting our duties. The service carried out a mock assessment exercise against the Achieving level of the Equality Framework in May 2010. Whilst the LGID consultants felt we were ready for the Achieving assessment, and were making a difference in our community engagement, they identified key areas for improvement, which included Equality Impact Assessments and member engagement.

**A real consideration of equalities**

Our previous Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) method had a two tier screening approach and, as a result, policies were sometimes screened out of equality considerations when they really needed further exploration. As part of a regional project, DSFRS has developed a new methodology for considering and analysing equality – the Equality Risk and Benefits Assessment (ERBA). Developed from a regional project to discuss engaging managers in EqiAs and looking for sector lead good practice, the new methodology uses a risk analysis approach, similar to that used by Cheshire FRS, which is already used extensively in the organisation. This allows policy managers to assess the potential for disadvantage or discrimination, and encourages the real consideration of the potential benefits and opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations. A range of guidance materials have been produced to enable better consideration of risks and benefits. The ERBA approach is being delivered in workshops to teams. Any risks relating to equality will also be held on the Corporate Risk Register, ensuring appropriate ownership and monitoring. Although newly launched after piloting, this approach is already producing better quality assessments.
When the ERBA was piloted on the Community use of Stations policy, it highlighted the need for a clear strategy around Community Use of Stations – underlining the Making the Connections action to proactively bring the community into stations, and to concentrate on where the risk profile is the greatest. This strategy, when developed and consulted on will inform the way we use community stations and our capital programme in the future.

Our ambition, to improve the scrutiny of our equality considerations was to establish a group of staff and community members to steer and scrutinise our equalities performance. The LGID consultant’s advice was to establish an internal group first. The Corporate Equalities Group has met three times with terms of reference which include assisting the service to meet its Public Sector Equality Duty, by reviewing evidence, setting equality objectives and scrutinising key ERBAs. It is planned to introduce community and voluntary sector members to the group to improve our external scrutiny, and also to set up a digital consultation bank of CVS members and the wider community.

The Officer for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS) has a key role in liaising and building relationships with groups and helping to identify and remove or mitigate disadvantage. Through the OCVS, we can seek external advice and scrutiny of relevant policies and ERBAs with reflective networks we have strong relationships with. The OCVS is also producing community engagement guides, in consultation with the relevant groups, which improve knowledge and assist in better quality ERBA considerations. Guides developed include the Deaf Community, Migrant workers and, currently in development, Gypsies and Travellers. The OCVS also advises on consultation and supports and assists groups to find useful networks and bridge gaps in engagement with vulnerable people in their areas. The OCVS is a member of the Community and Workplace Equalities team.

**Procurement**

The Procurement Department at DSFRS:

2. Actively collaborated on the production and content of the CFOA SW FRS Procurement Strategy 2009-2013, which was subsequently adopted by DSFRS.
3. Undertakes all procurement activities ethically & in accordance with the [Procurement and Contract Regulations 2006](#), ensuring that all tenders and quotations are conducted fairly and transparently and that suppliers are treated equally. The provisions of the [Policy on Gifts and Hospitality](#) and of the [Strategy for the Prevention and Detection of Fraud and Corruption](#) are strenuously adhered to.

Where the value of the goods or services exceeds the relevant financial threshold, tender exercises are completed in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (as amended) – which enshrines the ‘fair and transparent’ approach to the procurement process.

Specific guidance relating to equality and diversity in procurement has been compiled and has been circulated to key procurement personnel. We have also developed a suite of training courses and materials for the Fire and Rescue Sector which includes a specific sustainability equalities and diversity module. With the SWFRS’s an extensive library of guidance was developed for procurement & contract officers and also for suppliers, which was circulated amongst the SW Region FRS’s procurement community and sent to regional suppliers. Information for suppliers is published on the DSFRS [website](#) pages and the national BlueLight e-tendering solution links to this. This ensures that Equality and Diversity matters are considered during the whole procurement process, including planning and evaluation, and the profile of the equalities agenda is raised internally and with key suppliers. (2.4.3) A procurement strategy report guide has been compiled and has been circulated to key procurement personnel leading on major projects. The Standard Terms and Conditions for Goods and Services, which include clauses relating to Equalities, are incorporated in all major contracts.

Guidance from other professional bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply and EU, is sought and taken into consideration in planning the overall process. The Procurement Department personnel are all members or associates of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply and abide by their [Code of Ethics](#).
The Procurement Department at DSFRS has standard documentation in place to ensure that information (where relevant to the Procurement) in relation to Equality and Diversity is obtained from potential suppliers during the pre-qualification questionnaire stage. We have proactively collaborated with other FRS’s in the SW Region, to develop standard documentation for regional tenders, led by the Regional Procurement Manager. Suppliers are also asked to declare whether, in the last three years, any findings of unlawful discrimination have been made against their organisation by any court or industrial/Employment tribunal or whether their organisation been the subject of a formal investigation on the grounds of alleged unlawful discrimination. If this is the case, we will follow up and ask the supplier what steps they took as a result of the finding or investigation. On a regional level, we have worked with suppliers by providing equality and diversity feedback and reviewed their progress for significant value contracts.

Where the product or service to be procured has been assessed as having a ‘high’ equalities impact for the Service, community or end users, these impacts are taken into consideration in the specification and selection of the goods/services. For example, in the provision of PPE for fire-fighters, a mission critical supply, it was crucial to take into account and obtain clothing that addressed differing physiology between men and women, addressing issues over fit, comfort and protection. Bristol Uniforms Ltd were selected and their products had been subject to robust scrutiny and testing by Firebuy, the national procurement hub for FRS’s (now defunct.)

The outcomes from the above include:
1. raised awareness of the equalities agenda within the Procurement Department, across the Service and in the supply market as a result of their involvement/supervision of tender exercises and available guidance & training:
2. ensured transparency and fairness in the tender process
3. procurement of goods and services that take into consideration the needs of end users.

**Improving Procurement**

Identified areas for improvement include user engagement and consultation, supplier engagement, development, performance management and feedback and internal processes, guidance, documentation and training. Our Procurement Department aims to become a national centre of excellence for procurement within the Fire and Rescue Sector. A transformation project is currently underway, which will bring in significant improvements in policies, procedures and practices. The business case for the project has been approved and additional resources are now in place. A robust plan of work packages has been agreed and allocated with the aim to complete all tasks by the end of March 2012.

**Representative bodies**

The Service has extended the recognition of trade unions from the FBU and UNISON to include the RFU and FOA. This ensures that as many staff as possible have the opportunity to be collectively represented for the provision of information, consultation and negotiation purposes. The unions are fully engaged in consultation, guided by the Recognition, Consultation and Negotiation Arrangements Policy and have a significant role to play in shaping the future of the Service. As a key stakeholder, rep bodies are encouraged to take part in the consultation on the Corporate Plan and the FBU in particular have participated in this including presenting to the Authority members.

There are formal Industrial Relations Committees and also informal meetings in relation to specific topics e.g. policy development. Union representatives also meet the CFO/DCFO on a regular basis for strategic briefings. Representatives also take part in other working groups e.g. Staff Survey Group, well@work, Aerial Appliances and Health and Safety groups. The Service has also formed Job Evaluation panels for support staff and UNISON has an equal number of representatives as the Service. Similarly, there are panels for Wholetime re-grading.

As part of the Industrial Relations Committee (IRC) arrangements, matters that relate to delivery on equality & diversity objectives are discussed, at a strategic, service group and local level, such as the production of policies such as maternity, paternity & adoption leave, bullying & harassment, welfare, absence management, promotion and recruitment and flexible working. The Service also has a Joint
Safety Committee which includes TU representatives, managers and staff from other relevant areas of the Service, for example, HR, Risk & Insurance and Estates.

Examples of success include the introduction of retained (on-call) staff who are part-time workers being given access to apply for ‘Wholetime’ positions and for the Assessment and Development Centre (ADC) process for progression. This is a complete cultural change for the Service and one embraced by all as a fair approach for our staff. Another excellent example of TU reps being able to fulfil a positive role is Job Evaluation whereby Service and TU Reps provided joint briefing sessions for all staff and have formed JE panels to evaluate positions within the Service. Unison and FBU reps both sit on the Well at Work group as employees.

Improved involvement of rep bodies in Equality objective setting and evidence review is needed. To this end, FBU, unison, RFU and FOA have been invited to be permanent members of the Corporate Equalities Group. A joint statement between the Service and the unions conduct during any forthcoming industrial action on pensions has been produced.

**Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement**

**This section explores how we engage communities, deliver our services and work with partners to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups.**

**Measuring satisfaction, listening and talking to communities**

The integrated risk management plan forms part of the DSFRS Corporate Plan. Every year the Corporate Plan (including the IRMP) is reviewed with key stakeholders and the community invited to comment over a 12 week consultation period. Last year’s consultation included direct email contact with a number of key community and voluntary sector groups. Initial Equality Risks and Benefits assessments were publicly available as part of the consultation of 2011/12 to 2013/14 plan. The Audit & Review strategic and annual plans identify and plan ongoing service reviews. Where appropriate, the implementation of the IRMP is built into the scope of audit reviews. A recent example of this was the 2010-11 Protection Audit that looked to analyse how effectively protection activities were targeted using a risk based methodology.

Engagement is to be improved greatly in our next consultation round with community focus groups and events with key communities and business leaders.

Quality of Service questionnaires are sent to a sample of people after domestic and non-domestic incidents, home fire safety visits and fire safety checks and audits. At the end of each financial year a full report is produced, including benchmarking results with other FRSs. All surveys and consultations are published [here](#). An activity in the Draft Corporate Plan 2012/13 - 2014/15 seeks to improve community involvement in planning safer communities. To achieve this we are looking to establish new ways to meet with our communities to involve them in planning how we match our resources to risk, including community safety activities and to share information, data and neighbourhood influence.

**Participatory Budgeting**

DSFRS is the [first FRS in England](#) to be a lead or be a major partner in a Participatory Budgeting (PB) event. PB directly involves local people in making decisions on the spending priorities for a defined public budget. This means engaging residents and community groups, representative of all parts of the community, to discuss spending priorities, make spending proposals and vote on them. DSFRS will be running 4 PB pilots in 2011/12, one of the first will be in Honicknowle in Plymouth. Here residents will be given the opportunity to put forward proposals for projects they would carry out to help reduce anti-social behaviour. Where appropriate projects are put forward residents will be asked to make a short presentation to the rest of their community. The local community will then vote to decide which projects will be awarded money.

**Mapping and targeting vulnerable groups**

Risk maps and Local Community Plans are produced for each station ground. Risk groups, in relation to dwellings, are prioritised and are focused on the UK Fire and Rescue Service’s nationally identified

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definitions of vulnerable people with regard to fire safety and, importantly, further groups identified by local studies carried out by DSFRS, Dorset FRS and Exeter University using DSRFS Historical Data, Police Crime Data and the population profile (Demographics). Risk groups are located through the use of the Experian Mosaic population profiling tool. All this information is pulled together into Group Area Profiles for use in response and education. Our targeting team also produces ‘problem profile’ documents, for example, road safety, barn fires and accidental dwelling fires. In addition to using Mosaic, we are members of partnership groups with whom we share data and best practice. Examples of data shared include; profiles of migrant workers in South Somerset, Hate Crime data and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation for Torbay.

**Evaluating partnerships and initiatives**

DSFRS uses a Partnership Working Framework to enable effective partnership working and which is evaluated and provides the best outcomes for the community and value for money for the authority. The Framework was launched in 2010, however there is evidence that it still needs to be embedded and utilised more effectively. This was recognised in our recent EFQM report. Examples of partnership work include: South West Ambulance Service The British Red Cross Magna Housing Environment Agency

Our Activity Review and Evaluation Policy and Toolkit allows all Community Safety activities to be evaluated. It supports accountability, effectiveness, and sharing of best practice, both within the service and with partners and other FRs. All Community Safety partnerships and activities are subject to an Activity Review and Evaluation process. This too is still to be fully embedded across the service. At the point of a Home Safety Visit, additional data is now collected via the Home Safety Form and a voluntary equalities monitoring form. This level of data was not previously collected and will allow us to analyse the groups of people who are receiving visits and the risk category they fall into. We work increasingly across the service area with the community and voluntary sector and the Service is signed up to local Compact principles regarding working with third sector organisations. The Officer for the Community and Voluntary Sector was involved in the compilation of 2 new codes of practice for the Compact in Devon, namely Community Groups and Partnerships.

**Partnership working**

**Strategic partnerships**

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority is in the rare situation of having four strategic partnerships within its geographic area. Our strategic partnership work is focused on the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Area Agreement. We produced a film, *Working in Partnership*, demonstrating the importance of partnership working, which includes comments from key partners about the role we play (disc). We contribute to the objectives of improving community safety and other themes in the four LSPs within our boundary. Torbay; Plymouth Devon Somerset

“DSFRS are key partners in all community safety activity in Somerset, including those groups and projects that deal with specific and wider equalities issues. In Somerset there is a complex network of partnerships which requires high level commitment which is always upheld by DSFRS. The Somerset Community Cohesion forum, for instance, is a well developed network of equalities and community safety champions who work to improve access to services and support for all communities in Somerset as well as other cohesion issues. An example of work underway is to create a new and improved service to support victims of all types of hate crime in the county. DSFRS will be heavily involved in this work as a contributory partner, dedicating resource and commitment to improving service delivery.” Lucy Macready, Somerset CC.

We recognised that our information governance system needed reviewing, potentially disadvantaging some of our vulnerable groups as we weren’t able to maximise data sharing with some partners. Information Governance policies, procedures and processes are fundamental to improving how we achieve the appropriate controls and security. Resourcing this work will ensure we use our information to maximum effect and maximise our data sharing opportunities with partners. Within this work we will look to meet the ISO 27001 standard.
Equality and diversity in our operational response

Vulnerable people in major incidents
On the 29 October 2008, the East Devon area suffered an exceptional storm, which led to extensive flooding in Ottery St Mary and some surrounding villages. After the incident all the agencies involved discussed the issues relating to vulnerable people who can be more at risk in major incidents, such as the very old, very young and people living with certain disabilities. The result was the Local Resilience Forum Vulnerable Persons Framework which informs our major incident response. The single equality scheme includes an action for Training and Development to include casualties who live with disabilities (physical, learning disabilities and mental health issues) in training scenarios. Further planning by our Response and Resilience Teams will also be informed by the NHS operation Milo and our own scenarios, such as Exercise Hilton a partnership exercise: ‘Equality Impact Assessment for a Major Incident Response’. One of our own Firefighters initiated an Urban Search and Rescue mass decontamination exercise with the Bangladeshi community in Devon, which improved engagement with the community and provided learning points for communication in major incident response. Our Control staff who co-ordinate our 999 response have access to instant translation should an emergency call be made by someone for whom English is not their first language. We promote emergency text messaging schemes so that Deaf people can use the 999 system.

Making a difference and developing better outcomes

Examples of where we are developing better outcomes & making a difference in communities.

Children and Young People
Young people in Torbay have joined our ‘999 Community Cadets’. This is the first known joint venture of its kind in the UK, with both the police and fire services working together to set up an emergency services cadet scheme. Other agencies under the 999 umbrella present at cadet nights, such as the ambulance service and coastguard. Cadets are aged 13-16 years of age, and meet every Thursday evening to learn new skills such as drill practice, fire safety and crime reduction, in addition to anti-bullying messages, physical fitness and diversity awareness. The girls attended our women’s network (WANDS) launch.

We provide a number of schools talks packages aimed at the various Key Stages and in line with Ofsted and LEA requirements, which include not only safety information, but also respect and citizenship in line with National curriculum requirements. Our resources provide a ‘hands-on’ tool for teaching the identification of potential risks and hazards for young people in KS1 and KS2. The benefit of such a resource is that tailored lesson plans for any individual, special need and/or age group can be created. The resources support many learning styles (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic) and can be transferred to different linguistic requirements. We also provide a range of fire safety posters and leaflets targeted at children and young people.

Learn 2 Live and Choice and Consequences involve successful partnership work with Road Safety Partnerships in both Devon and Somerset. Learn 2 Live is a theatre based production that is aimed at those young people learning to drive. These college students are given the opportunity to listen to the stories from real people who are still coming to terms with the enormous cost a fatality has on them and their community. Young people can get involved through a website and facebook page www.learn-2-live.org.uk

Building positive futures

Boxing Clever
Taunton fire station is involved in a project to improve community cohesion and the life chances of young men in the area through boxing. Originally the boxing club was set up to service the east side of Taunton. This area is one of the more deprived parts of Taunton with a recognised issue with boys and young men being involved in anti social behaviour. The boxing club was due to close, due to a lack of appropriate accommodation - so a community fire station was offered. The support for the club also comes from Taunton Deane District Council, Avon and Somerset Police and the local action teams. The head coach spoke of the difference that the club had made to several young people who had increased self confidence and self esteem, had a found a focus in life, and as a result were
changing their lifestyles. Instead of being involved in anti social behaviour, they were keeping fit to get better at boxing. Other initiatives include:

- **Soccer Safe** - Community based programme working in partnership around anti-social behaviour.
- Swim Safe and Cycle Safe - Initiatives to improve safety and public health
- Phoenix - 6 month group intervention programme increasingly aimed at young people who are not in education, employment or training
- Firebreak – 12 week School based group programme 1 day per week out of school. Aimed at getting young people back on track within school
- Firesetters - Individual intervention programme aimed at young people who have displayed issues with Fire Setting behaviour.
- The Honest Truth – worker with learner drivers through their instructors to highlight the dangers of anti-social driving.

**Supporting independent living for people with learning disabilities**

Since 2005, the Service has been a part of a partnership initiative steering group - the Keeping Safe group. The group has developed a resource for people with learning difficulties, based on an original concept by Hertfordshire Police and as a result of a survey regarding hate crime against service users. Following consultation with service users who live with learning difficulties, an A5 pack has been produced, enhanced to include information on fire safety, internet safety rights, reporting hate crime and using other emergency services. Feedback so far shows that the pack is improving knowledge and confidence for people with learning disabilities, highlighting rights and importantly tackling hate crime against this vulnerable group. The scheme has been adopted by Cornwall CC. We are currently funding the production of a fire safety film with and for people with learning disabilities.

**Migrant workers**

In early 2007, the Service was included on the Devon and South West Regional Migrant Worker Steering Group. An early task was to develop a Welcome Pack in partnership for new migrants. Based on consultation and a review of existing resources, an A5 pack including leaflets which can easily be updated was produced and distributed. Migrant Worker Hubs were set up in order to monitor and review Service provision. DSFRS recently facilitated a multi agency consultation event where the community were able to ask questions about a range of services and influence development.

**Road Safety - Partnership T5 Vehicles**

Two VW T5 Transporters and a Subaru have been converted into educational vehicles to engage with young drivers and give road safety advice. Each Transporter has been redesigned to a high specification and includes a 42" plasma TV showing educational material, a stereo system, Wii driving game and DVD player. This is designed to engage and educate young and emerging drivers. The T5 is used at many events including the Learn to Live shows, which typically play to a audience made up of more than 2,000 college and sixth form students. The vehicles were commissioned with the support of the Department of Transport funded Country Mile project.

**The Deaf Community**

DSFRS works with the Deaf community developing the pledges in the Devon British Sign Language Charter. In 2005 as a result of consultation with Deaf people, an SMS number was introduced so that information can be passed both ways in a format that is accessible to the community. Four partnership consultation events, ‘Sign Vision,’ have been held where the needs of the community are reviewed. We provide Fire Safety advice in BSL and are providing Deaf culture and communication awareness training across the organisation where identified as relevant to role. 'Flashcards' for emergency situations have been produced by a Torbay Firefighter and are to be introduced to Deaf community for feedback. We also provide BSL interpreters for engagement such as Home Fire Safety visits as required. We have a text information line to allow Deaf people to contact DSFRS for non-emergency advice and information (text 078 00 00 2476). We also part funded and took part in a film exploring and promoting public services for the Deaf community. To highlight Deaf Awareness Week, an afternoon of activities for Plymouth’s deaf children and their families was arranged.
Travelling communities
Our engagement with travelling communities has developed significantly over the past two years, thanks to the community knowledge and commitment of individual firefighters and partnership working with Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officers and Plymouth and Devon Race Equality Council (PDREC). We have some areas of real engagement and improved outcomes, particularly in Torbay and Somerset. Last year we were involved in regional and local events, including running an open training seminar for staff and members, delivered by Devon Race Equality Council. We are key partners in the Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Strategy and the Devon Protocol for unauthorised sites. Work underway includes the development of corporate guidance resources for all Stations to use, with guidance on initial engagement and the particular safety hazards associated with the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller lifestyle, such as a safe distance between dwellings and carbon monoxide detection. A film, produced for to help us attract a diverse workforce, All Fired Up includes a Home Safety Visit in the travelling community. Other examples include: Fair Bridgewater Traveller’s Times

Domestic Violence - ‘Sanctuary’ project
We work with the Family Intervention Project at Safer Communities Torbay, where we have a seconded Firefighter in partnership with the Police Domestic Violence unit and the MARAC team, (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). We visit women and families in referred homes with a Police Officer and decide the best room where a ‘sanctuary’ can be provided. This room is then fitted with a 1 hour fire door, we supply and fit smoke alarms and carry out a Home Safety Visit and supply and fit an arson resistant letter box bag and talk to the family about a fire escape procedure.

Black & Minority Ethnic communities in Plymouth
Amber initiatives provide assistance to migrant workers in the UK. As part of the latest Focus Week held in the Mutley/Greenbank area of Plymouth we worked with the group and audited HIMO’s (Houses in multiple occupation) to assess their compliance with current Fire Safety Legislation. Crews provide interactive engagement, and DSFRS provides financial support for the annual Respect Festival, organised by PDREC and are using Community Safety advocates to attend workshops at local schools to support and encourage attendance at the festival itself which is taking place on 30th October 2011.

We currently enjoy a close working relationship with one of the main RSL’s (Residential Social Landlords) in the City, namely Plymouth Community Homes. We linked up with Open Doors International Language School in Plymouth. Fire safety advice was given to various groups and literature supplied in respective languages with regards to fire safety in the home. We are actively involved in refugee week which is a recognised annual awareness week usually held in the month of June. FATA HE is a West African word which means ‘Inclusion’ and was established in 2001 to redress social and economic inequalities relating to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals, families and groups. DSFRS has a good working relationship with Fata He and the Plymouth Group has supported local events including the Chariot Festival (Hindu Community focused), Hare Krishna Festival, PIETY Day and Unity Plymouth events.

Protection
Advisory and enforcement work needs to be carried out with all communities with sensitivity and clarity. The single equality scheme, Making the Connections includes actions to ensure that our enforcement procedures, where necessary, are carried out with cultural sensitivity, highlighting that the targeting of investigations is always evidence based.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service has subscribed to the National Register of Public Service Interpreters which is the primary source of interpreters who are competent and qualified to operate within the Criminal Justice System. Devon and Somerset is the first FRS in the UK to appear on the list of subscribers to the National Register of Public Service Interpreters.

Arrangements have also been made to secure the services of appropriately qualified interpreters for Deaf people. As a result, DSFRS is able to discharge its duty to enforce the Fire Safety Order fairly, equitably and proportionately for all members of the community in accordance with the explicit requirements of PACE.
**Compliance Framework**

Communications and Protection have been working together on a Compliance Framework project. The project aims to promote understanding of the Fire Safety Order among all sectors of the community; particularly in small to medium sized premises. One focus of the project is aimed at the catering industry and research showed that the ethnic communities were a key focus. Further research was conducted with David Wright, Hate Crime Prevention Coordinator for Devon County Council and Tat Ruck from Devon Grapevine, (a BME social network), and the CWE team. We established the three largest ethnic groups in Devon were Chinese, Bangladeshi, and Turkish. We are preparing a series of workshops and presentations for small enterprises and are due to meet the Sunrise Group in Barnstaple in November, the Chinese Business Association and Bangladeshi restaurant owners in Torbay in December. We are also developing a tailored advice leaflet for the catering industry for use by all FRSs in the South West Region.

**Employment and training**

**Equality aspects of our workforce planning**

A revised workforce strategy was not produced after combination in 2007. Instead, strategic workforce planning was built into the organisation’s Corporate Plan and Business Plans. The Human Resources function is about to undergo a comprehensive review and the approach to workforce planning will be considered as part of that review. Under the current system, the Service has a Corporate Plan which incorporates our mission, vision and our strategy. This includes our 3 strategic principles, of which the third is “To work hard to be an excellent organisation”. The Service commitment within this principle is to make DSFRS one of the best organisations in the UK in which to work. Two of the indicators of success are to achieve Excellent in the Equality Framework and to rank in the top 100 employers in the Stonewall Equality Index by 2014.

The People and Organisational Development plan and Equality Scheme set out actions on key equality issues, for example, workforce diversity, a recruitment code of practice, specific welfare support mechanisms for Lesbian, Gay or Bi-sexual staff, reviews of maternity and paternity policies, appraisals, exit interviews and a bullying & harassment policy. Actions are monitored by senior management and equality scheme actions by SIG, SMB and HRMD committee. HR policies are assessed for equality impacts.

Improved outcomes for employees include: an increased take up on flexible working and job share, work-life balance, increased awareness (for employees, management and members), a reduction of stress related illness and improved career paths for part-time workers such as our Retained staff who can now transfer both ways between duty systems. Staff survey results for 2010 show, that compared to 2008, the proportion of employees who reported that they would be complimentary when speaking about DSFRS as a provider of services, and as an employer, has increased by 28 percentage points (52% in 2008, 80% in 2010).

**Recruitment and positive action**

Over the last few years, there has been a relatively low turnover of staff and therefore limited opportunity to increase diversity in the organisation. The last wholetime recruitment process of summer 2009 saw an increase in the number of applicants who identified as being from minority ethnic backgrounds. Part of that recruitment programme involved making use of our networks and partnerships with established BME targeted media, organisations and networks to disseminate our recruitment messages. Unfortunately, the increased attraction rate translated into the recruitment of only one Firefighter from a BME background out of a cohort of 24.

The Labour Force Survey (a quarterly sample survey of households living at private addresses in Great Britain) in 2008 indicated that the local minority ethnic working age population across Devon and Somerset is 5.29%. However, variation in local areas is significant, being for example 13% in Exeter, 5.6% Mendip and 1.2% in North Devon, and 0% in Sedgemoor. With high retention in wholetime stations, external recruitment currently is in rural retained stations with very low BAME
populations, recruitment is challenging and an increased effort is to be concentrated on retained recruitment areas. We are currently developing relevant performance indicators for women and BME recruitment which we can benchmark with the best performers in the sector. Current percentage of all BME staff is 1.18%.

DSFRS (along with all other UK FRS’s) is trying to increase the percentage of women in operational roles and following the removal of national targets is looking to develop a new target for this and BME recruitment, benchmarked with demographically similar highest performers in the FRS Nationally. The most recent whole time recruitment campaign saw an intake of 2 female firefighters in a cohort of 24, or 12%. However, overall, women make up only 3.35% of our operational workforce. Working with NDFA, we are particularly focused too on getting the message across that disability is not necessarily a barrier to an operational role. The Service is currently working in a regional partnership to introduce an Electronic Recruitment System. This system will enable us to record accurately where the public hear about our vacancies and allow us to target social networking sites and media more easily. A new policy and a recruitment toolkit, underpinned by positive action, is in development to coincide with the launch of the e-recruitment system.

The toolkit includes resources which we have been using for some months. Key messages include; the breadth of the role, future leaders, career progression and flexibility. The imagery demonstrates the diversity in our workforce. The resources include a film, ‘All fired up’, which tells the firefighter’s story, featuring three Firefighters from different backgrounds. We have produced a Recruitment Code of practice for managers, which reflect practices that are already embedded and has equality and diversity and the Equality Act as its foundation.

The employment procedures of the service, including reasonable adjustment practices have been assessed by Job Centre Plus and we have achieved the right to be users of the Two Ticks disability symbol. On appointment to the service, a risk assessment is undertaken and adjustments are made to accommodate the needs of an individual. If the needs of an individual change a workplace assessment is undertaken by our Occupational Health provider and any necessary adjustments made, which can include redeployment to another post.

**Positive Action foundations for the future**

For the past two years we have sponsored Exeter University Netball Club. Our links with the club enable us to progress one of our key recruitment priorities and to provide information to students about fire safety. We launched our women’s network, Women’s Action and Networking, Devon and Somerset, (WANDS), in 2010, to help women support each other, personally and professionally, to help make our workplace a fulfilling, friendly and supportive environment for women to excel and progress in the Service. WANDS has a social networking site and two events, including a launch which was attended by 70 women and a ‘Have a go’ day at Taunton Fire station. The next event is in November at Urban Search and Rescue.

**The working environment**

**Buildings**

The capital program has sought to bring the working environment of both stations and administration buildings up to the standards expected of a modern fire and rescue service to include dignity at work and access requirements. By the end of the 2011-12 programme, some 80% of the total properties in the portfolio will have been refurbished. The Carbon Management Plan has been running alongside this program aimed at improving the working environment. There is also an ongoing programme of Access Audits of all station premises. Annual Condition Surveys are carried out incorporating suitability assessments of all station premises and legislation is adhered to.

**People**

The service promotes flexible working for all our employees, and all applications are considered, over and above legislative need. There is a flexi time scheme and we have a number of employees working flexible contracts, for example; term time, annual hours, condensed working week etc. The Service has implemented a Family Leave policy covering all aspects of General Family Leave provisions. Maternity wear available for our uniformed employees has been improved and a comprehensive
process for undertaking risk assessment for employees during pregnancy and following the return to work after maternity leave is in place. A maternity pack has been produced for pregnant employees to give guidance and advice on maternity matters (available on site). We are currently developing an information pack for Line Managers to give them a better understanding of maternity matters, their responsibilities and how they can support their staff.

DSFRS has actively supported and enabled the development of the National Disabled Fire Association (NDFA), by 3 of its staff, over the last 3 years. In May of 2009, the NDFA was awarded the 'Leadership Team Award' in the CLG Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Equality and Diversity Awards for its positive and proactive work to tackle discrimination against disabled applicants and employees in the UK Fire and Rescue Service, and for: "...its work as an advisory body to FRS employees, recruits and potential recruits, and as a source of expertise for managers." CLG

We have established a dyslexia support group. We have also purchased a screening system and aids including a software solution, Read Write Gold. Posters have been designed to raise awareness and help remove stigma and the group is working towards introducing awareness sessions for managers and the production of a guide. Training & Development have a member on the working group to ensure that any improvement and development work is incorporated into training provision, for example, building in extra time for paper-based exercises.

The service’s Welfare Policy contains information about welfare services and benefits available to staff, ranging from the Staff Supporters network to Mediation and Facilitation Services, Fitness Advisors (FAs) and Gym Facilities, Critical Incident Defusing, National Disabled Fire Association, Sports and Social Association, Childcare Voucher Scheme, Religious and Spiritual Advice, The Fire Fighters Charity. An Index of Welfare Organisations is available for all staff to access on the intranet. Two multi faith Service Chaplains were appointed to support staff and encourage and promote links with local communities.

The Welfare Officer produces regular welfare statistics on the number and types of cases that she’s dealing with, including bullying and harassment, and where sickness absence has possibly been avoided due to her intervention.

Talks are arranged and articles, posters and leaflets are issued on a wide range of welfare-related subjects including: advice for LGB staff, welfare during Ramadan, domestic violence and cancer awareness. Staff Supporters have now been provided with guidance and information on supporting LGB colleagues who are coming out at work. They have also been given useful guidance on the main religions and beliefs within the Devon and Somerset areas. A Fitness survey was introduced in April 2010 for user’s feedback after gym induction, remedial fitness training and 1-to-1 training. This was to gauge effectiveness of Fitness Advisors and to look at ways we can improve the service offered. We also carried out a survey of our Childcare Voucher users to see if our current provider was giving us the best service, from a value for money and customer viewpoint, and investigate any improvements that could be made.

A new Death in Service/Critical Injury policy has recently been launched to ensure all personnel are aware of the actions to be taken by specific staff, should an accident happen to an on or off duty member of staff. It also details the on-going support that should be available to the remaining next of kin for the longer term.

The Joint Safety Committee was established to test and monitor the health of the organisation. The committee monitors trends, near misses and takes a holistic approach to fire fighter and employee safety, which includes psychological factors such as stress.

The results of the Staff Survey in 2008 highlighted that managing stress and achieving a worklife balance can be difficult. In response to this, many things were put in place to improve the situation such as a new Management of Stress Policy and a supporting booklet called Coping with stress. Employees were invited to help the Service address this issue. Volunteers came forward and the well@work group was formed. The group objective is to develop and implement a proactive strategy to raise awareness of stress, and its causes and effects, dispel the stigma surrounding stress and promote ways to improve work/life balance.
Well@work is now chaired by Head of HR. The group run awareness campaigns and, most importantly, have brought stress to the attention of the Senior management and members. This has resulted in regular scrutiny of stress related statistics and in the funding of stress management training for managers, committed to by members, to be completed in 2011/12. The approach is recognised as good practice and is being shared at external events. It has also led to the service signing up to the Mindful Employer charter. The direction of travel is good, but there is still some way to go. *Since 2008, the proportion of employees who agree that DSFRS takes into account your need for a good work-life balance has increased by 9 percentage points (31% in 2008, 40% in 2010).* In 2010, three fifths of employees (63%) disagree that they are emotionally drained by their work and have suffered work related stress.

We saw a considerable reduction in absence due to mental health difficulties, dropping from 2416 days in 08/09 to 1143 in 09/10, which is a reduction of 53%. Disappointingly they have risen again, to 1888 days, which could reflect the uncertainties created by of the current economic climate, but more analysis is required to find out why this might be.

**Diversity Monitoring**

In 2009, we rolled out a new process to collect, update and monitor equality information relating to our staff. One of areas for improvement this highlighted was a very low identification on LGB sexual orientation. This generated a discussion about what needs to be done to achieve an organisational culture and environment where LGB people are comfortable in terms of being ‘out’ in the work place, if they wish to be. We have since joined the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme. As a result of the activities undertaken, such as senior support for IDAHO day, an SMB LGB champion, employee attendance at local and national Pride events and the Stonewall Annual conference, and specific LGB welfare support promoted, two Firefighters have established themselves as LGB champions and are building an LGB network, with the support of the Gay Police Association. Further outcomes will be measured when we re-run our diversity monitoring next year, which will allow us to see whether confidence has increased and more LGB employees self identify. *In the 2010 Staff survey there has been an increase of 9 percentage points who agree that they feel able to be open about their culture, 54% to 63%, and feel able to be open about their religious beliefs 50% to 59% in 2010.*

**Equal pay**

We have in place a job evaluation scheme (agreed with UNISON) for non-uniformed staff and have been through the rank to role evaluation procedure with uniformed staff involving the RFU, the FOA and the FBU. Recently, re-grading application panels have been set up for both groups of staff, both involving the participation of recognised unions. Consequently anyone who believes they may be paid on the wrong grade may apply for a re-grade. Regional work had begun to scope options for equal pay assessment between conditions on role similarities, but this work has not progressed as yet. An equal pay audit is to be completed and published by the end of Jan 2012.

**Equalities and training**

Firefighters receive equality and diversity training as part of their initial training course, and for corporate staff a new induction package is being developed which will supplement the compulsory e-learning package with Welcome days. The Equality & Diversity Training Strategy is under review to improve implementation and content, and a new draft policy, which includes an update of the e-learning package in line with the Equality Act, ensures that equalities training is role relevant and refreshed as a core competence, is in consultation. This new policy is designed to provide more accessibility and flexibility particularly for Retained Firefighters, where there are particular challenges in delivering training due to time and availability constraints. Equalities is a mandatory part of the role development programme. Members receive induction training on equalities and an induction pack, which includes Making the Connections and Considering Needs.

In addition to essentials training, the equalities team have delivered awareness seminars and sessions. An open invitation seminar on Gypsies and Travellers was held in 2010, and was attended to capacity by a mix of 60 staff and members. The session was delivered by the Plymouth and Devon Race Equality Council and the training team included one of our own staff who works extensively with G/T communities. Bullying and Harassment workshops were also undertaken as part of regular Watch
Managers seminars and a round of Core Values focus groups undertaken with all whole time watches in Plymouth, in preparation for a service wide project to promote Core Values in 2011/12. In 2010, 81% of staff reported understanding how the Equalities policy relates to their role, and how their role relates to the delivery of the equalities policy.

All Service Trainers are qualified to a nationally recognised standard (minimum level of PTTLS - Preparing to Teach in The Lifelong Learning Sector). These courses cover learning styles and embed the requirement to cater for learners with different needs. All lecture packages and student notes have recently been reformatted to comply with best practice, corporate branding and British Dyslexia Association guidance relating to dyslexia. Service joining instructions for courses, which have been reviewed in the last year, ask whether students have any special requirements.

Firefighter recruitment and career progression are based on an assessment of Personal Qualities and Attributes, one of which is their Commitment to Diversity and Integrity. This ensures that all staff are assessed on their ability to deal with a range of issues effectively and have an awareness of local community needs at every stage of their career. CDI is given the greatest weighting in some parts of the process, this recognises the importance being placed on this aspect of the role. Informed by the Personal Performance and Development process, the Service’s annual Training Needs Analysis process enables staff and their line managers to identify any additional training or development required for an individual to effectively carry out their role within the community. As a result of this, training is regularly requested and funded for teams or individuals to meet specific needs.

The Service employs an E-Learning Developer whose role it is to develop specific e-learning packages to support the overall delivery of training. This will reduce the impact on RDS staff in terms of time away from their main employment through potentially reducing training delivery days, and increase flexibility in how and when e-learning modules can be completed. All Crew Managers and Watch Managers attend a Managing Learning and Development Course as part of their development, parts of which map to the equality and diversity module.

The Assessment and Development Centre (ADC) process, which is a gateway to access promotion opportunities consists of a series of practical exercises and role plays using actors which simulate real life managerial situations, and staff are assessed on their personal qualities and attributes, including commitment to diversity and integrity, evidenced in each exercise. This ensures that individuals identified as ready for promotion have the personal qualities to be able to deal effectively with the equality and diversity aspects of people management and community engagement. All Operational Service managers attend a modular role development programme on promotion from Crew Manager level upwards, and at each level this includes modules on leadership and management to equip them with the skills they need for their new role at the higher level. These modules are also available to existing staff at those levels and for non-uniformed staff. The middle manager leadership programme, which promotes transformational leadership, has been accredited to national standards. Once managers have completed the module development programme, they are required to successfully apply the newly learned skills in the workplace. Standards of performance are clearly identified through competency frameworks. These are periodically assessed prior to individuals becoming competent in role.

Change management training is being developed for managers to equip them better with the skills they need to manage the changes within the Service. This will not only deal with the practical theory and process side of change, but most importantly the people aspect, so that managers will be able to support their staff whilst implementing the effects of major change programmes at frontline level. This includes training business change managers to provide a link between the change and improvement initiative and employees.

Increasing diversity in our urban centres, concerns of rising racism in Plymouth raised by the Plymouth and Devon Race Equality council and our own recognition of the need to improve awareness of cultural diversity and hate crime in our workforce, has prompted us to scope the implementation of some specific Race training, using our urban stations as a pilot. This will be delivered by Plymouth and Devon Race Equality council in 2012.
Discipline and grievance and bullying and harassment
The Service introduced new discipline and grievance procedures into both Devon FRS and Somerset FRS based on a regionally negotiated template prior to combination. This included training for Senior Points of Contact, HR Practitioners and Investigating Officers. Following combination the training continued Service wide for managers using ACAS as the training provider assisted by HR Officers. An e-learning package has also been developed and the training has been rolled out to all stations.

Following the Employment Act 2008 which repealed the statutory procedure, the Service has developed, in conjunction with the Trade Unions, a new Disciplinary procedure. This incorporates ACAS guidance, simplifies the previous policy and removes some inconsistencies e.g. timing of hearings. There are further guidance documents including investigations and suspensions.

The annual Training Needs Analysis identifies managers who require training in Discipline & Grievance. As part of our continuous development there are 6 monthly conferences in Discipline & Grievances to maintain skills and review lessons learnt from previous cases. A new Bullying and Harassment policy was introduced in 2010 which provides guidance and support for managers and those who are experiencing bullying and harassment. The policy was approved by the FBU and was used by Avon FRS in the development of their e-learning package. Staff supporters are trained in dealing with bullying and harassment and the Welfare officer and Community and Workplace Equalities also provide guidance and support. The welfare officer categorises cases which have not yet been formally reported.

In the 2008 staff survey, 30% of respondents reported they had witnessed bullying or harassment and 22% said they had personally experienced bullying and harassment in the last twelve months. This, regrettably, mirrored the national picture. Much of this had gone unreported. In 2010, the direction of travel is favourable, with a reduction to 26% had witnessed bullying and harassment, and 13% said they had personally experienced bullying or harassment. It is still an intolerable percentage. There is more work to do, and a project to promote core values in 2011/12 will have a focus on clearly defining and taking a tough approach to bullying and harassment. It will also underline to those who were reticent to report it, that the number of people who were satisfied with the way it was dealt with rose by 25 percentage points.

Individual annual performance reviews
The findings of the 2008 Staff Survey identified the need for a harmonised appraisal process for all staff, with 60% stating that they had not had an appraisal. As a result, the Personal Performance & Development (PPD) process was implemented in 2010. A performance management measure has been set up to monitor the completion rates of PPD within the allocated timescales which is reported monthly and discussed at Service Improvement Group meetings.

As part of this process there is an assessment of an individual's Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQA). One of the mandatory PQAs is Commitment to Diversity and Integrity and the individual and line manager has to undertake an evidence based assessment of the individual’s PQA to determine if the individual is displaying the necessary standards of attitude and behaviour. It also requires agreed objectives to be linked to our strategic principles and service plans including the equality action plan. A Service audit was carried out in late 2010 on the PPD process to gain feedback and identify improvements for 2011. In addition, the PPD electronic process was presented to the Dyslexia support group for their comment and approval. A review of year 2 PPD is due to take place over the coming weeks with feedback from Service Delivery representatives in order to continue this process, capture feedback and identify future improvements.

Engaging employees in service transformation
The first DSFRS staff survey was carried out in February 2008, one year after the combination of the new service. The next survey was carried out in 2010, and had an increased response rate of 38%. The final survey questionnaire contained questions under the following subject areas: opinion of the organisation, your job and wellbeing, communications and equality and diversity. Before the 2010 survey, we published ‘You said, we did’ posters and two staff alerts detailing what had changed because of the 2008 feedback, to encourage wider participation. Some outcomes from actions on the last survey and the key areas of improvement and concern from the 2010 survey are discussed
throughout this section. A staff survey steering group analyses and communicates improvements and key areas for concern. A staff suggestion scheme encourages employees to put forward ideas for improving and developing the organisation.

Working groups were set up in 2010 to develop a new strategy for the Service, to move the Service towards Excellence by 2014. At the beginning of 2010 the organisation carried out the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) assessment to help us identify what areas we needed to improve to achieve excellence. Our overall score in the assessment was in the 350-400 range which identified DSFRS as a ‘good’ organisation, whereby some quality management was in place and that we had started on the journey towards continual improvement and our ultimate goal of excellence.

The EFQM assessment also highlighted a number of areas where improvements could be made and, due to the cross-cutting nature of these, it was decided to adopt a structured change transformation programme and a Change and Improvement Team was set-up to oversee this.

The Service delivery and Business Support programme boards are represented by a ‘Business Change Manager; - whose responsibility is to bridge the gap between programme/project and the business area. For Business Support, the Business Change Manager is Jane Sherlock, Director of People and Organisational Development due to the significant implications from Business Support for all staff. Part of the assessment process involves bringing together a group of peers known as the Business Case Assurance Panel – who provide assurance on whether a business case is fit for purpose and make suggestions for improvement. This panel includes the Community and Workplace Equalities manager, and ERBAs are intrinsic to business cases.

At this point in the maturity of the governance process, it is fair to say those stakeholders directly involved with a project/process improvement are engaged, but that wider awareness and engagement needs improving. The Portfolio Board is currently considering improvements to advocacy for change, support and engagement.

A number of employee workshops were run earlier this year to discuss the key proposals in our Corporate Strategy. The results were made available on the intranet, along with the opportunity to discuss some of the proposals further through online discussion forums.

A number of smaller fire engines (known as Light Response Pumps) are being trialled across the area. This came about following feedback from firefighters at a number of stations who pointed out that standard fire vehicles are too large for their station areas and rural routes. The vehicles are still being trialled but early indications are that they have reduced response times.

**Sharing good practice**

The Audit & Review Team have communicated the Audit Commission’s notable practice in FRS’s across the service. As part of the ongoing work of the team, best practice examples are identified (both internally and externally) to help improve service delivery. A recent example has seen the service utilise a fraud & corruption self assessment that has been developed by Dorset FRS to review and improve upon the DSFRS fraud & corruption processes. Community and Workplace Equalities enter awards, engage with national and regional networks, such as South West Equality Network, (SWEN) Devon Equality Partnership and Somerset Equality Officer’s Group (SEOG). We are also involved in events, such as the AFSA diversity challenge and CFOA Innovations events, and funded the NDFA expert advisor from Disability Forward to attend the most recent event. We attend Regional and National HR forums and share and gather information from the LGID Communities of Practice. Required workforce data, and an equalities annual report is/was submitted to CLG.

The Community Safety department use CFOA ‘Prevention and Practitioners’ online forum to look at the best practice of other FRS and share the work of DSFRS. The Experian team have said that
DSFRS’s use of Mosaic is at the cutting edge of data-led information use in all FRSs throughout the UK.

Some members of the Training and Development team visited a range of other FRSs to identify good practice that could be implemented locally (two are due to visit West Yorkshire FRS later this month), and a number of staff are involved in development programmes and Action Learning on a regional and external basis which enables external perspectives to be brought back into the Service. A number of courses run within the Service have been accredited through various awarding bodies and are subject to regular external verification, all of which have been successful and some, with exceptional feedback, for example, the report from QA Associates regarding the BTEC CFFT Instructors course run by BA Training Centre. In addition, the department has achieved a range of quality awards including ISO 9001 and Investors In People in recognition of the good practice in place within the department. Since the establishment of the Training Academy in early 2011, the number of external customers has increased dramatically with high levels of repeat business as well as a healthy number of new customers. DSFRS have led on some innovative projects on a regional and national basis which other FRSs adopted (for example, Integrated Personnel Development System, Right to Apply, BTEC Instructors course and streamlining of ADCs).

In 2008 DSFRS volunteered to take part in a national pilot of a High Potential Leadership Programme which aims to fast-track existing Firefighters/Crew Managers to middle manager level. One of the aims of the pilot was to promote opportunities for under-represented groups and to that end, a series of roadshows was organised and information sent direct to eligible potential female applicants. Following an intensive recruitment process, three candidates were appointed onto the programme. A formal audit and review of the programme has recently been initiated in order to evaluate the pilot and make recommendations for the future of the scheme.

The CFO and other officers have undertaken visits to other Fire and Rescue services that are seen to be ‘best in class’ for certain functions. He has personally formed part of a scoping team comprising of a vertical slice of roles from DSFRS to meet peers and discuss specific subject matter. Many learning points were developed, such as the use of advocates and the recognition that the recording and measurement of our outcomes needed improvement. The partnership framework and evaluation policy demonstrate how are addressing this. We are exploring collaborative work with Dorset Fire and Rescue.

**Conclusion**

We have moved beyond understanding the importance of equality and diversity and are achieving better outcomes for vulnerable communities and our people. We hope we are able to demonstrate to our assessors both our achievements and our awareness of areas in which we need to improve. We look forward to their assessment of where we are, improving our outcomes and continuing our journey.