



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

Making the Connections

"...an equality scheme for everyone"

CORPORATE SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

2009/10 TO 2011/12

Approved 6th May 2009



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This scheme supports the principles and practice of the nationally developed Core Values for the UK Fire and Rescue Service:

1. We value **Service to the community** by:
 - Working with all groups to reduce risk
 - Treating everyone fairly and with respect
 - Being answerable to those we serve
 - Striving for excellence in all we do

2. We value all our **People** by practising and promoting:
 - Fairness and respect
 - Recognition of merit
 - Honesty, integrity and mutual trust
 - Personal development
 - Co-operative and inclusive working

3. We value **Diversity** in the service and the community by:
 - Treating everyone fairly and with respect
 - Providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations
 - Promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the service
 - Challenging prejudice and discrimination

4. We value **Improvement** at all levels of the service by:
 - Accepting responsibility for our performance
 - Being open-minded
 - Considering criticism thoughtfully
 - Learning from our experience
 - Consulting others

Making the Connections...an equality scheme for everyone

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1 Introduction

Message from the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Authority

"We are delighted to introduce this single equality scheme for Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

The purpose of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service is to work with partners, communities and individuals to prevent emergency situations and to provide a response to fire, major flood, and road traffic collision emergencies. Our people engage with these partners, communities and individuals on a daily basis, with the goal of preventing loss of life and injury. To carry out this work and to reach those in the greatest need in an increasingly diverse environment, it is important that we provide equality in access to services, information and of opportunity. No-one will receive a lesser service because of their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, gender, gender identity or any other human characteristic. Assessing the needs of the individual, whether a community or staff member, is fundamental to the success of any organisation and the effectiveness of its service delivery. We aim to ensure this ethos influences all the functions which support our services of Protection, Prevention and Response. We are working to build a workforce of the best people from all our communities to enable us to share a better understanding of individual needs and help us to deliver the best possible service.

We recognise there is more for us to do to fully reflect the community we serve and this single equality scheme contains measures intended to eliminate discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity and access to services. It has our full support and we commend it to you".

Lee Howell, Chief Fire Officer and Bernard Hughes, Chairman, of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority.

May 2009.

Acting to Protect and Save: Protection, Prevention and Response

When Firefighters salvage personal belongings from the site of an incident they instinctively know to salvage everything; even if it looks worthless, it may be priceless to someone. It is that consideration of the needs of the individual which is key to this scheme. Whilst this scheme focuses on issues surrounding the six 'strands' of diversity identified by the new Equality Bill 2009, namely race, age, gender and transgender, religion, disability and sexual orientation, it recognises that these characteristics relate to us all. We all have a race, a gender, an age, a religion or belief and a sexual orientation. Some of us have a disability and many of us may acquire a disability, short or long term. Most of us have people in our lives with disabilities. This scheme is about all people and their individual characteristics, not pigeon holes.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 is the primary legislation affecting Fire and Rescue Services and their activities. This Act replaced the Fire Services Act 1947 and came into force on 1 October 2004. The Act puts the prevention of fires at the heart of legislation by, for example, creating a duty to promote fire safety and by providing the flexibility for Fire and Rescue authorities to work with others in the community to carry out this duty. This is in addition to preparing for;

- fighting fires and protecting people and property from fires
- rescuing people from road traffic accidents
- dealing with other specific emergencies, such as flooding or terrorist attack

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008 – 2011 presents the Government's key expectations of fire and rescue services for the next three years. These expectations are:

- To work with local partners to collectively deliver community priorities.

- To apply robust performance management principles.
- To continue using the principles of integrated risk management planning to direct the delivery of the service.
- To measure the new national performance indicators for arson incidents, number of fires and related deaths and injuries.
- To enhance the capability for the delivery of 'resilience' services such as responding to major flooding incidents.
- To support the implementation of the national Firelink and Firecontrol projects
- To consider the effectiveness of joint working arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services.
- To implement the fire and rescue service Equality and Diversity strategy.
- To recruit, develop and maintain a competent workforce.

Three Corporate Goals focus all our work, with the aim of achieving our Corporate Mission of: **'Acting to Protect and Save.'**

- Goal 1: To proactively reduce risk, to save life, protect property and the environment from fire and other emergencies
- Goal 2: To be an employer of choice
- Goal 3: To provide an effective, efficient and economic service

For further information about the service's overall goals, priorities and ambitions please refer to our **Corporate Plan 2009-2011**, available on our website www.dsfire.gov.uk or by calling us on 01392 872200. Large print, audio and/or translation are available by request.

Our history and culture

The fire service began as several 'services' attached to insurance companies in the 1800s, and small community fire stations set up by individual towns and villages. Eventually these services merged to form a National Fire Service. The Fire Brigades Act 1938 authorized the establishment of a training centre for special fire service courses. With the outbreak of World War Two the War Office provided a facility which became the National Fire Service Training College. The College trained firemen and women throughout WW2 in all aspects of the National Fire Service. During the war women became fire watchers and drivers and managed the NFS communications network. At this time there were 70,000 women in the service, at ranks from 'Leading Firewoman' to Senior Area Officer. Many women were awarded for their remarkable achievements.

At the end of the war, when men returned home, the majority of women were discharged from the fire service. The Fire Services Act 1947 denationalized the fire service, and the responsibility for brigades eventually fell to local authorities.

The service has evolved as a white male dominated culture, quasi- militaristic in design and focused on operational response – fighting fires. Today, we have modernised and are changing to both foster a diverse workforce and to emphasise our protection and prevention work, in partnership with other agencies. Whilst we will always provide an excellent operational response, our focus is to build safer communities, with those communities and our partner agencies, by working to stop fires and road traffic collisions happening. To do this work we need a diverse workforce, one that includes people from every community, to help us identify, engage and protect those who are most at risk.

This scheme will assist us in building a diverse workforce by offering equality of opportunity for people whose multiple characteristics reflect our contemporary communities and to encourage women to return to the service they were once key to delivering.

The eight point star – new meanings for a modern Fire and Rescue service

The eight point star which is the emblem of all Fire and Rescue services across the UK, and customised to each service, has traditional qualities attached to each of the eight points. These qualities were ascribed many years ago and were adopted as the personal qualities required to be a Firefighter. Whilst these qualities are admirable Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service are bringing them up to date to both align them with and promote our core values. These values are those that should guide the modern fire-fighter and fire service staff in every aspect of their work, from relationships with colleagues to engagement with communities.



The eight values were:

TACT
PERSEVERENCE
GALLANTRY
LOYALTY
DEXTERITY
EXPLICITNESS
OBSERVATION
SYMPATHY

The updated values are:

EXCELLENCE
DIVERSITY
COURAGE
RESPECT
RESPONSIBILITY
INTEGRITY
TRUST
EMPATHY

Leadership

The Authority has strategic responsibility for discharging Fire and Rescue Authority functions for Devon and Somerset, with the day-to-day responsibility resting with the Chief Fire Officer and the Service Management Board.

The Authority is made up of 25 Members appointed by the constituent authorities as follows:

Devon County Council - 11 Members, Somerset County Council - 8 Members, Plymouth City Council - 4 Members, Torbay Council - 2 Members.

In addition, there are currently three Independent Members of the Standards Committee. We have equality and diversity champion members in our Authority, who are there to identify and challenge proposals where they may have a negative impact on difference.

The Local Government Association (LGA) is committed to promoting equality and diversity in the fire and rescue service and showing political leadership on the issue. To help make this a reality, the LGA asked all Fire and Rescue Authority members to sign up to the 5-point charter below to demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity:

I will...

- 1** lead by example, promoting and championing diversity in my fire and rescue authority
- 2** work to achieve recruitment targets of at least 15 per cent for women in operational roles, and for minority ethnic employees at the same level as the representation in the working age population
- 3** ensure my fire and rescue authority has developed and published all of the required equality schemes and action plans, and provide challenge to the Chief Fire Officer on progress
- 4** ensure my fire and rescue authority works towards achieving level 3 (*'achieving' under the new framework*) or above of the equality standard for local government
- 5** show zero tolerance towards bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour.

Representative bodies

There are several representative bodies which fire service employees can choose to join. They include the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Unison, The Retained Firefighters Union (RFU), the Fire Officers Association (FOA) and Unison. The FBU includes groups which specifically address issues for women and Black and Minority Ethnic Members. These groups work with the authority on issues such as dignity at work, and maternity, paternity and adoption leave.

National Women's Committee

Women members of the FBU are represented at a national level by the elected National Women's Committee (NWC). It seeks to:

- Identify resolve and promote all issues affecting women in the fire and rescue service
- Progress equality and diversity issues in the workplace
- Actively promote and support the FBU's policy of eradicating bullying and harassment in the workplace
- Create and promote a supportive network for women FBU members
- Provide and promote education opportunities for women in the FBU
- Encourage women's participation in main stream FBU issues.
- Through effective involvement in the trade union movement, equalise opportunities and improve conditions for all women
- Assist and advise other organisations with common goals and aims
- Advance and pursue international issues

Black & Ethnic Minority Members (B&EMM)

This groups' mission statement is: To continue to be a progressive group within the UK Fire and Rescue Service, our communities, its under-represented ethnic minority members and their union. To also be a focal point for advice and support on dealing with issues of discrimination, harassment and debarment as they affect Black and Ethnic Minority Members of the UK Fire and Rescue Service.

The purpose of this scheme

This Single Equality Scheme has been entitled 'Making the Connections' to reflect its aim to integrate the practice of considering individual needs into the policies, procedures and practices of our organisation and, most importantly, embed it into the service's consciousness and culture. We recognise that the consideration of the needs of individuals and groups in our service delivery is the responsibility of everyone in our organisation. This single equality scheme will enable those delivering our services and managing our people to 'make the connection' between the principles of equality and diversity and their day to day work.

As well as our 'General Duties' of Disability, Gender and Race, this single equality scheme embraces the Equality Bill 2006 (at the time of writing on course to become the Equality Act in 2009) by considering the impact of our policies with regard to race, religion or belief, disability, age, gender and sexual orientation and considers other characteristics which might present barriers to equality of opportunity. An example of this could be potential barriers associated within rural living. We believe we should aim to apply the same high standards of accessibility and service delivery to everything that we do. The scheme also seeks to incorporate Human Rights considerations into the way we assess the impact of our policies and practices.

This scheme aims to:

- Eliminate discrimination and harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity, service delivery and access to services
- Promote good relations between, and positive attitudes towards all people
- Encourage inclusion in public life

This scheme will set out the ways in which we intend to achieve these aims by identifying equality issues, priorities, goals and actions for us to achieve in every area of our service, from recruiting and employing staff to carrying out our services and public activities.

Measuring progress and reporting achievement

Whilst there is much happening already with partners and communities, there is much to do. Once drafted and agreed, the themes of this scheme will be embedded in to the departmental plans of the organisation which inform how our functions operate. The single equality scheme actions will be mapped, updated and reported quarterly to our Senior Management Board and to our Authority members via the Human Resources Management and Development Committee. An Equality and Diversity Monitoring group made up of members of our staff, Authority members and external agencies will be formed and will meet six monthly to review progress, priorities and to share contemporary issues. We will inform stakeholders of the progress of this scheme with six-monthly bulletins in our internal publications and on our external website, www.dsfire.gov.uk. Whilst the scheme is dynamic and will change to accommodate new challenges and priorities, the entire scheme will be reviewed three years from its implementation, to assess progress, strengths and weaknesses and to ensure priorities are relevant.

Involving people and working in partnership

We engage with statutory agencies such as local authorities, health trusts, police authorities, voluntary agencies and community groups to connect and engage with all our communities and use links with issues such as health and crime to inform our preventative work. We have developed and are committed to extending and sustaining informal partnerships with geographical and single interest groups. This will help enable our community safety and recruitment messages to be received by all our communities, and to engage those communities in considering our corporate goals and priorities.

DSFRS is developing a 'Partnership Framework' that will support effective management and monitoring of our strategic partnership work; evaluating where a partnership delivers mutual benefits and real outcomes. This will be supported by a 'Partnership Register', which will map the range of partnerships, formal and informal and activities undertaken by the service across all its areas. A Partnership Board will be set up to ensure that partnership performance is reported and evaluated. This will allow good practice to be shared across the service and highlight areas where partnership work needs improvement by, for example, increasing targeted community safety work for groups at higher risk.

DSFRS is working towards full engagement, at both political and officer level, on each of the top-tier Local Strategic Partnerships across Devon and Somerset. This strategic involvement supports the achievement of shaping local communities, improving social cohesion and joining-up services to solve local problems, from planning for major flooding disasters to multi agency support for survivors of domestic violence.

We also work closely with other fire and rescue services and share best practice and lessons learnt in regional and national forums, including Local Resilience Forums and the Chief Fire Officers Association.

Who helped us to develop this scheme?

In developing this scheme we recognise that there is a tremendous amount of expertise, both in DSFRS itself and in the wider community. We are committed to working with our people, our partners and all the diverse communities and individuals we serve. Fire service employees have assisted us in developing this scheme by providing examples of good practice, helping to identify equality issues and suggesting how we can address issues and promote equality. A range of groups reflective of a range of communities also assisted us by feeding back on the very first draft, and as a result the scheme has evolved and developed with the aim of reflecting that feedback. Further details of the groups we engaged and what they said is available in a separate report; 'Who helped inform Making the Connections?'

Your views: What to do if you disagree with anything or feel something is missing in this scheme

Whilst we have tried to identify as many equality issues as possible and have prioritised actions for functions most relevant to the general duties and wider equality considerations, there may be areas you feel we have missed or could have addressed better. If there is anything you disagree with within this scheme or if you feel it is lacking in a specific area please contact us on 01392 872200 and ask for the Equality and Diversity unit. Your views and feedback are essential in helping us review and adjust the scheme.

2 Our Communities

This section gives an overview of the people living in our two counties. Specific equality issues relating to each of our functions are explored in **Our Functions**.

Population and density

Within Devon & Somerset there is a residential population of 1.66 Million, living in over 700,000 households spread over a geographical area in excess of 1 million hectares. This makes Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service the largest English Service by area and the 2nd largest non metropolitan Service by population.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service covers one of the most sparsely populated areas within England. Within the two counties the population is focused on the principal towns of Plymouth, Taunton, Torquay, Exeter, Bridgwater, Barnstaple and Yeovil. Devon currently has the lowest population density of all the South West counties, of which the area of West Devon is the most sparsely populated district in the South West. Somerset has the 5th lowest¹.

This means that the remainder of the population lives in widely spread, relatively small towns and villages and extremely rural locations. Communications here are poorer with winding narrow lanes making travel times long. This situation presents real logistical challenges for any emergency service provider. Large geographic rural areas cover relatively small percentages of the population, when compared to more urban services across the country. A direct result of this is that the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service is now the largest employer of Retained Firefighters within the United Kingdom. Retained Firefighters live and sometimes work within the community, within five minutes of the Fire Station, and respond to incidents when required by being alerted by pagers, as opposed to Wholetime Firefighters who attend at the station when on duty.

¹ Source Devon and Somerset Briefs: GOSW regional intelligence team.

Tourism can lead to a seasonal population increase of about 25%, with nearly 40 million tourist nights spent within the counties. This means more people in popular resorts and busier roads, with possible impacts on response times and numbers of Road Traffic Collisions.

Ethnic minorities in our two counties

The population of Devon and Somerset is becoming increasingly diverse. There is a small ethnic minority representation in the area, 1.7% according to the ONS census 2001. This is difficult to measure today in the absence of a new census, but is estimated to have marginally increased regionally, but to have increased more significantly in urban areas. The working age population of ethnic minorities, for example, measured recently and being used to assist us in setting recruitment targets, is at 5.3%¹. A small percentage means it is all the more important to prioritise our commitment to ensure that those members of our communities, sometimes isolated families in rural areas, rather than ethnic minority communities of number, receive our services and information.

The ethnic minority representation is diverse in itself and across the two counties our population includes people of many heritages including (but not limited to); Irish, Chinese, Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Caribbean, African, Somali and Portuguese. There is an increasing population from eastern European countries, such as Poland and Latvia. There are well over 80 languages spoken in Devon and Somerset, from Arabic to Zulu. Our service delivery must be tailored and recruitment opportunities accessible to all. These challenges are addressed within this scheme to ensure every service and opportunity is accessible and fair.

Within Devon and Somerset there are several Roma, Gypsy and Traveller sites, including licensed and so called 'tolerated' sites. These members of the community have specific needs in relation to our services, specifically home safety needs in travelling homes such as caravans and converted Lorries are different to those of immobile dwellings. One of the key actions of this scheme aims to dispel the

¹ Labour force survey 2006/07

prejudice which is still openly expressed and tolerated against these groups in our society and address fire prevention needs with tailored home safety advice.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service currently have only 0.67% 'BME' Black and Minority Ethnic, including 'white other' employees. We recognise that is wholly unrepresentative of our local communities and we are committed to improving this with actions enshrined in this scheme. We will address this year on year with a target of 7.3% of all our new joiners to be from a minority ethnic background, (2% above the local working BME population) by 2013. This issue is discussed further in the functions section of this scheme under Human Resources.

An ageing population

As a country, for first time ever, we are home to more pensioners than under-16's¹. In Devon as a whole, 21% of the population are over 65 years of age. In Somerset 20%, of the population is over 65, and represents the largest proportion.

Whilst many older people maintain good health and an independent life style, the fire safety issues around an aging population are to be considered now more than ever. This is due to many factors, including increased life expectancy, the age of the 'baby boomers' of the 1960s moving into the older age bands and women, born during the peak years immediately after World War Two have now reached retirement age. Men born during this period will reach retirement age in 2012. The fire safety risks relate to those older people who may live alone, are not in good health and /or may suffer some physical and/or mental impairment as they get older. One in 20 people over 65 and one in five people over 80 are affected by dementia ². These specific issues and risks are explored further in the Community Safety Section.

¹ ONS website: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci>

²The Dementia UK Report (Alzheimer's Society 2007)

Young people

It is essential that we engage with young people for a variety of reasons, including:

- Getting our fire safety messages across and tackling arson by young people
- Getting road safety messages across to young and inexperienced drivers
- Encouraging boys and girls from a very young age to consider the fire service as a career

The services' Children and Young People's (CYP) strategy provides a framework for engaging actively with children and young people to divert them from fire crime and associated anti-social behaviour and to educate them and their families in fire safety skills and responsible citizenship.

The CYP Strategy clearly outlines how the Service intends to improve the life chances of children and young people by focussing on those young people who most need our help. For more information please call us on 01392 872200 and ask for Community Safety.

Protection of vulnerable people

The Service recognises that the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable persons, especially children and young people is everyone's responsibility. Our policy establishes the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to the protection of these individuals, with whom they come into contact with through their work.

Embedded within our Protection of vulnerable people policy is the acceptance that '*the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount*' and the policy further supports the three main elements of the Service's protection and safeguarding strategy, namely;

- Prevention through the training and development offered to staff working with children young people and vulnerable adults and the operation of a safe system of work;
- Protection by following agreed procedures, ensuring staff undergo a safe recruitment process that will include, where appropriate, a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check to the appropriate level that supports an individuals suitability for such a role; and
- Support to staff who may find themselves dealing with a safeguarding issue or an allegation.

It is not expected that staff will act as child protection workers or that they will be trained to intervene in cases of suspected abuse. We realise that reporting concerns regarding the possibility of abuse can be difficult. Saying or doing nothing, however, is not an option. The management of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service will support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns that a vulnerable person, adult or child, is being abused or is at risk of abuse, even if those concerns prove to be unfounded.

People with disabilities

Based on 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. A large proportion of the population then are living with a complex range of disabilities which include physical impairment, mental health issues, diabetes and long term illnesses such as HIV. Whilst the prevalence of disability increases with age, according to the ONS 20% of those living with a disability are under 45 years of age. It is important that we take time to understand the issues and how our service delivery, recruitment and retention policies impact upon people with disabilities, and to tailor our procedures and promote opportunities with these considerations in mind. As one example, In addition to providing information suitable for those living with dyslexia, we are increasingly finding that employees schooled before awareness of dyslexia are recognising that they need support in addressing their challenges. We are currently working on a project to provide specialist software to be

available across the organisation which will help with the challenges faced by people with dyslexia when using PCs. We are fortunate and proud that three founding members of the National Disabled Fire Association (NDFA), which exists to advise on disability issues specifically relating to employment, are employees of our service.

Gender

We recognise that women are under-represented in our operational workforce and in our senior positions. This scheme aims to address that underrepresentation and we have targets to increase our new operational entrants who are women to 18% by 2013. We will engage and consult with women in the southwest when we develop a strategy for encouraging women and girls to consider the fire service as a career, from the earliest opportunity. We are also establishing a regional benchmarking group for equality and diversity to monitor and analyse our performance against other fire and rescue services in the southwest, and nationally, allowing us to challenge each other and share best practice. We recognise that there are particular issues around gender, impacting upon lives and human rights, which we can help address in the workplace, such as violence against women and men in relationships. In addition to internal groups such as Networking Women in the Fire Service and the FBU Women's group, we have forged links with Fawcett Devon, who campaign on gender issues and the Gender Duty, which helped inform this scheme.

Transgender

In relation to transgender, we will build our knowledge by engaging with networks and challenge prejudicial attitudes with training. We aim to provide an inclusive supportive work environment and to provide support for those who embark on the process of gender re-assignment.

Religion and Belief

There are many faiths practised across Devon and Somerset. The majority identify as Christian of various denominations, but there are other prominent faiths and beliefs including (but not limited to) Islam, Baha'i, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism, Humanism, Agnosticism and Atheism. 'Faithnet Southwest' has recently conducted an online survey of the region in the hope of gaining a better understanding of the diversity of faith communities that exist. This information, when it is available, will be helpful in assisting us with targeting communications and prioritising needs. It is important that we take the customs of all these faiths into consideration and assess how our policies and practices may impact upon those who practice them, to ensure no person is disadvantaged because of the religion or belief. This includes considering prayer time requirements, prominent religious festivals and customs of all faiths. All members of the service have a responsibility to ensure that strongly held and extreme religious beliefs do not conflict with our core values of respect for difference.

Sexual orientation

We are committed to fostering a culture in the service in which gay, lesbian and bi-sexual people feel no pressure to stay 'in', or to keep their private lives secret, and whilst under no pressure to be 'out', they can feel comfortable to be out. We have started a project to monitor the sexuality of our employees, in order to help assess the culture of our organisation and address the needs of our LGBT staff. We continue to challenge prejudicial views with training, both in a virtual environment and in the classroom. We are also signing up to the Stonewall Equality Index and hope this will encourage LGBT people to join the service and help us foster the inclusive culture we are aiming for.

Considering the needs of everyone: Human Rights

Considering needs goes beyond the six 'strands' of diversity identified in the equality bill, and by applying a human rights framework, we can, for example, address multi-layered discrimination (such as the challenges faced by a black woman). We aim to eliminate discrimination and promote equality by considering the absolute, limited and qualified rights of every human being, in all we do.

The Human Rights Act 1998 came into force in October 2000 and enabled people to enforce the European Convention on Human Rights in the UK courts. Article 14 of the Human Rights Act 1998 refers to the prohibition of discrimination, and states that the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set out in the European Convention on Human Rights shall be secured without discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. In practice, taking a human rights approach to equality means Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service reach beyond the 6 Strands identified in the equality bill and will apply the same principles to all individuals, considering all situations in the development of policy and procedures and the delivery of services.

The Human Rights Act urges public authorities to apply a human rights framework to decision making across public services in order to achieve better service provision. Applying a 'human rights framework' means including core human rights values, such as equality, dignity, privacy, respect and involvement in decision making, whether a public service is being delivered directly to the public or a new plan or procedure is being devised.

The convention rights concern not only matters of life and death, such as freedom from torture and being killed, but also what people can say and do, and their beliefs. Rights can be grouped into three categories, absolute rights which the state can never take away, limited rights such as the right to liberty and qualified rights, which require a balance between the rights of individuals and the wider community.

Human rights include (but are not limited to) the right to:

- life
- freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- liberty and security
- respect for private and family life
- freedom of expression
- Freedom of assembly and association
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion

1 Our Services

This section outlines the areas which inform our service delivery in relation to community, equality and accountability.

How do we reduce and respond to the risks in our local communities?

In order to assess fire risk and effectively respond to emergencies and target prevention work, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service work to identify and map the risk factors of each of our 83 Station Grounds across the two counties. A Station Ground is defined as the area covered by a particular fire station. This risk assessment work enables us to set response standards, (which include the time we aim to respond to emergencies and the resources we will need), and help us target our community safety messages in the areas of greatest need. Risk maps are produced for each station ground which informs the following:

- Proactive community work
- Reactive community work
- Dwellings response standards
- Other buildings response standards
- Road Traffic Collision response standards

This risk work helps the service to appropriately target prevention work in communities, often carried out in conjunction with local authority, health trust and police authority partners and voluntary agencies.

Risk groups in relation to dwellings are prioritised by Community Safety and are focused on the UK Fire and Rescue Service's nationally identified 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 DSFRS Historical Data, Police Crime Data and the population profile (Demographics).

They are;

(National)¹

- Residents living as part of a single household
- A lone parent to young children
- Those on a low income/never worked or unemployed
- Those who may be impaired because of substance abuse
- Those who may be impaired because of a physical/mental/age related disability or illness

(Local)²

- Older people living alone, as households without children, or where the household contains at least one person with a long term illness
- Those who live in relatively densely populated areas, where a high percentage of men and women are working in service industries
- Younger people in education living independently, many of whom may be non-UK residents
- People co-habiting in converted, often rented accommodation where in general all occupants are employed

The equality issues around why these groups are higher risk in relation to fire safety, and other group characteristics which are associated with barriers to equality of access and information, are discussed further in our Community Safety section.

¹ Human behaviour in fatal fires (Smith et al 2007)
CLG report

² Who has the fires? Implications for targeting resources in the fire service
(Maul, Maul and Holme 2008)¹
School of Business and Economics, University of Exeter
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

Are we delivering a fair and equal service to all? : Equality Impact Assessments

A standard feature of this single equality scheme is the requirement to both assess the impact of every DSFRS policy and practice upon an individual and how we work with the effect a policy or practice has on difference. This is to ensure that there is no adverse impact upon a person because of race, religion and belief, gender disability, age or sexual orientation, either with direct or indirect discrimination. Traditionally, policies have been written and then assessed for this impact. We believe that the equality considerations should come first – if a policy is written with those considerations in mind, the risk of negative impact can be eliminated from the start. As a combined service, many of our policies are still being harmonised and the impact assessment is a part of this process. As the culture of equality and diversity becomes embedded within our organisation, the principles of the assessment will be applied to every project and process introduced.

This single equality scheme includes an action to review the equality impact assessment process and to incorporate a Human Rights approach in a new assessment process. Human rights are rights and freedoms that belong to all individuals which are fundamentally important in maintaining a fair and civilised society.

Screening existing policies

Initially a policy or process is screened for its relevance to the 6 equality strands. Initial screening also establishes whether a policy or process relates to the General Duties for public authorities for Race, Gender and Disability. In practice, highest priority will be given to those functions and policies that have the greatest potential to disadvantage particular groups.

Equality snapshot: Cats in trees - The benefits of Equality Impact Assessments

As part of the continuous improvement of our services, the Fire Authority made a decision not to respond to rescue small animals, as that work was already being expertly managed by the RSPCA. The Authority decided to limit rescue to that of large animals, such as horses and cows. An Equality Impact Assessment, which considered the impact of the decision on all strands of diversity, identified that if

this were adhered to, our policy would prevent us from rescuing Guide Dogs and Hearing Dogs in emergency situations. As a result the policy was amended to include these small animals that provide such a vital service to their owners, who live with disabilities.

Equality and Diversity Training

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS) have introduced a new training strategy in 2008 for Equality and Diversity, with the aim of equipping all members of staff with the knowledge and information they need to treat all colleagues and all members of our communities with dignity and respect and to be able to consider their individual needs. All training will set out exactly what staff can expect from the organisation in terms of values, as well as the behaviour and conduct expected of them by the organisation.

The aims of the equality and diversity training strategy are to:

- increase knowledge and understanding of diversity and equality in the workplace and within the communities we serve;
- raise awareness regarding the standards and values of the organisation linked with our organisational and individual responsibilities;
- develop skills and performance that naturally incorporate diversity and equality in all that we do;
- bring about necessary personal, social and organisational change in accordance with the Equality and Diversity Strategy; and
- develop a culture that treats all people with dignity and respect, where we are seen to promote equality providing a service that is fully accessible to all sectors of our community

The training strategy offers four tiers of training, tailored to all levels in the organisation and is delivered using a combination of a virtual learning environment and traditional workshops with assessments. The content is compulsory and ranges from discrimination awareness to comprehensive supplementary programmes on equality impact assessments and specific issues workshops, such as 'Hidden Disability' and 'The Gender Duty'.

How is our performance measured?

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service is accountable to the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Authority is made up of Councillors and Independents who oversee all strategic decisions. We are inspected by the Audit Commission, the inspecting body of all Fire and Rescue Authorities.

We are regulated by central government via the office for Communities and Local Government (CLG). Our equality and diversity performance will be measured via a new framework from April 2009, The Equality Framework for local government. The new framework has simplified its predecessor, the Equality Standard – notably there is less a process, more an outcome focused approach, fewer action points and an emphasis on self assessment and peer challenge. It introduces **proportionality and relevance** and enables authorities to take account of local needs and circumstances. The framework provides a **common performance framework** for compliance by integrating the public duties on race, disability and gender.

There will be **five** areas against which authorities can measure their performance:

- a) Knowing your community - equality mapping
- b) Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- c) Community engagement and satisfaction
- d) Responsive services and customer care
- e) A modern and diverse workforce

The measurement under new framework will consist of **three** levels, **Developing, Achieving and Excellent**. This scheme takes account of these themes and includes actions to improve our performance in each area.

Internally, we use robust systems for performance management, risk and review and internal audit. We operate an open consultation process on our Corporate Plans and encourage community involvement and feedback on our service priorities, from individuals and reflective networks from across Devon and Somerset.

Our performance is monitored using the collection of data for performance indicators and the completion of actions and projects. Performance indicators and actions relate to three goals which focus all our work, with the aim of achieving our corporate mission of: 'Acting to Protect and Save.'

- Goal 1: To proactively reduce risk, to save life, protect property and the environment from fire and other emergencies
- Goal 2: To be an employer of choice
- Goal 3: To provide an effective, efficient and economic service

With regard to this scheme, in addition to stand alone measurement against the progress of its actions, the actions will become embedded in departmental and local plans of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

To read more about service goals, priorities and activities, please refer to the corporate plan. For a copy of the Corporate Plan, please visit our website www.dsfire.gov.uk or call us on 01392 872200. Alternative formats are available.

Satisfaction measures

We monitor satisfaction with our services post incidents, and have started a project to monitor satisfaction with the delivery of home safety visits. This single equality scheme includes actions to expand this work and to cover the monitoring of the comprehension of messages and to include an assessment of satisfaction and comprehension between different demographic groups. We also monitor the satisfaction of our staff and encourage suggestions for improvement actions and activities, through staff research schemes such as surveys and consultation forums.

Equality monitoring

We recently rolled out a new process to collect, update and monitor equality information relating to our staff. In 2008 we expanded the monitoring from race, religion, age and disability to include sexual orientation.

The collection and analysis of this information helps to:

- Establish whether we offer real equality of opportunity and treatment for our staff
- Determine whether our policies on tackling discrimination are working
- Identify the further barriers that prevent our staff from making the best use of their talent
- Enable policy makers to tackle inequalities and promote equality.

This monitoring provides information to inform policy and monitor issues such as bullying and harassment. It helps us offer appropriate confidential support to staff where needed and provides the evidence of our achievements in relation to equality matters.

Equality Mapping

To deliver our service effectively and equally we need to know our communities. We need to understand both our local community profiles and key 'equality gaps' often experienced by different communities. We will therefore need to understand national equality data and supplement this with local data sources. Our community knowledge will be built through effective engagement and we are currently assessing solutions to enable us to supplement the national and our own data and build a comprehensive map of our communities, highlighting our high risk groups.

Bullying and Harassment

Workplace bullying is the misuse of power or peer position which has an adverse effect on an individual. Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, behavioral examples of bullying include:

- initiation ceremonies which may cause injury of embarrassment
- the continuous use of unwanted nicknames
- ridiculing and humiliating someone in front of others
- ignoring and isolating someone over a period of time
- unconstructive or unwarranted criticism
- unachievable work objectives
- restriction of work, training, development or promotion opportunities without good reason
- withdrawing or preventing access to benefits such as leave, flexible working etc without good or justifiable reason
- physical abuse

Harassment can include:

- physical contact, ranging from touch to serious assault
- jokes, offensive language, gossip, slander, letters and e-mails
- posters, graffiti, obscene gestures
- isolation and non-cooperation and exclusion from social activities
- coercion for sexual activity
- pressure to participate in political/religious groups
- intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking

A survey of current and ex-Firefighters in England, commissioned by Communities and Local Government in 2008, reported that 32% of respondents reported that they had been bullied or harassed in the previous 12 months in the workplace. Firefighters with a disability, lesbian, gay and bisexual Firefighters, women and graduates were the most likely to be bullied or harassed by colleagues. In our own service, 30% of staff responded to Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service's 2008 staff survey. Regretfully, of these respondents, 30% reported they had witnessed bullying or harassment and 22% said they had personally experienced bullying and harassment in the last twelve months. Much of this had gone unreported.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service recognise this is an intolerable situation, and are taking steps to eradicate all bullying and harassment, starting with a new policy to be developed as part of this scheme. We will not rest until every staff member is aware of their own right for respect and of their responsibilities towards each other as human beings. We will promote respect for difference of all kinds, including difference of opinion.

We are encouraged that 91% of staff who responded to our staff survey were aware that it is their responsibility, along with everyone else, to ensure that equality and diversity policies work effectively within DSFRS , and will build on this positive response.

Legislation

As well as an organisationally driven commitment to customer service and inclusion, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service have legal responsibilities to tackle discrimination and promote equality, according to the 'General Duties' of disability, gender and race. We have to consider these in everything we do. These responsibilities are referred to as the three general duties to promote equality.

This scheme also embraces the Equality Bill 2006 (at the time of writing on course to become the Equality Act in 2009) by considering the impact of our policies with regard to age, religion or belief and sexual orientation and goes beyond it by considering others in society who might be vulnerable to exclusion. We believe we should aim to apply the same high standards of accessibility and service delivery to everything that we do. If you would like more information about the general and specific duties of disability, gender and race and the equality bill, please contact the Equality and Diversity unit at DSFRS.

List of relevant legislation

The relevant legislation which helped inform the development of this scheme:

1974: Health and Safety at Work Act

1975: Sex Discrimination Act

1976: Race Relations Act

1995: Disability Discrimination Act

1995: Criminal Justice and Public Order Act

1996: Employment Rights Act

1997: Protection from Harassment Act

1998: Human Rights Act

1998: Crime & Disorder Act

1998: Data Protection Act

2000: Race Relation (Amendment) Act (Race Equality Duty)

2002: Employment Act (Dispute Resolution) Regulations 2004

2003: Employment Equality Regulations (Religion or belief) and (Sexual Orientation)

2004: Disability Discrimination Act (amends the DDA 1995)

2004: Gender Recognition Act

2005: Civil Partnership Act

2006: Disability Equality Duty

2006: Employment Equality (Age) Regulations

2006 Equality Bill (on course to be the Equality Act 2009)

2007: Gender Equality Duty

The Scheme Action plan

How to read this single equality scheme

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service conduct several functions in order to deliver our services of Protection, Prevention and Response.

This section includes:

- An outline of each function
- **Equality issues:** The equality issues and possible barriers relating to each function, **identified so far**. These are separated into; **Standard Considerations** which affect all strands and **Specific Considerations** where they are specific to one strand
- **The way we work now:** Examples of the ways we are already working with relevance to equality and diversity, outlining some of the priorities, projects and practices already in place
- **How the scheme will further address the equality issues:** A narrative outline of the priorities for the function within the scheme action plans

The scheme action plans catalogue the specific actions for each function.

The scheme gives the highest priority to those functions whose policies and practices have the greatest potential to disadvantage particular groups. The scheme action plan identifies the actions for each function with timescales and the lead responsible roles.

The National Equality and Diversity Strategy

This scheme has been written in line with the requirements of the UK Fire and Rescue Service National Equality and Diversity Strategy. As such, the actions prioritised by the equality issues identified have been numerically linked in the Action Plans to the themes within that strategy. These themes are:

1. Leadership and promoting inclusion
2. Accountability
3. Effective Service Delivery and Community Engagement
4. Employment and Training
5. Evaluation and sharing good practice

These themes are referenced E & D in the tables and the correlating number is in black.

Our Corporate Goals and Priorities

This scheme also references where actions address goals and priorities in our corporate plan. The goals and corresponding priorities are:

Goal 1: To proactively reduce risk, to save life, protect property and the environment from fire and other emergencies

Priorities:

- 1a) To reduce the incidence and impact of fire
- 1b) To reduce deaths and injuries from road traffic collisions
- 1c) To improve planning and response arrangements in dealing with other non-fire emergencies
- 1d) To improve emergency call management arrangements

Goal 2: To be an employer of choice

Priorities:

- 2a) To improve the service's approach to equality and diversity
- 2b) to provide effective training and development of staff
- 2c) To improve the health and welfare of staff
- 2d) to develop strategies to recruit and retain Firefighters in rural communities

Goal 3: To provide an effective, efficient and economic service

Priorities:

- 3a) To improve organisational planning and performance
- 3b) to improve communication
- 3c) to optimise the use of resources

These themes are referenced Goal in the tables and the correlating number is in red.

For further information about the service's overall goals, priorities and ambitions please refer to our **Corporate Plan 2009-2011**, available on our website www.dsfire.gov.uk or by calling us on 01392 872200. Large print, audio and/or translation are available by request.

Our Functions

Operations

The Operations Department ensures that Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service maintains and develops the readiness and response to local, regional and national emergencies safely and effectively. The Department's responsibilities and work streams relate to those issues identified within our Corporate Plan, the National Framework Document, responsibilities under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, including the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the actions in this single equality scheme. The Department engage with local partnerships relevant to emergency response delivery.

- Control (Those who co-ordinate our 999 response)
- Fire fighting and rescue
- Response to Road Traffic Collisions
- Response to terrorist threat
- Urban Search and Rescue
- Response to major flooding incidents
- Response to serious non-road transport incidents
- Water rescue
- Line rescue (safety at height and confined spaces)

Equality Issues

Standard considerations

- We must assess how our operational duties impact upon individuals in relation to issues around the six strands of diversity and human rights at the planning stage

- We must work with partners to identify community tension indicators and plan accordingly, for example, visiting mosques following terrorist incidents, watching public opinion around planned gypsy/traveller sites and planning for social disorder/arson instigated against those groups
- We must work with partners to plan a multi agency approach to rescue in disaster situations
- The primary concern in carrying out operational duties is the preservation of life. We must consider the needs proportionately in critical and life threatening situations
- We must remember that when we salvage after an incident that any possession may be valuable to an individual.

Specific considerations

Race:

- We must be able to communicate effectively in emergency situations and ensure messages are understood. We must have easily accessible systems which allow instant translation
- We must be aware of cultural differences and sensitivities

Religion and Belief:

- We must be aware of religious sensitivities when visiting homes and places of worship

Disability:

- We must explore and address considerations around the rescue of people with physical and/or learning disabilities.
- We must investigate and take into account mental health issues in relation to the communication and comprehension of messages

Gender:

- We must ensure that we consider dignity in situations which require disrobing
- We should provide dignity and comfort facilities for Firefighters when attending a prolonged incident

Age:

- We must consider methods of communication which reassure and effectively reach people of all ages, from small children to older people

British Sign Language

We recognise that we should be able to provide key information in BSL (British Sign Language) for the Deaf community.

The way we work

Getting the message

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.

Preparing for major incidents: Local Resilience Forums (LRF)

These forums were set up to establish prevention and planned response programme for major incidents. These multi agency forums set key milestones and targets, monitor the performance of the programme and prioritise work. The LRF also provides a forum for sharing good/poor practice, lessons learnt, understanding the various frameworks and relationships between the Government Office SW, Regional Resilience Team, and the LRF and supporting agencies.

Across the forums there are 30 sub groups of various forms, reflecting the National and Community Risk Registers. The role of these groups is to deal with specific issues across a wide range of responsibilities, and address common issues within the following groups;

- Chemical Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Environmental (CBRNE) Resilience
- Site Clearance
- Infectious Diseases - Human
- Infectious Diseases - Animal and Plant diseases
- Mass Casualties
- Warning, Informing and Media
- Mass Fatalities
- Humanitarian Assistance Evacuation and Shelter
- Flooding
- Coastal Pollution
- Communications Resilience
- Recovery Groups

Some of the significant milestones and positive outcomes of this partnership approach since 2007/8 include;

- The production of a number of plans including CBRNE, Flooding, Search and Rescue, Pandemic Flu and Mass Casualty Plans
- A number of regional multi-agency training exercises and seminars for differing types of emergencies have been hosted including CBRN at DSFRS HQ, Flooding and pandemic Flu

Equality Snapshot: 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. The impact of the unprecedented volume of rain that fell was made worse later in the night by the subsequent hail

storm, which blocked drains and culverts, making the flooding worse. The Service received over 200 calls from flooded residents and subsequently deployed 11 appliances and one high volume pump (national asset), and rescued 20 people.

These incidents have been subject to a series of multi-agency debriefs to identify lessons learnt, strategic prevention options and the integration of the recommendations of Sir Michael Pitt's Review into flooding in England through the Local Resilience Forum structures. During the debriefs there were discussions concerning vulnerable people, recognising that incidents like this will lead to many people becoming vulnerable due to location, personal circumstances and impairments. It was agreed that engagement with the public should be on a more structured or regular basis and the emphasis is on the responders and the local community to help with the identification and prioritisation of vulnerable people.

A Flood Recovery Group has been established and on a wider scale, we are developing and implementing a number of policies and resources allocations to assist the combined response to these types of incidents. This includes the development of four Technical Rescue Stations, a cadre of Flood Incident Managers, and greater use of our National Assets. DSFRS is represented on both of the Local Resilience Forum Flooding Sub Groups and has contributed to a number of multi-agency simulation events incorporated into the LRF training and exercising programme, which have helped to identify the areas for improvement in responding to these flooding incidents. We have also offered to circulate our community risk profiling information to assist in identifying people who would be more vulnerable in a major incident.

How the Single Equality Scheme actions will further address the equality issues

We will ensure that all operational staff are able to easily access instant translation. We will include scenarios in training which include casualties who have disabilities, (physical, learning disabilities and mental health issues). We will investigate solutions for the dignity of our staff and of the public on incidents. Some of the issues identified will be addressed with Equality and Diversity training, Equality Mapping and tailored communications detailed in 'Our Services'.

Operations Single Equality Scheme Actions Table 2009

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E&D Goal	Lead responsibility
O01	Roll out guidelines for accessing instant translation services to all operational staff	Race	2010	3 1 & 3	Head of Operations
O02	Ensure the rescue of people living with disabilities are considered in scenario training	Disability	2010	3 1 & 3	Head of Operations
O03	Investigate solutions for dignity and welfare during an incident for employees and the public	Gender, disability, Religion	2010	4 1 & 2	Head of Operations

Community Safety

The Community Safety Department ensures that the public's safety is improved by supporting and directing the protection and prevention activities carried out by the service in all our areas. Across the UK, Community safety strategies have brought about significant results in terms of reduced numbers of fire deaths, now at the lowest level for forty years.

The Community Safety Department includes two main activities:

- Community Safety Protection
- Community Safety Prevention, including fire investigation and arson reduction

Community Safety: Protection

Protection work focuses on non-domestic premises. Our protection policies reflect the standards for fire precaution measures, nationally agreed necessary to provide adequate safeguards in the event of fire. Protection work includes providing safety **advice and guidance**, **auditing** of premises identified as possibly at risk and, where necessary **enforcement action**, which can be as serious as closing premises such as shops, factories or houses in multiple occupation if they are unsafe.

Equality issues for this function

Standard considerations

In delivering this service DSFRS needs to be mindful that any enforcement action should be evidence based and is carried out in accordance with the national compliance code and without prejudice.

Specific considerations

Race

- Being aware of possible language barriers and cultural differences when delivering advice and enforcement
- Ensuring the enforcement is carried out with cultural sensitivity
- Highlighting that the targeting of investigations is evidence based
- Being aware of the effect that a uniformed presence can have in certain circumstances with certain groups
- We should be engaging with local planning departments to advise on Gypsy/Traveller sites with regard to fire safety

British Sign Language

We recognise that we should be able to provide key information in BSL (British Sign Language) for the Deaf community.

Religion and Belief

- Considering cultural and religious customs and practices when visiting premises .This awareness can lessen tension and help to assist with effective communication

Disability

- Considering individual needs with regard to accessibility of advice and enforcement information

The way we work

We provide information and advice in plain language and on the standards that are applied. As far as the law around regulation and enforcement allows, we take account of the relevant circumstances of individual cases. In discharging the function of Fire Protection, DSFRS will ensure it makes reasonable and proportionate arrangements for those individuals or groups who have communication and comprehension challenges (e.g. where English is not a first language).

We believe that prevention is better than cure and that our role therefore actively involves working with business, to advise on and assist with fire safety compliance.

How the scheme will further address the equality issues

By 2012 we will develop a protocol for liaison with relevant agencies and community groups to be undertaken before carrying out enforcement actions which may have an impact on community tension. In addition staff will be able to access instant translation services and due to enhanced training will be more aware of social, cultural and religious differences. **Please refer to the action plan on page 60 for further details.**

Community Safety: Prevention

This work includes targeted prevention initiatives and projects in the areas of Home Fire Safety and Road Safety. The Service has seen a reduction of dwelling fires in the home by 10% (112 less fires) and the casualties at these types of fires have been reduced by 23% (39 people) measured at year end 2007/08 and compared to previous year of 2006/07. Prevention work is focussed on those members of the community identified as higher risk according to local and national studies.

Although historically the Fire and Rescue Service has always attended road traffic collision (RTC) incidents, the 2004 Act now places a statutory duty on DSFRS to make provision for rescuing people in the event of a road traffic collisions as well as requiring us to become actively involved in multi-agency preventative work. In the Department of Health's 2008 Health Profiles it is reported that, according to the 2007 National Indicators, 338 people are seriously injured or killed in Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) in Somerset and correspondingly 304 are seriously injured or killed in Devon each year¹. This is statistically significantly better than the average for England, but importantly represents many devastated lives. These losses can be prevented and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service work increasingly with other agencies through Road Safety Partnerships for the prevention of RTCs, as well as fire.

The service is involved in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) which oversee the Local Area Agreements for the regions of Devon and Somerset. As defined by the government, a Local Area Agreement (LAA): "Sets out the 'deal' between central government and local authorities and their partners to improve the quality of life for local people. As such, the LAA is also a shorter-term delivery mechanism for the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)". From the local government perspective, LAAs are a key feature of a more devolved central and or local settlement. Through these, different localities can channel public resources towards the priorities of their own areas, alongside national outcomes and targets. LAAs are three-year agreements, developed by local councils with their partners in a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

¹ APHO and Department of Health. Crown copyright 2008 per 100,000 population 3-year average crude rate 2004-2006)

4.27 Equality issues related to this function

These issues incorporate the national and local recognised risk categories listed on page 28, and places them in the context of their relevance to the equality strands.

Standard considerations

- Equality mapping: building profiles of our communities to assist in targeted prevention work
- Ensuring that from a planning stage to the point of service delivery we exhibit respect for all difference whether social, economic, cultural, religious or national.

Specific considerations

Race:

- Accessibility of information where English may not be the first language
- Cultural differences which need awareness and sensitivity
- Tailoring services to different dwellings, for example mobile dwellings

Age:

- Statistics show that older persons should be a priority for targeted prevention work with 57% of all fire fatalities being people aged 50 and over (2007/08). The reasons for this are numerous and include reasons related to physical and /or mental impairment
- Older people living alone or older couples living alone without children are particularly at risk
- Some young people, typically between the ages of 6-12, have a fascination with fire and fire setting and a lack of awareness around the dangers of fire.
- Young adults where they are new drivers, have a lack of driving experience

Gender

- There is strong, proven and recognised link between domestic violence and arson attacks
- Households of lone parents are statistically more at risk, due to multiple factors which can include the increased weight of responsibility for all aspects of running a home on one person
- Single men living alone, often as a result of relationship breakdown. This risk increases further where they are without work and where there is possibly substance misuse. Often relates to smoking in the home.

Religion/belief:

- Religious and cultural differences which need awareness and sensitivity and specific channels of communication
- Fire safety around religious festivals

Disability / long term illness

- Those with a long term illness and households where at least one person has a long term illness are statistically more at risk
- National studies have identified that those who are living with a mental or physical disability are at increased risk of being involved in a fire.

British Sign Language

We recognise that we should be able to provide key information in BSL (British Sign Language) for the Deaf community.

The way we work

Home safety

The Service has seen a reduction of dwelling fires, which we believe can be largely attributed to our Home Safety Strategy. This Strategy is founded on the Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) procedure that provides free advice and the fitting, where appropriate, of free smoke alarms. Although the ultimate aim is to ensure that all domestic properties within the Service area have working smoke alarms, it is important that a risk-based approach is taken in achieving our aims. This means that we target the areas of greatest need, prioritising those identified as at increased risk in our communities. These groups are defined below in 'equality issues'. The broader Home Safety concept includes giving advice and spotting hazards in the home such as potential trip hazards, carbon monoxide issues, fuel poverty and possible sensory loss, and signposting to other agencies where appropriate.

Equality snapshot: Different homes

When I became a fire-fighter and began to deliver Home Safety visits in my area, I quickly realised how the community fire safety advice needed to be tailored and delivered appropriately to Gypsy and traveller communities. I began by encouraging friends in these communities to take up the home safety service. I learnt that our home safety visit format did not consider the lifestyle and cultural differences of these communities, and from what I had learnt I began to identify the particular risks and issues.

I approached these communities and carried out Home Fire Safety Visits on sites and fitted smoke alarms into caravans and converted vehicles. By involving Devon's Gypsy liaison officer I was able to discuss the service Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service provide and ask her to encourage the communities she engaged with to invite us to visit.

I now support other areas to visit their local sites by providing advice and support, and encourage greater awareness around the Gypsy community.

The next steps are to:

- Work with the community fire safety department to develop a display package to use at Gypsy and traveller events and to raise awareness amongst colleagues
- Develop, in partnership with agencies who work with Gypsy and traveller communities, an awareness training package for colleagues in my area as a pilot, with a view to working with Community Safety to extend this across Devon and Somerset.

Liz Clegg, Firefighter

We have developed a Community Safety Action Team (CSAT) to support the ongoing home fire safety work, specifically to address issues specifically relating to those who are at a high risk of injury. The structure of the team allows any fire service employee, regardless of their status or role, to join the team in addition to their primary role in the service and undertake important life-saving work directly with communities.

Partnerships

We engage with statutory agencies such as local authorities, schools, health trusts, police authorities, voluntary agencies and community groups to form the necessary connections with all our communities to enable us to communicate with them, and so they can tell us what they need from us as a fire and rescue service. As an example, we are currently working with The Somerset Home Safety Action Partnership to provide specialist smoke alarms linked to remote call centres and sensory alarms for those with impaired hearing or sight.

Equality snapshot: Supporting independent living

Our Community Safety department worked in partnership with Devon County Council this year, jointly funding a pilot project to assist those who require additional support to live independently as a result of a disability and/or over the age of 65. The project is intended to promote independent living for those people who would be at risk within their own home alone if they have a limited awareness of fire safety and the significance of alarms.

The pilot project involved remotely monitored smoke alarms being fitted into qualifying homes. If these alarms are activated an operative from the remote monitoring company calls the householder. If there is no response the emergency fire service is alerted.

This project is an example of equality and diversity in action; responding to the differing needs by tailoring our service delivery to ensure equal access to information and standards of service. It is also a demonstration of how productive partnership working can make a real difference to the enjoyment of independence and the quality of life for specific people.

Arson has a strong link with domestic violence and by working with the Police or specialist agencies such as Women's Aid, the service has been able to supply and fit preventative devices, such as arson proof letter boxes, in the properties of vulnerable survivors of domestic violence.

Equality snapshot: Partnership Information Packs for people with learning difficulties

Following a survey of people with learning difficulties across Devon in 2003, South Hams Community Safety partnership began working to produce resource pack for people with learning difficulties, making use of service user focus group feedback and a wider spectrum of agencies to enhance the information. The Fire Service has been represented on the steering group since 2005 to assist in the development of a fire safety booklet. The project is now delivering 10 x A5 information booklets in an easy to read format as part of the

Keeping Safe Scheme. Subjects requested by service users include 'Stay safe from fire', 'Keeping safe on line', 'The Ambulance Service' and 'The Coastguard'. Service users have been involved at all stages of development and production.

Information

We use several tailored information leaflets for home safety, including:

- **Parents and Child Carers:** Reducing risks to children, teaching children of the risks of fire and how to escape one.
- **People with Sight, Hearing or Mobility Difficulties (printed and available in Braille and audio CD)** Smoke alarms, specialist equipment for disabled people, using oxygen safely, electric blankets, escape routes.
- **Gypsies and Travellers:** Tailored fire safety information around travelling homes and communities
- **Students:** Information tailored for students who live in university halls and shared homes

We endeavour to assess, target and tailor our communications to ensure that the community fire safety message is received by those for which English is not their first language. This includes members of the Deaf Community, whose first language may be British Sign Language. This aspect of our communication needs to be improved and is enshrined as a project in the single equality scheme.

Equality snapshot: Reaching the Polish community

In 2008, we issued a press release, based on national research, which identified that some members of the Polish community were using scissors and screwdrivers to 'adapt' their two pin plugs. In conjunction with the weekly polish column in the Herald Express we issued a warning to the Polish community about the very real dangers of this – namely both electrocution and short circuit, causing fire. We have also formed links with the migrant workers forum to access and engage this community.

Road safety

DSFRS recognises the need for a proactive and co-ordinated approach to reduce the number of road casualties occurring and as a result have engaged fully with the Wider Devon Road Safety Partnership and the Somerset Road Safety Partnership with the aim of reducing fatalities and increasing survivability rates.

Within these partnerships, DSFRS has helped develop two new Road Safety education packages designed to deliver key safety messages to young people and new drivers:

- **Learn to Live**, developed in Devon is a multi-agency roadshow presented to large audiences. These roadshows include family members of those who have died or been seriously injured in accidents, emergency services and people who have caused collisions.
- **Choice & Consequences**, developed in Somerset is delivered to targeted audiences of young people.

How the Single Equality Scheme will further address the Equality Issues

By 2012 we will have identified, tailored and targeted our home fire safety visits for each vulnerable audience, with increased and measured formal and informal partnership working and community engagement. We will also recognise and utilise, where possible, skills in our own workforce where staff members have a particular community link/experience they wish to share. We will ensure that staff have access to instant translation services and develop their awareness of cultural and social difference and its importance when visiting homes. We will promote the use of community fire stations amongst target groups to promote and encourage involvement in shaping our service delivery and recruitment. We will measure and compare, demographically, satisfaction with our home safety visits and include a measure of how well the message has been understood. We will assess all Community safety initiatives at the planning stage to ensure projects are tailored for target audiences and that there is no adverse impact for any group. **For detailed actions please see the action plan on page 60.**

Fire Investigation and Arson Reduction

DSFRS liaise with the Police and other external agencies to investigate and to provide accurate intelligence and information on deliberately started fires. We work with the Avon & Somerset 'Arson Task Force' to enable a co-ordinated approach across Somerset.

We work with businesses to assess risks and advise on arson prevention measures. Group Support Teams identify potential arson attack sites and, in conjunction with our Arson Reduction Officers, they advise on preventative measures with other supporting agencies, such as the police.

Equality issues

Standard considerations: Hate crime: There is strong, proven and recognised link between domestic violence and arson attacks. This hate crime link can be applied in all cases of bullying and harassment, whether on the grounds of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion disability or any other human characteristic.

Specific considerations:

Race

- Accessibility of information where English may not be the first language
- Cultural differences which need awareness and sensitivity

Age

- Young people in disadvantaged situations need particular attention to help them improve their life chances

The way we work

Young people

Whilst Young people are not the sole perpetrators of arson by any means, statistics show that many young people hold a fascination of fire and fire setting, that is not necessarily malicious in intent, and the service has recognised and responded to this need for education around fire safety. A programme titled 'Firesetters' uses training advisors to educate and inform young people and their families.

In June 2008, the Service published its three-year Children & Young People's (CYP) Strategy which acknowledged the positive work already undertaken by Service personnel in the area of safety education for children and disadvantaged young people, and sought to build on these successes. It provides a framework for engaging actively with children and young people to divert them from fire crime and associated anti-social behaviour and to educate them and their families in fire safety skills and responsible citizenship.

The CYP Strategy clearly outlines how the Service intends to improve the life chances of children and young people by focussing on those young people who most need our help.

We work in partnership with the police where a domestic violence situation has been identified, providing advice and fitting arson proof letter boxes where appropriate.

How the single equality scheme will further address the equality issues

We will equip our investigators with awareness around hate crime, including domestic violence and with greater cultural and religious awareness around visiting homes. We will reinforce our language translation procedures to enable instant access and continuity of messages. **For further details please refer to the action plan on page 60.**

Community Safety Single Equality Scheme Action table 2009

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
CS01	Develop tailored home fire safety visit guidelines with consideration for suitability and accessibility for the audience	Race/disability/religion/gender/age	2010	3 1	Community Safety ACO
CS02	To assess all community safety initiatives at the planning stage to ensure projects are tailored for target groups at a central and local level	All	ongoing	3 1 & 2	Community Safety ACO
CS03	To promote and expand the use of community fire stations amongst specific target groups	Race/disability/religion/gender/age	2011	3 1 & 3	Community safety ACO
CS04	To develop and embed cultural awareness around visiting homes and places of worship	Race/Religion	2010	3 1 & 3	Community safety ACO
CS05	Roll out guidelines and training for directly accessing translation, transcription and audio services to CSAT	Race/disability	2010	3 1 & 2	Community safety ACO

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
CS06	Work with service planning to develop a measure for the comprehension of messages at home safety visits	All	2011	3 3	Community safety ACO
CS07	To gather, map and develop partnership work/ work with voluntary sector groups across the service	All	2011	3 1 & 2	Community safety ACO
CS08	To recognise specific community knowledge in relation to prevention within our own workforce and where staff wish to share this knowledge facilitate its transfer	All	Progress by 2011 and ongoing	3 1 & 2	Community safety ACO
CS09	Develop guidelines to ensure that targeted protection and enforcement work is evidence based and enforcement practices are tailored and sensitive to cultural and social difference	Race/disability/religion/sexual orientation	2011	3 1 & 2	Community safety ACO

Human Resources Management and Development

The Human Resource Management and Development Department ensures that Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service maintains and develops a competent workforce that is able to meet the current and future requirements of the service. In providing a modern workforce the Department also manages the Health and Safety for all staff and ensures that they are treated fairly and with respect.

The work of the Human Resource Management and Development Department is delivered by the following Sections:

- Human Resource Management: including Recruitment, Retention and employee relations etc.
- Training and Development
- Health and Safety
- Equality and Diversity
- Industrial Relations

Human Resource Management: including Recruitment, Retention and employee relations etc.

Our workforce and our communities are made up of many different people, all with different needs and aspirations. In order to continue to provide the excellent service that we are well known for, we must be able to reach all communities to adequately communicate our safety messages to schools, businesses and community groups. This will be better achieved if the diversity of our staff reflects the local communities we serve. We must work to retain the skilled people who work for us by considering their individual needs in relation to the characteristics of their lives.

Equality issues for the function

Standard considerations

- We must ensure that **all** our communities are aware of our recruitment opportunities and that our internal community are aware of promotion opportunities
- We must have selection processes that are evidenced based and do not unfairly discriminate and ensure equality monitoring at the recruitment/selection stage is anonymous
- Conflict management: ensuring that there are fair and effective processes to address internal and external conflict
- Employee relations: having agreed policies and processes that ensure efficient and effective employer/employee working relationships
- Absence management: having policies and procedures that support individual specific needs
- Discipline and Grievance: protocols are applied in a fair and equitable manner by employees who have received specific training. Discipline and grievance cases should be monitored to assess parity between groups
- Welfare: in addressing welfare needs we take individual considerations into account and be aware of multi-layered nature of experiences, for example the experiences of a man with disabilities, the experiences of a black woman and the experiences of a young Asian man will be fundamentally different.
- We must equality impact assess all our HR policies and procedures.
- We must adopt a system to apply a human rights framework to our policies and practices

Specific considerations

Race

The labour force survey for 2006/07 shows a figure of 5.29% of the population as black and ethnic minority across Devon and Somerset. We are aiming for our new joiners to be 2% above the local working age population of minority ethnic people by 2013 – 7.29%. This figure is a target to be reached and exceeded.

Religion and Belief

We need to ensure that no employee is disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their religion or belief and need to make arrangements for those who need prayer time and facilities during working hours and time off for religious festivals.

Disability

Our Non-uniformed, non-operational personnel have been covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 since it became law. All UK operational fire fighters have only been covered by the employment elements of the Act since October 2004. This has meant that the UK Fire and Rescue Service has had to reassess how it deals with issues of medical retirement, the concept of 'fitness' in relation to disability and how we do our job in relation to disability. We must ensure we make reasonable adjustments for people living with disabilities, in relation to the recruitment and retention of our people.

We must make it clear when recruiting, and actively promote that living with a disability does not automatically exclude anyone from becoming an operational Firefighter or fulfilling any other role in the service.

Gender

- We must address any gender pay gap.
- We must work to address the under representation of women in our workforce.

We are aiming for at least 18% of all new operational entrants to be women by 2013.

- Our maternity/paternity policies and flexible working policies must be robust and consider the needs of nursing mothers and the role of fathers.
- We must assess the need for a specific policy on domestic violence, to include awareness, support/signposting for victims and survivors and signposting for perpetrators.

Age

- We must not and will not discriminate against workers, employees, job seekers and trainees because of their age, directly or indirectly. The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 cover employment and vocational training including access to help and guidance, recruitment, promotion, training and development, termination, terms and conditions of employment.
- We must ensure chronological work histories and other information which can indicate age is not requested on our application forms.

Sexual orientation

- Monitoring the sexuality of staff will enable us to be aware of our progress towards an inclusive and diverse organisation and demographically compare questionnaire results amongst certain groups and assist in providing equality of opportunity and internal service delivery to all our people.
- We must and will ensure that homophobic bullying and harassment is not tolerated and is dealt with in specific terms and to foster an environment where our people are free to be open about their sexuality if they wish to do so.

The way we work

Equality snapshot: Ali's experience

"Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue have supported me fully in my development as a Firefighter. They welcomed me into the team and strengthened my English skills with lessons. I am really proud of my role, both as an operational Firefighter and as part of the Community Safety Action Team. I speak two languages, as well as English, which will help me to talk to different households about community safety. I received a letter of congratulations from the High Commission for the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh when I joined the service – I'm very proud of that!"

With regard to disability, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue service manages the circumstances in partnership with the staff member. All decisions are based upon input and advice from the staff member, Human Resources, Occupational Health, line managers, Equality & Diversity and Health & Safety. Amongst our operational staff living with disability are people with hearing impairments, diabetes, long term-progressive conditions and other situations that fall within the remit of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). With the help of the National Disabled Fire Association (NDFA), we are extremely proud that we were able to facilitate the return to work of one the UK's first amputee Firefighters.

Equality snapshot: National Disabled Fire Association

It is of note that three members of this organisation have been the founding members of and the driving force behind, the creation of the UK's first National Disabled Fire Association. This work has been done in partnership with (amongst others), the Disability Rights Commission and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Duncan White is a flexible duty station manager with Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, who lives with a hearing impairment. Duncan became aware that his hearing was deteriorating in 2002 – pre- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) – and was faced with the

uncertainty of his future within the service. Following a diagnosis, Duncan was able to continue his career with intrinsically safe hearing aids.

As a result of his experience and having gathered information about the DDA, Duncan and two colleagues, Andy Oaker (Equality and Diversity Advisor, DSFRS) and Barbara North (HR Officer, DSFRS), with expert DDA support from Michelle Valentine of Disability Forward, formed the National Disabled Fire Association (NDFA) to provide an advice service relating to disability for employees within the Fire and Rescue Service nationally.

The NDFA is now a registered charity (2008) and has received some funding from CLG and the Disability Rights Commission. The team have developed a website, www.ndfa.info, and support literature. The advisors continue to work around their day jobs as volunteers to promote the charity nationally and to fulfil an increasing demand for their services, from national presentations to individual case work.

Equality snapshot: Returning to work after serious illness

A female member of our senior management team suffered a serious illness which has left her with fatigue, relating to an impaired immune system, and a mobility impairment. Reasonable adjustments relating to a flexible working contract, including home working, reduced hours and adaptations to a vehicle, has reaped rewards for both the service and the individual – the service retains the valuable experience and key skills of the individual and the individual is able to continue her career in the service.

Equality snapshot: Operational women

We have been set targets in the National Equality and Diversity strategy to increase the percentage of operational Firefighters who are women in our Service. Our operational staff, wholetime and retained, numbered 1929 staff in December 2008, of which only 81 are women. The government has offered fire authorities the opportunity to apply for funding to stretch those targets, and we are taking up

that challenge. We will be talking to; female Firefighters in the service, women who have thought about joining the service and women who hadn't considered joining the service to gather their perceptions, opinions and ideas to help us recruit, retain and promote more women. We are aiming for at least 18% of all new operational entrants to be women by 2013.

Equality snapshot: Monitoring sexuality

This year, we have expanded our personnel equality monitoring to include sexual orientation. This Equality Monitoring can help determine whether our policies on tackling discrimination are working, identify the barriers that prevent staff from making the best use of their talents, and enable policy makers to tackle inequalities and promote equality. This measure enables us to compare levels of satisfaction amongst certain groups and assist us in providing equality of opportunity and internal service delivery to all our people. It also helps us to assess the perception of our organisation, with regard to being seen as open and inclusive and as an employer of choice by all the diverse communities we serve.

How the Single Equality Scheme will further address the equality issues

(See page 76 for the Human Resources actions table)

Priorities

With regard to gender, there are actions within this scheme which aim to improve the recruitment, retention and opportunities for progression for women in our service. We will challenge the male dominated culture of the service and foster a gender inclusive environment which women want to be a part of, make them feel valued and able to progress. We are developing a positive action strategy in order to encourage people from minority ethnic communities to apply for operational roles.

We will carry out an attitudinal survey around disability issues. We will be addressing the criteria to achieve 'Positive about Disability' Two Tick symbol by 2010. This accreditation is awarded to employers who demonstrate to the [Department of Work and Pensions \(Job Centre Plus\)](#) that they have achieved, and are committed to, continually achieving 5 commitments relating to the employment of disabled people.

We will develop a specific welfare system for LGBT staff to offer and signpost support for situations in the work or home environment. We will investigate any gender pay gap and develop a domestic violence policy. We will review our maternity and paternity policies and develop a standard induction process for staff. We will develop a new bullying and harassment policy within a human rights framework which will include information packs for employees.

We will review our recruitment practices to ensure there is no direct or indirect age discrimination and ensure that equality monitoring is used meaningfully to measure satisfaction between groups, assess the openness of our culture and encourage staff to share specific issues with us. **Please refer to the actions table on page 76.**

Training and Development

Training and Development is responsible in the main for ensuring that staff are selected and then developed to be competent to undertake their roles, and that they are then able to maintain their competence. Principally, this involves working closely with other Departments to ensure that employees have the requisite knowledge, skills and understanding to enable DSFRS to deliver its corporate goals and priorities. **NB: specific equality and diversity training, including e-learning, is the responsibility of Equality and Diversity.**

Equality issues relating to this function

Standard considerations

- Training Needs Analysis (TNA) must ensure that each member of the organisation attends Equality and Diversity training and is assessed on their knowledge attainment.
- We must ensure that our training programmes are equality impact assessed to ensure that no-one is directly or indirectly discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way because of their race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or age.
- We must ensure equality of access to courses for development and progression
- The training department is committed to maintaining its 'Investor in People' status

Specific considerations

Race

- Relevant courses should include a standard reminder of the availability of instant translation services where the course subject includes engaging with the public.
- Role play should include people from different races

Disability

- We must ensure that our joining instructions include questions relating to specific needs in relation to disability.

- We must ensure that our training venues are assessed in relation to necessary DDA requirements
- Course subjects which include engaging with the public should include considerations around engaging with people with disabilities, to include in a physical sense, those with learning disabilities and mental health issues etc. where possible courses with role play should include situations which include people with these disabilities.

Religion

- We must ensure that relevant courses refer to the need for considerations around religious sensitivities with proportionality.
- Role play should include people from different religions

Gender

- We must consider 'family friendly' issues in the delivery of courses

The way we work

Our training policies undergo equality impact assessments. All our trainers are assessed using a recognised quality assurance tool and all our courses undergo a feedback and audit process. Equally, they have all been trained in line with guidelines for Certificates in Education.

Our trainers challenge inappropriate behaviour within the training environment and ensure inclusion and fair access to training with a robust Training Needs Analysis (TNA).

How the Single Equality Scheme will further address the equality issues

A performance appraisal process will be developed and implemented which will address training needs, work/life balance and the needs of individuals. Our training venues will be assessed for DDA requirements in relation to hearing loops.

We will impact assess course content to identify where issues around all strands should be included.

Health Safety and Welfare

The Health and Safety Department acts to ensure that the health and safety of all staff and those who visit service property or are affected by the work of the Service is managed in accordance with statutory requirements. The scope of the Department extends across the Service and impacts upon office, training, station and incident environments as workplaces.

Equality issues for this function

Standard considerations

The Safe Person Concept

The 'Safe person concept' means that there are organisational and personal responsibilities for making the Firefighter as safe as possible in the inevitably dangerous situations they are involved in.

The overriding premise in safety management is to ensure that collective control measures are put into effect, because this safeguards everyone. An operational incident, however, can be an inherently dangerous environment, where implementing collective controls may not be possible. Brigades must, therefore, ensure that the Firefighter is safe. This approach is known as the Safe Person Concept.

There are two facets to this concept - organisational responsibility and personal responsibility.

Organisational Responsibility

The organisation must provide the support necessary to ensure that employees are able to remain safe in a hostile environment.

This will include:

- The selection of employees
- The provision of risk information
- Effective instruction
- The provision and use of equipment
- Safe procedures and systems of work
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Training and exercising to achieve competence
- Competent supervision

Personal Responsibility

The individual must possess the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to assist them in making professional judgments about the appropriate use of available resources, in order to control the risks inherent in the unique circumstances of any emergency situation. Furthermore, the individual must acknowledge any limitations in their abilities that may have direct effect on their personal safety or that of others.

Every operational Firefighter must therefore be:

- Competent to perform tasks assigned
- An effective member of a team
- Self disciplined to work within safe systems of work
- Adaptable to changing circumstances
- Vigilant for his or her own safety and that of colleagues and others
- Able to recognise his or her own abilities and limitations

Specific considerations

If we use the requirements of the safe person concept as a standard consideration, there are some strand specific considerations to take into account.

Religion

- Personal Protective Equipment that covers the head

Disability

- Having a disability does not automatically exclude the Firefighter from an operational environment

Stress: The safe person concept may be affected by the impact of stress on an individual and those working with them.

The way we work

The terms of reference of our Joint Safety Committee, our strategic consultative forum, has been expanded to include; Health Safety and Welfare issues by including members from a wide cross section of departments such as Human Resources, Welfare, Risk and Insurance, Physical Assets etc. All representative bodies, recognised by the Fire Authority; Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Fire Officers Association (FOA), Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) and Unison are invited to attend and participate in this meeting.

Health and Safety are working with the Welfare Officer and the FBU women's group to develop policies relating to dignity and respect on the fire incident ground.

Health and Safety audit processes are subject to audit and review and all policies are Equality Impact Assessed.

We have developed a stress policy which will both assist managers to identify when someone may be suffering from stress, and help staff to recognise when they might be suffering from stress.

We have tailored uniforms, including firehoods which are specifically designed to cover the head, a solution for Firefighters whose religions may require the head to be covered.

Our Firefighters who live with hearing impairment are able to wear 'intrinsically safe' hearing aids, which mean that they are now able to stay fully operational.

Equality snapshot: Still fighting fire after the loss of a limb

Our Health and Safety department worked with Human resources and the National Disabled Fire Association by carrying out risk assessments and advising, with the objective of keeping an operational Firefighter in employment, following the loss of a limb. Working in partnership with Health professionals, support was given with the acquisition of a fire retardant prosthetic limb, fitted with a fire boot. This enabled the Firefighter, with reasonable adjustments, to remain fit for role, and they were able to continue their career.

How the Single Equality Scheme will further address the equality issues

There are actions throughout this scheme which sit under different functions but which include the Health and Safety function in their development which will assist in ensuring that the safe person concept is adhered to. They range from training to welfare systems and the procurement of tailored PPE solutions.

Human Resources SES Actions Table 2009

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
HR01	To develop a strategy to meet the National Equality and Diversity stretch target requirements for 2013	Race, Gender	2010	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR02	Develop and conduct a disability survey of the workforce focussed on attitudinal factors and barriers to inclusion	Disability	2011	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR03	Ensure all diversity monitoring forms for staff profiles and recruitment include sexual orientation and additional areas of religion and belief , e.g. humanism, agnosticism	Sexual Orientation Religion	2009	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR04	Develop a recruitment and selection code of Practice to include a review of application packs for evidence of age, race, gender, disability and bias and develop new packs in consultation with existing women employees, employees with disabilities and employees with ethnic minority heritage	Race, Gender, Disability, Age	2010	4 2	Head of Human Resources

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
HR05	With expert advice, develop and publicise a specific welfare support system for gay, lesbian or bisexual, or transgender staff to offer support for situations in their home or work environment, or both	Sexual orientation	2010	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR06	Ensure chronological education , work history and person specifications are removed from application forms for uniformed and non-uniformed applicants	Age	2009	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR07	Review the Maternity and Paternity, Carers and Dependent's leave policies	Gender	2010	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR08	Develop a standard induction process for non-uniformed staff to include a Corporate induction for all staff, a Departmental induction and a Manager's induction	All	2010	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR09	Develop and implement a Performance Appraisal system to incorporate; Core Values, work/life balance, working with the impact of difference	All	2009/10	1 /4 2	Head of Human Resources

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
HR10	Investigate any gender pay gap	Gender	2010	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR11	Establish a protocol to ensure reasonable adjustment is made for staff who live with or acquire disabilities	Disability	2009	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR12	Review and implement the criteria for 'two ticks' disability status	Disability	2010	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR13	Develop and roll out a new Bullying and Harassment policy, applying a human rights framework	All	2010	4 2	Head of Human Resources
HR14	Develop exit interviews policy	All	2010	4 2	Head of Human Resources

Equality and Diversity

It is the responsibility of the equality and diversity unit to ensure that the Equality and Diversity agenda is delivered and understood throughout the organisation.

The unit works to:

- Help the organisation to treat everyone fairly, with dignity and respect
- Provide varying solutions for different needs and expectations
- Promote equal opportunities in employment and progression within the Service
- Challenge prejudice and discrimination
- Give advice and guidance about addressing with our impact on difference, so as to provide an improved service to the public and our partners

However, the responsibility for these aims does not rest with the Equality and Diversity Unit alone. Every member of the organisation holds an individual responsibility. Corporately, the organisation is responsible for raising awareness and for the actions of all its personnel.

The way we work

- Progress the implementation of Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service's Equality and Diversity Strategy across the Service functions and ensuring that Equality and Diversity is incorporated into all business streams
- Interpret equality and diversity policies and procedures and advise/assist on their development
- Promote Equality and Diversity through training and development courses and workshops.
- Provide practical guidance on issues around fairness and dignity at work and respect within our communities.
- Act as advisors to people at all levels of the organisation regarding Equality and Diversity related issues – particularly legislation and best practice
- Act as advisors in matters where conflict exists between individuals or in teams (in conjunction with the Welfare Officer)

Equality snapshot: Addressing dyslexia

The Equality and Diversity unit is currently implementing a plan to provide support to those who live with dyslexia. This includes:

1 Those employees with dyslexia, who ask for further assistance, will be provided with the necessary support and reasonable adjustments based upon an individual needs assessment. We have purchased a software solution which supports those with dyslexia when working on a computer.

2 Managers and co-workers of employees who choose to declare their dyslexia will be provided with support and guidance in relation to that person's specific needs.

3 We will develop an awareness and understanding within DSFRS about dyslexia by:

- Providing Key information about dyslexia available for all staff on the DSFRS intranet site on the Equality and Diversity pages. This information will be linked to the training, human resources, ICT and Information Management sections of the intranet site.
- A series of half-day disability awareness sessions will be held for trainers and managers. Dyslexia will be one of the subjects covered.
- All human resource (HR) and key training department personnel will receive specific training on dyslexia in general and the specific processes that DSFRS will undertake in relation to dyslexia. The HR, training and Equality & Diversity teams will then be able to act as a central source of information, guidance and support on all issues relating to dyslexia in DSFRS.
- There will be articles about the approach to dyslexia in DSFRS in the Service Bulletins and in the Service magazine, "Your Shout", to publicise this.

We will also ensure that all text based information generated by DSFRS is dyslexia friendly by ensuring it adheres to British Dyslexia Association guidelines.

How the team will progress Equality, Diversity and a Human Rights approach within the scheme

In addition to the day to day role of the section, some key actions have been enshrined in this scheme to enable specific outcomes for all groups in relation to all the functions within this scheme. We will work to support all functions in the delivery of their action plan with guidance and advice where requested. We will monitor and produce the progress reports for this scheme and will produce a DSFRS equality and diversity Annual Report. Please refer to the Equality and Diversity action table.

Equality and Diversity Single Equality Scheme Action Table 2009

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
ED01	Roll out 'e' learning E & D programme across the service	All	2011	1 1 & 2	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED02	Develop a campaign targeted at watch managers to ensure they are aware of their leadership role in matters of equality and diversity	All	2011	1 1 & 2	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED03	Produce an annual report for Equality and diversity in the organisation and to report on progress of Making the Connections	All	2010	1 2	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED04	Review the Equality Impact Assessment process and incorporate Human Rights considerations	All	2011	1 1, 2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
ED05	To support members and staff to take a lead in national and local events around equality and diversity issues	All	2010	1 2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED06	Develop with service planning and human resources, new performance indicators for recruitment and retention	Gender, Race	2011	2 2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED07	Provide quarterly articles on aspects /progress of the scheme and E and D issues for Your Shout internal magazine, press release and website posting	All	2009	2 2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED08	Review and develop a Bullying and Harassment Policy and procedures to be launched with an internal PR campaign	All	2009	2 2	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED09	Develop an interview skills workshop with senior managers to be offered to all communities	All	2010	1 2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
ED10	Coordinate and host a disability centred conference within the service to create awareness and establish the service as a leader on disability issues.	Disability	2011	3 1 & 2	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED11	Develop single issue awareness sessions for managers to improve staff understanding and attitudes towards gender issues, people with disabilities and race issues	Gender Disability Race	2011	3 1 & 2	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED12	Support a study of our women Firefighters to gather their views on attraction, recruitment, retention, progression and the culture within our service	Gender	2009	4 2	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED13	To recognise and support staff who wish to share specific community knowledge	All	ongoing	3 1 2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
ED14	To co-ordinate a group with external and internal members from the Authority, Staff and agencies including the voluntary sector to discuss the progress of this scheme and raise contemporary issues, to meet every six months	All	2010	2 & 3 2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED15	To develop, with the Recruitment Unit, a strategy to meet the National Equality and diversity stretch target requirements for 2013 (links to HR01)	Gender, Race	2010	4 1 & 2	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED16	Develop, publish and roll out 'Stop and Think ' guidelines relating to day to day practices with regard to assessing individual needs	All	2011	5 1,2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED17	Collect and share the progress of the single equality scheme and case studies with CLG for inclusion in its National Annual Report	All	2010 and ongoing	5 1,2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED18	Develop a guide to cultural/ religious awareness	Race/ religion	2010	1 1 & 2	Equality and Diversity Advisor
ED19	Roll out dyslexia support package	disability	2009	4 2 & 3	Equality and Diversity Advisor

Service Planning and Review

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service use a Performance Management framework that enables it to plan, monitor and review its activities. The Department develops the annual corporate business plan that presents the strategic activity for the organisation to achieve its Goals and Priorities. This function also analyses performance information to identifying if protection, prevention and response activity is having a positive effect on community risk.

The organisation's internal and external audit and review process is the responsibility of the Department. This involves undertaking management reviews and research, risk based reviews of policies and procedures and managing the review and assessment requirements of external agencies.

Consultation is an important part of the organisation's planning, review and communication processes and is the responsibility of this section.

Equality issues for this function

Standard considerations

- Encouraging all members of the community to influence our priorities
- Using equality monitoring to measure satisfaction and compare results demographically
- Measuring Equality and Diversity related performance of the service in thematic reviews and station assessments
- Measuring the progress of the Corporate Plan in relation to equality and diversity issues
- Assisting the Equality and Diversity function to measure progress and evidence relating to the Equality Framework for Fire Services and this scheme

Specific considerations

Race

We must make it clear to all communities that we are able to produce our information in other languages as requested.

British Sign Language

We recognise that the Deaf Community consider they have a linguistic difference and we should be able to provide key information in BSL (British Sign Language).

Disability

We must make it clear that we are able to provide our information in alternative formats suitable for the individual needs of people with disabilities, e.g. Braille transcription, audio and larger text and that all literature we produce adheres to the guidelines set out by the British Dyslexia Association.

The way we work

We recognise that we have not been proactive in reaching all our communities and enabling them access to our consultation processes, and this year we have begun to take steps to address this. We presented the service priorities we had identified to some key groups reflective of communities for their comments in November 2008. We intend to strengthen our relationships with these groups and others and be able to involve them fully in the process at the planning stage in the future. We will also evaluate the mutual benefit and value of our partnership arrangements.

Equality Snapshot: Equality and Diversity in action on stations

The next round of station assessments in 2009 includes:

- testing the ability of fire-fighters to access our instant translation service
- mapping the informal partnerships/community groups/neighbourhood networks stations are engaging with and assessing the level of the engagement
- Assessing Firefighters' knowledge of our Core Values (see inside cover)
- Assessing Firefighters' knowledge of bullying and harassment definitions, service policies and procedures and support mechanisms for witnesses and victims

How the Single Equality Scheme can further address the Equality issues

The actions for this function focus on building the demographic measurement of the performance of our services and ensuring all communities have an opportunity to influence our service priorities. Please refer to the Service Planning and Review action table.

Service Planning and Review SES action table 2009

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
SP01	Ensure Equality and diversity considerations are embedded into risk management planning	All	2010	3 1	Head of Service Planning and Review
SP02	Present home fire safety satisfaction results demographically and use the results to inform future practice	All	2010	3 1 & 3	Head of Service Planning and Review
SP03	Investigate with community safety a mechanism for measuring the comprehension of messages and assess demographically	All	2011	3 1, 2 & 3	Head of Service Planning and Review
SP04	Integrate equality and diversity into the internal audit processes of the organisation as a part of thematic reviews	All	2012	3 2 & 3	Head of Service planning and Review
SP05	Ensure reflective community groups are engaged and consulted on for Corporate Plans and policies	All	2010	1 2 & 3	Head of Service planning and Review

Physical Assets

The Physical Assets Department ensures that the Service is provided with the most appropriate asset solutions to meet current and future community safety needs. The reference of Physical assets includes amongst other things: property, vehicles, operational equipment, personal protective equipment, radios, computer networks, and computer hardware and software. The Department is responsible for the procurement, maintenance, upgrading and disposal of all physical assets.

Equality issues for this function

Specific considerations:

Religion:

- PPE with regard to the covering of heads/hair
- The provision of space for prayer

Disability:

- DDA compliant buildings
- IT accessibility, for example solutions for those living with dyslexia and visual
- PPE with regard to prescription lenses

Gender:

- PPE designed for women and for maternity wear
- The provision of private space for nursing mothers
- Adequate changing / showering facilities

The way we work

We now procure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that takes religious custom and beliefs into account, for example, the provision of Fire Hoods where the head needs to be covered and ensuring the garments have no leather components. We also provide prescription visors on our Breathing Apparatus PPE.

How the SES can further address the Equality issues Please refer to the action plan for Physical Assets.

Physical Assets SES Actions Table 2009

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
PA01	Assist equality and diversity in the installation and roll-out of dyslexia software solution	Disability	2009	1 2 & 3	Head of Physical Assets
PA02	Ensure station improvement plans include DDA considerations	Disability	2009	1 2	Head of Physical Assets
PA03	Ensure station improvement plans and all buildings include consideration of adequate provision for somewhere to pray	Religion/belief	2010	1 2	Head of Physical Assets
PA04	Ensure station improvement plans and all buildings include appropriate showering facilities which protect the dignity of both genders	Gender	2010	1 2	Head of Physical Assets

Democratic Services and Corporate Support

The Corporate Support Department ensures that the Authority is supported in exercising its democratic duties. The Department also has responsibility for managing the control of corporate information which includes content management of the internet and intranet and meeting the requirements of legislation which affects information handling and disclosure, and risk including reputational risk and business continuity. Internal and external corporate communication is managed within the Department including proactive and reactive public and media relations. The Department also includes Procurement (page 98).

Equality issues for this function

Standard considerations

- We must ensure that all frontline reception staff have a keen understanding of equality and diversity and know how to address visitors appropriately.
- Our reception, visitor areas and fire stations should be used to demonstrate and communicate our core values and key messages
- We must support and encourage the authority members to provide leadership in the principles of equality and diversity, to challenge officers on these principles and to highlight considerations and concerns
- We must work to develop clear key messages which support the principles of equality and diversity and communicate them in all internal and external communications
- We must target single interest publications with stories that promote the service's commitment to equality and diversity and challenge stereotypes of the Firefighter, and myths around the fire and rescue service
- We must ensure our website is used as a window on the service and is accessible and inclusive
- We must ensure that all procurement contracts include an assessment of a third party approach to equality and diversity and that it is compatible with our own Core Values

- Integrate equality and diversity into the risk assessment processes by assessing specific risks around community tension indicators and reputational risk factors associated with equality and diversity considerations

Specific considerations

Race

- We must ensure that we can provide any information in other languages when required.
- We must promote positive stories and images of different races in our external and internal communications.

Religion

- We must promote positive images of different religions in our communications

Gender

- We must actively promote positive images of women and women Firefighters in all our communications, external and internal

Age

- We must target publications for young people with fire safety and 'myth busting' messages about the fire service as a career

Disability

- We must be able to provide information in preferred formats for people living with disabilities and long term conditions such as dyslexia and visual impairment

How the Single Equality Scheme will further address the equality issues

The scheme will establish a set of key messages for Equality and Diversity to be consistently promoted internally and externally, promoting positive images of race, gender and disabled people. It aims to demonstrate a commitment to our core values with visible commitment in our reception areas, both displayed and demonstrated by the interaction of frontline reception staff.

Corporate Support SES Actions

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
CS01	Assist operations in promoting the instant translation service (Language Line)	Race	2009 and ongoing	1 1 & 2	Head of Corporate Support
CS02	Develop key messages around Equality and Diversity in the service and regularly communicate internally and externally using stories gathered from areas	All	2010 and ongoing	1 1, 2 & 3	Head of Corporate Support
CS03	To ensure positive images of a diverse workforce are included in publications	Gender, race, disability	2010 and ongoing	1 2	Head of Corporate Support
CS04	Develop positive message posters to be displayed in every fire station and multi lingual welcome posters for each station, Area HQ and SHQ	All	2010	1 2 & 3	Head of Corporate Support
CS05	Integrate equality and diversity into the risk assessment process e.g. Assess specific risks around community tension and reputational risk factors associated with equality and diversity considerations	All	2011	1 1 & 2	Head of Corporate Support

Procurement

Procurement is part of the Corporate Support department and is the gateway for everything that is bought into the organisation to help us deliver our services, from fire appliances to IT software.

Equality issues for this function

Standard considerations

An important part of our commitment to equality and diversity principles is to encourage and, where possible, to require companies and other organisations that bid for our services to practice equality and diversity in employment and service delivery.

The way we work

All companies who bid for our business have to produce evidence of their commitment to equality and diversity.

In addition we assist functions in procuring tailored software solutions for example, people with visual impairment and dyslexia, protective clothing and equipment for women and equality mapping solutions which will help us target groups for prevention work.

How the SES can further address the Equality issues

Working with the Equality and Diversity unit, we will develop a toolkit for the procurement function to ensure that all our procurement is carried out fairly and equitably and that we are aware of tailored solutions. We also plan to carry out site visits to some of those from whom we procure services to see evidence that their equality and diversity policies are carried out in practice.

Procurement SES Actions Table 2009

no	Action	Strand	timescale	E & D Goal	Lead responsibility
F01	Develop an equality and diversity toolkit for DSFRS procurement practices	All	2010	2 2	Head of Corporate Support
F02	Develop guidelines for on site visits of premises of businesses we procure from to seek demonstration their equality and diversity policies	All	2011	2 2	

Finance

This function deals with all things budgetary and financial which includes;

Developing, monitoring and reviewing the policies and procedures for financial management and to deliver the requirements.

Ensuring that the accounts and financial records are complete and accurate, comply with statutory and financial regulations, and are available for external scrutiny by audit or other interested parties.

The way we work

The policies of this department are equality impact assessed.

There are no further actions for this function at present, but this is subject to review.

For further information about this scheme, please contact Equality and Diversity by calling 01392 872200.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service 2009