

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY 2011-2015



West Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue Service



Making West Yorkshire Safer
www.westyorkfire.gov.uk

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Introduction

Human resources management is central to ensuring that West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) meets its statutory obligations to the people of West Yorkshire. In addition, the importance of a 'people plan' is vital to the transformation of service provision to West Yorkshire's communities.

The national fire and rescue service has been through a period of significant change, a period of modernisation and a period of review which challenged the way services had been traditionally delivered.

Now in 2011 the service faces new challenges in the form of budget cuts and constraints, which means that WYFRS will have to deliver more for less. This strategy supports the search for new ways of working, which allows the utilisation of our staff in the best way against the backdrop of budget constraints. It supports the Service Plan 2011-15 which is the cornerstone of our future service delivery strategy.

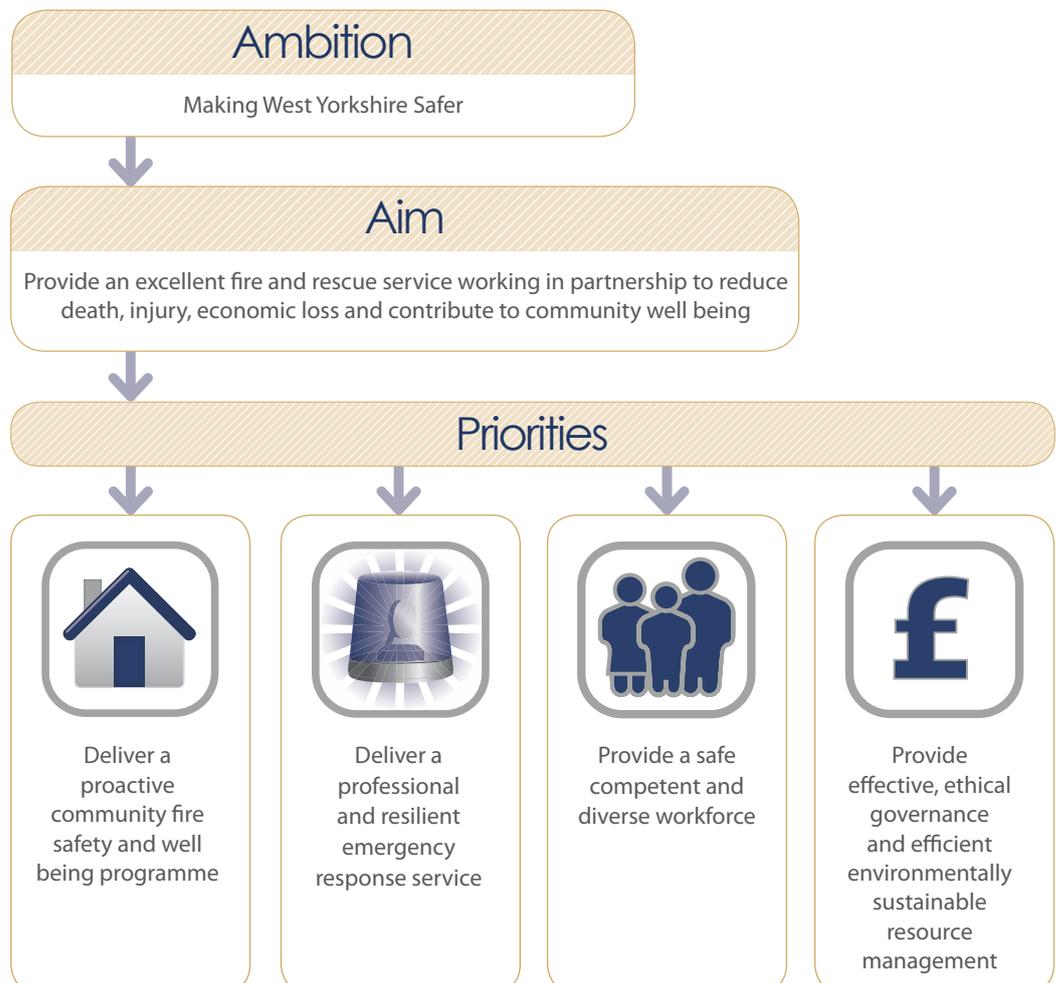


Ambition, aim and priorities

The human resources strategy is part of the foundation for WYFRS's ambition, aim and priorities over the next four years.

The strategy will be used to;

- Facilitate the implementation of strategic change within the Service
- Recruit and provide a diverse workforce
- Provide a competent and skilled workforce
- Provide a healthy and safe workforce





Recruitment and retention

It is anticipated that 2011-2015 will be the years in which WYFRS faces severe financial constraints. As the salary budget forms 85 per cent of its expenditure it is inevitable that any potential savings will come from this budget.

In order to prepare for these budget changes, in January 2010 West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority approved a recruitment freeze. With a decreasing workforce new patterns of work and new ways of working have been introduced.

It may be that there will be a need to recruit staff within this four year period and if this is the case WYFRS will utilise fair and equitable recruitment strategies with employees, as always, selected on merit.

Although there will be little recruitment, our policies and procedures will still require review and amendment to comply with changing employment legislation. In addition, flexible employment procedures will be maintained to assist employees in their work/life balance choices. [Click here for Employment Services policy and procedures](#)

For the future, any operational recruitment process will be customised to WYFRS's needs based on national guidance and equality principles.

Information provided by our human resources database and the Central Staffing team, will be used to inform decisions in relation to the efficient deployment of staff to ensure our core business is implemented.

Retaining skilled and motivated staff as appropriate is important to our continued progress. This will be achieved by the use of targeted development and by listening to and responding, where possible, to the needs of our workforce.



Employee relations and communication

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is fortunate to enjoy good employee relations, but we recognise that in order for this to continue there is a need to ensure that we operate in a fair and transparent way and that we listen to and consult with all our representative bodies.

Currently the authority recognises the following representative bodies:-

- The Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
- The Fire Officers Association (FOA)
- The Retained Firefighters Union (RFU)
- Unison

In addition to the above to ensure the workforce is kept informed, the management communicates and engages with staff through other forums. Use is made of station visits when senior officers visit Watches to provide corporate information and answer questions. There are also focus groups and staff meetings where views are sought and information exchanged.

Engagement with staff is vital if change is to be achieved. Staff must feel empowered in order for them to share the vision of WYFRS. Empowerment is only achieved where the workforce has the information it needs and the ability to make decisions and have choices. This empowerment, however, brings with it accountability and responsibility which needs to be embraced by managers and staff alike.

In times of financial constraint there is a duty to ensure the whole workforce understands the decisions that may impact on their lives. By ensuring that as many lines of communication as possible are open we believe we will earn the trust and confidence of all the staff and together achieve our ambition and aims.



Reward and remuneration

WYFRS's remuneration strategy is based on principles of fairness and non discrimination, together with the legal requirements of equal pay for equal value. Within the current financial environment, however, WYFRS recognises the need to maintain control over staffing costs and affordability.

Job evaluation is already embedded within West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and we are committed to ensuring that fair pay principles are observed. As WYFRS changes to meet the needs of its communities our methods of service delivery will also need to change. As systems of work evolve to meet the requirements of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), there may be a need to consider whether different and appropriate payments should be offered to staff who agree to undertake different/amended work patterns.

The additional responsibility allowance scheme will be reviewed to ensure that it remains current and affordable. This review will be undertaken in consultation with appropriate representative bodies.

Equality and diversity

The Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF) sets out the guiding principles and priority areas to enable progress on the journey to excellence. It underpins our ambition, aim and priorities which will be delivered through the Service Plan. We have developed an equality and diversity action plan for 2011-12 which details the priorities and actions required to support the delivery of the Service Plan and the Community Risk Management Strategy over the next four years. This action plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it meets the requirements of the organisation.

In 2010 WYFRS was the first FRS to achieve the Excellent Level of Equality Framework, demonstrating clear leadership and commitment to serving our diverse and at risk communities.

WYFRS will continue to respond to changing equality and diversity legislation and meet the requirements of the new Public Sector Equality Duty.

Following a review of the equality and diversity training we have now commissioned an e-learning package which incorporates the new Equality Act 2010.

In the Excellent Peer Challenge our process for Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) was recognised:

“The service has a clear understanding of what equality impact assessments are and how they can be used”.

High level EIAs for training and development and Safety Central are now in place and we continue to work with the representative bodies and our equality stakeholders to audit the quality of EIAs.



We are currently in a period of non recruitment we will, however, continue to implement positive action initiatives, as appropriate, to improve the diversity of the workforce, including opportunities for progression of under-represented groups.

WYFRS will continue to contribute and influence the national equality and diversity agenda. As an Excellent FRS we will endeavour to share best practice, through the Chief Fire Officers Association and Local Government Improvement and Development, with Developing and Achieving Authorities.

Occupational health, safety and welfare

There is little doubt that the financial challenges facing West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service over the next four years will result in significant changes to its practices and ways of working. However, WYFRS is adamant that these changes will not compromise the health, safety or welfare of its workforce, as this continues to be one of its key priorities through these times of change. We will, therefore, work with the integrated risk management plan team to undertake a firefighter safety and welfare assessment for all of the IRMP proposals to ensure they do not adversely affect firefighter safety or welfare.

As a fire and rescue service providing an emergency response service in what can sometimes be high risk situations, particular emphasis is, and will continue to be, placed on health and safety management. We will continue to provide a competent occupational health and safety service, supporting directorates by providing competent and timely advice on all aspects of occupational health and safety, ensuring that functional managers can discharge their legal responsibilities effectively. This will include the monitoring of any relevant legislative changes, ensuring they are incorporated into WYFRS's policies and procedures and the monitoring and review of internal compliance with these policies and arrangements. This will be achieved by a structured audit programme along with a peer review programme with regional fire and rescue services.



WYFRS can only achieve its ambition of 'Making West Yorkshire Safer' by having the right number of staff at work and, therefore, we will continue to strive to reduce accidents at work and general sickness absence. WYFRS have set targets for the continued reduction of work related accidents and days lost to sickness and we will continue to centrally drive this agenda. This will be achieved by the analysis of statistics to identify trends and patterns, which will feed into the development of policies and procedures to support managers. WYFRS's 'Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy' will also play a major role in the setting of strategic priorities and subsequent action plans for reducing work related accidents and ill health.

Fit and healthy staff have less time off work and work more productively when they are in work. The effort, therefore, to not only maintain but improve the fitness and wellbeing of our staff continues to be important. We will develop a holistic approach to the fitness assessment of all operational personnel, along with fitness training programmes and competent specialist advice, to ensure they are operationally fit and able to perform effectively and safely. This service will also be available to all staff employed on green book conditions of service on a voluntary basis. We will continue to provide a full occupational health service including access to competent occupational health advice, physiotherapy services, confidential counselling services and mental health advice, pre-employment health screening and routine and specialist nurse based health screening.



Training and Development priorities

The Service Plan 2011–2015 highlights the ambition, aim and priorities of the service and the challenges facing the service over the coming years. To support the plan, continual development of a competent, safe and diverse workforce is essential. Training and Development will provide this in the most cost effective way to support front line service delivery:

- A comprehensive Training and Development Policy and Training Framework ([click here](#)) that supports the service to develop strategic, tactical and operational responses to meet the full range of roles and incident types
- Skills development – with partners, developing employees’ skills and knowledge in an innovative, high performance, multi-agency context
- Flexible programmes of training and development opportunities to support the community safety agenda by addressing the development needs of all groups of staff as new demands emerge from the fire and rescue services Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Succession planning and leadership development – building visionary and ambitious leadership, which makes the best use of both the political and managerial role, operating in a partnership context
- Lifelong learning
- Maximising staff potential in the achievement of organisational objectives
- Addressing future skills

In April 2009, fire and rescue services became members of Skills for Justice – one of 25 sector skills councils. We will work in partnership with Skills for Justice to develop skills for safer communities - to ensure that all our employees are equipped with the right skills to enable them to be productive, effective and efficient.



Developing our workforce

Analysis of continuous training needs defines our organisational training requirements and managers undertake Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) with all staff to agree objectives and individual training requirements.

Staff development is an integral part of the strategic planning process, in that it is aligned with organisational objectives via a performance management system. National Occupational Standards (NOS) form the basis of our operational competency frameworks. For those seeking promotion, our selection processes value the diversity of experience, backgrounds and abilities that exist amongst our staff and thereby maximise the opportunities to have a more diverse workforce.

Operational Competencies, Personal Quality and Attributes (PQAs) and Core Values, provide the framework to determine an individual's potential for progression within the organisation. Assessment and development processes will be used to support career progression. Succession planning will be supported by appropriate targeted development for staff who have been identified as 'high potential' performers.

Critical to service delivery is a comprehensive range of initial and refresher training, together with regular competence assessments which take place in the Technical Rescue Training Centre, the Command Training Suite, Training Centre, Urban Search and Rescue facilities and fire stations

Developing our workforce (continued...)

There is a commitment to e-learning and use of information technology to support cost effective training and development. The electronic course booking and recording system will hold individual records of development, performance management and career progression information.

All training centre staff have a comprehensive induction process. Each instructor gains nationally recognised qualifications to prove sector competence in the area they teach. They also gain City and Guilds Cluster awards for training along with the Award/Certificate in Assessment.



Qualifications

The Fire and Rescue Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS) presents an overview of the qualifications and learning provision relevant to the fire and rescue sector. A range of vocationally related qualifications (VRQs) with relevance to the fire and rescue sector are available including awards, certificates and diplomas.

Critical to our Human Resources Strategy will be the provision of training to ensure a competent workforce is underpinned by relevant and recognised qualifications.

The full range of relevant learning provision and qualifications are outlined in the flexible training and development frameworks which recognises staff achievements and professionalism, adding value and offering opportunities for progression and transfer. Qualifications will provide a 'benchmark' against which to measure competence and as such, have the potential to promote confidence in the competence of practitioners in the sector. In certain risk critical work situations, qualifications do offer a means to ensure the required standards of competence and safety are achieved.

The range of relevant learning provision and qualifications which we will use includes the following:

- National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ)
- Certificate/degree/diploma/masters qualifications offered by further education and higher education
- Vocationally (VQR) and technical skill-related qualifications
- Operational competency-based qualifications
- Incident command, safety critical activities, BA, water rescue
- National Resilience e.g. civil contingencies/multi agency working
- Qualifications offered by professional bodies e.g. The Institution of Fire Engineers

The Fire Service College in England is an agency of Communities and Local Government (CLG). WYFRS will utilise the courses on offer such as Gold Incident Command, Executive Leadership Programme and other advanced specialist training which supports the improvement agenda.



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The Government Standard

