



2008-2011 Human Resources and Workforce Development Strategy



West Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue Authority

Making West Yorkshire Safer
www.westyorksfire.gov.uk



Contents

	page
Foreword	2
Introduction	3
Profile of the county of West Yorkshire	4
Profile of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service	5
Leadership	7
Equality and Diversity	8
Training and Development	9
Career Development and Succession Planning	11
Recruitment and Retention	13
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	14
Employee Relations and Communication	15
Reward and Remuneration	16

Foreword

By the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive and the Chair of the Fire Authority

We are pleased to introduce the Human Resources and Workforce Development Strategy 2008 -2011. The Strategy sets out West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue's philosophy for the management of people across the organisation.

Our commitment is to provide an excellent service to all the communities of West Yorkshire and to do that we need to have skilled and competent staff. Our employees should also be provided with opportunities for progression and development to enhance their own performance and that of the organisation.

We recognise that in order to provide an excellent service we must recruit staff from all sections of our diverse communities and work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that our service meets the needs of our citizens.

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has embraced the modernisation agenda set for it by Central Government and our Human Resources and Workforce Development Strategy reflects our desire to continue with that modernisation. We will, however, never lose sight of our primary role, which is to protect our communities from death and injury.

In conclusion, we are certain that this strategy will assist in our progress and our ability to deliver the best possible service to all our communities.

Introduction

Human resources management is central to ensuring that West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (WYFRA) meets its statutory obligations in relation to the people of West Yorkshire and assists in the transformation of services to its communities.

The fire and rescue service nationally has gone through a period of great change. In 2003 the Government published the White Paper, 'Our Fire and Rescue Service' enacted as the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004. This set out the modernisation agenda and is supported by the National Framework document. This document sets out the range of projects to be delivered nationally. All fire authorities' progress will be measured against this document during the Comprehensive Area Assessment process.

This strategy supports the push towards modernisation and is part of the foundation for WYFRA's ambition, aim and priorities over the next three years. These are;

AMBITION: Making West Yorkshire Safer.

AIM: Provide an excellent fire and rescue service working in partnership to reduce death, injury and economic loss and contribute to community well being.

PRIORITIES: Deliver a professional and resilient emergency response service.

Deliver a proactive fire community safety and well being programme.

Provide a competent, skilled, safe and diverse workforce.

Provide effective ethical governance and efficient environmentally - sustainable resource management.

This Human Resources and Workforce Development Strategy sets out our vision for the next three years and provides a robust framework for the development of Human Resources.

In addition, the strategy will be used to;

- Plan workforce needs at a corporate level in relation to the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and future planning assumptions.
- Ensure HR resources and activities are focussed on key areas.
- Monitor plans and outcomes.
- Assist and guide managers in the development of workforce strategies in each of the four functional groups of the authority.
- Develop a shared understanding of cultural values and behaviours.
- Recognise that the changing environment within the British fire service requires a flexible approach to human resource management and in the development requirements of our employees.
- Challenge existing practices to ensure continuous improvement.

Profile of the county of West Yorkshire

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority serves a resident population of 2,125,000 and provides an emergency response across 202,924 hectares.

In 2007/08 we attended 41,373 incidents. We have 34 wholetime fire stations and 14 retained (part-time) fire stations based within the five districts of West Yorkshire: Kirklees, Leeds, Calderdale, Bradford and Wakefield.

We employ 1509 wholetime firefighters, 188 part-time firefighters, 57 mobilisation staff and 412 fire and rescue (non operational) staff.

Each of the five districts of West Yorkshire has very different levels of social, educational, behavioural and demographic characteristics. Our service is provided to city and urban areas and to rural communities.

We serve a diverse population: 18.1 per cent of the people of working age within West Yorkshire are from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds.

In addition, the general demographic trend of having a population which is living longer, presents additional challenges in terms of community safety.

The risks posed to the communities of West Yorkshire are constantly changing in response to transformation in demographics and newer emerging threats, such as terrorism and climatic change. This transformation requires that the Human Resources and Workforce Development Strategy reflects these changes and is sufficiently flexible to adapt to service requirements.

Profile of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority

WYFRA, which is responsible for the county's fire and rescue service (WYFRS) consists of 22 councillors who are appointed annually by the county's five metropolitan districts.

The service itself is led by Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Simon Pilling. There are four 'functional groups' (departments) each managed by a director. The groups are:

- Operations
- Fire Safety and Community Relations
- Human Resources
- Corporate Resources

The Operations directorate is divided into two sections; operational response and operational preparedness. The wholetime and retained station structure is managed by five district managers, working in Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale and Wakefield.

The Fire Safety and Community Relations directorate is responsible for fire safety legislation/inspection and community relations. Staff provide fire safety advice and work with other agencies and partners to improve fire prevention throughout West Yorkshire.

The Corporate Resources directorate comprises property, transport and logistics, information technology and communications, media and public relations and corporate services.

The chief finance officer leads a finance team which is responsible for all financial matters relating to the authority including accounting budgeting, payroll and treasury management etc.

The Human Resources directorate is divided into training and development and human resources. Training and development deal with operational training and maintenance of competence and career development issues.

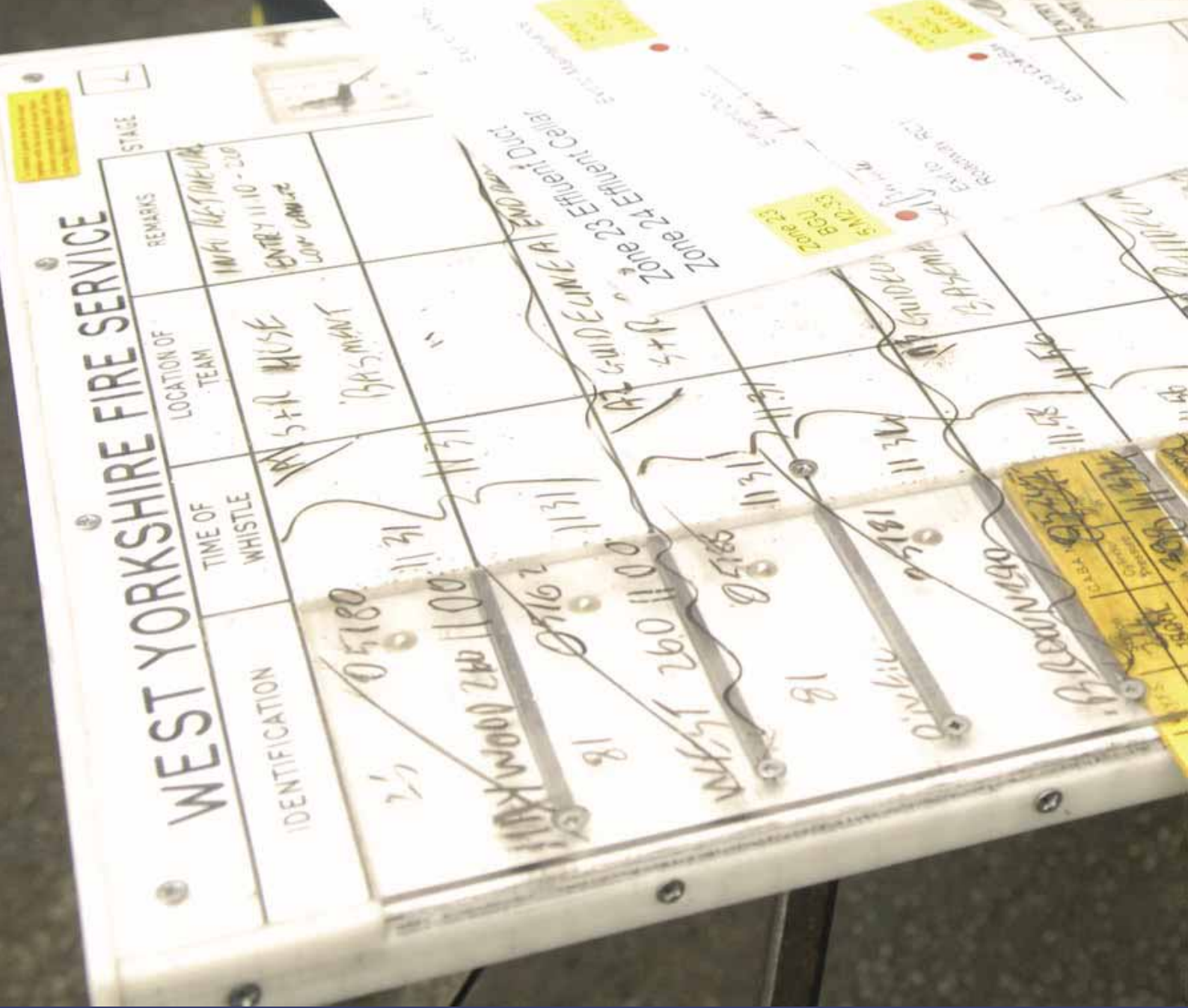
Human resources is responsible for transactional personnel, HR policy and procedure, occupational health and safety, equality and diversity and employee resourcing.

To ensure that the ambition, aim and priorities of the organisation are achieved, WYFRA has put in place a performance management framework.

This framework begins with the Integrated Risk Management Plan and the Corporate Plan. The priorities and objectives of each directorate link to those strategic documents. In turn, these are implemented through the staff who are given objectives within their Personal Development Reviews/Action Plans.

WEST YORKSHIRE FIRE SERVICE

IDENTIFICATION	TIME OF WHISTLE	LOCATION OF TEAM	REMARKS	STAGE
05180	15:11:31	5th FLOOR	ENTRY 11.10 - 2.00 LOW LEVEL	
001100	15:11:31	BASEMENT		
09162	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE A END	Zone 23 Effluent Cellar	
260100	15:11:31	5th FLOOR	Zone 24 Effluent Cellar	
16150	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE B		
181130	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE C		
181130	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE D		
181130	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE E		
181130	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE F		
181130	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE G		
181130	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE H		
181130	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE I		
181130	15:11:31	GUIDE LINE J		



Leadership

Effective and focussed leadership is central to the success of WYFRA. To this end the authority is committed to developing leadership capacity. It is important to recognise that effective leadership should operate at every level; from crew manager to the chief fire officer and from supervisor to director. In addition, it is also vital that councillors are recognised as leading and scrutinising the organisation.

Developing leadership capacity to support the delivery of our current and future Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) is a key element of both the Fire and Rescue Service Learning and Development Strategy for England, the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework 2008 -11, our Corporate Plan 2008 -11 and Corporate Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 -11.

WYFRA is committed to the development and support of our leaders, managers and specialists. There is a growing need for leaders/managers to develop relationships with politicians and across a diverse range of organisations. Partnership working is the key to public leadership skill. Managers need to be able to see and communicate the big picture, make connections with diverse groups and negotiate resolutions to emerging challenges.

WYFRA has fully embraced the need to develop leadership capacity and has in place a series of management development tools which are applicable to both operational and non operational staff. The tools complement those provided by the National Leadership Programme at the Fire Service College and allow us to continually identify and enhance leadership skills at operational, tactical and strategic levels.

Within this strategy WYFRA will;

- Ensure Personal Development Reviews are carried out at least annually and where development needs are identified suitable interventions are arranged.
- Utilise Personal Development Reviews to identify those employees with potential and manage their development accordingly.

- Provide externally verified and effective development programmes for all staff progressing within the service with a key focus on leadership.
- Undertake 360 degree leadership diagnostics for all managers with feedback and development plans from trained facilitators.
- Develop a high quality network of coaches and mentors within the service to ensure our best leaders can improve skills across the service.
- Continually update leadership skills with facilitated continuous professional development covering all aspects of the service.
- Work with local partner organisations to ensure that our managers gain leadership development within a wider context.
- Support leadership development at the highest levels in the service using the Executive Leadership Programme or equivalent.
- Equip leaders with the skills and tools which assist them to deliver the objectives of the organisation within a change management culture.

Equality and Diversity

The publication of the National Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 - 2018 sets out the vision, commitment goals and values in relation to equality and diversity within the fire service.

WYFRA has a strong commitment to this agenda. The Corporate Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2011, sets out service priorities and action plans in this arena.

In addition, the publication of a single equality scheme provides a coherent approach to reporting and scrutiny of progress across all the strands of diversity in line with the requirements of the Equality and Diversity Strategy.

Currently, WYFRA has been independently assessed at Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government and declared at Level 4 in December 2008.

The challenges going forward will be to ensure that WYFRA responds to changing equality and diversity legislation and is able to react to any changes introduced by the new Equality and Human Rights Commission. We will ensure that all data required by Communities and Local Government (CLG) in relation to diversity is available and that we will strive to meet our diversity targets by using all legitimate means available.

Our rolling programme of equality and diversity training will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that all employees are equipped to understand and promote equality and diversity both in the workplace and in the community in relation to service delivery. Alongside this training emphasis will be placed on the core values of the British fire service and these core values will be examined and tested within Personal Development Reviews and in the ongoing conduct and performance of all employees.

Our processes for equality impact assessments are firmly embedded within the organisation and the establishment of the Corporate Equality Steering Group with stakeholder members will provide additional scrutiny of our policies and procedures.

Positive action initiatives have been employed within the authority for many years and have been accepted and embraced by both the workforce and the community. We continue to improve the number of women and black and minority ethnic employees recruited to the service but realise that these numbers require ongoing improvement. In addition, the rate of progression for women and BME employees is an area which will be a focus for our development teams. These initiatives will continue and be reviewed and updated in line with best practice across the service.

WYFRA plays a major role in the national equality and diversity arena and is committed to using its resources to assist in the promotion and shaping of this agenda. In addition, as the lead authority for equality and diversity within the Yorkshire and Humberside region, West Yorkshire has been acknowledged as an organisation which has demonstrated its commitment and as one which promotes innovation and good practice.

WYFRA has developed equality and diversity partnerships with the five local authorities to ensure we are in a strong position to produce good quality, current evidence of the equalities profile in our communities. This information will provide us with evidence of the changing needs of our communities.

This initiative is supported by joint stakeholder forums providing consultation and scrutiny of our employment practices and service delivery.

Training and Development

Ensuring that we employ a fully trained and professional workforce is essential to meeting our strategic objective of providing a competent, skilled, safe and diverse workforce.

All training and development for operational personnel will be based on the principles of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS). For all non operational staff, training and development will, where possible, be integrated with operational interventions or be identified through Personal Development Reviews.

They will be able to recognise and understand their contribution to the Corporate Plan and the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

We will ensure that all staff who enter the service receive appropriate induction, training and development to meet all the requirements of their role. This will include reaching and maintaining National Occupational Standards (where appropriate) and demonstrating the Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQAs) appropriate to their role. In addition, the core values of the service will be emphasised through training courses and via Personal Development Reviews.

The Workforce Development Strategy sets out how training and development will be implemented across the service. The strategy identifies the process of training and development for the next three years.

Our aim is to ensure that West Yorkshire develops a high performance culture which supports change and allows all staff the opportunity for progression and promotion.

Managers will be equipped to deal with poor performance and to make decisions within an enhanced permissions framework. In order that managers feel able to make decisions, they will be equipped with the skills to manage budgets and financial information and other associated tasks, e.g. grievance and discipline, interviewing skills, sickness/absence management and change management.

In addition, managers will work in an environment which operates within a performance management framework. All staff under their direction will understand the 'golden thread' principle and be able to see the 'bigger picture'.



Career Development and Succession Planning

West Yorkshire has an obligation to ensure that there is a provision of appropriately trained and skilled staff available to carry out its duties.

In line with our commitment to the principles of IPDS we have fully embedded the use of the National Firefighter Selection Tests and Assessment and Development Centres (ADCs) to assist in identifying future leaders at all levels. These processes will continue but we will monitor their effectiveness and, if required, modify them in order to ensure that the best candidates emerge to occupy these vital roles.

In order that staff feel able and comfortable to apply for promotion a scheme which offers coaching and allocate mentors to assist employees will be established and developed. The identification of potential for leadership at an early stage in an employee's career is important for the advancement of the organisation. Personal Development Reviews will be used to more effectively identify those individuals who show promise and require tailored development to succeed.

To further ensure that our recruitment, selection and development processes can effectively compete to bring the most diverse range of talented people into the organisation, we will seek to develop other schemes. Alternative entry and high potential schemes will be considered which operate within the IPDS framework but offer more opportunities for advancement to candidates both internal and external. These schemes may assist in the employment of women and Black Minority Ethnic (BME) candidates and offer them better opportunities for progression.

The use of human resource information will assist in ensuring that we have the right number of people to meet the needs of the IRMP and further inform us of the numbers required to be recruited to our uniformed service, year on year, to deliver our core business.

Fire and rescue staff will also be recruited and developed to meet the needs of the service. The need for staff to deliver community safety and fire safety strategies increases and therefore, appropriate recruitment and career progression strategies will be provided to fulfil this requirement.



Recruitment and Retention

To ensure success in delivering core business, the need to recruit and retain the requisite number, quality and diversity of employees is key. All recruitment will be carried out in a fair and equitable manner with employees selected on merit and with regard to current employment legislation and good practice.

The National Firefighter Selection Tests will be the basis for recruiting to operational posts. We will ensure that positive action initiatives continue in order that we increase the numbers of black and minority ethnic employees and women to our service, both in operational and non operational roles.

We will establish WYFRA as an employer of choice and provide career development paths that meet the aspirations of potential and existing employees.

Our employment policies and practices will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the 21st century. Employees will be encouraged to contribute to policy formation in relation to employment via their elected representatives and cognisance will be taken of any emerging needs in relation to flexible working and work life balance opportunities.

Information provided by our human resources database will be used to inform decisions in relation to recruitment and the number of staff required to ensure our core business is implemented. In addition, as staff retire or resign from employment, exit interviews will be carried out to ascertain their perceptions of working for WYFRA in order that, where necessary, improvements can be made.

Retaining skilled and motivated staff is important to our continued progress, but looking outside the authority to recruit talented and professional staff is also important to improvement. This will be an area for further development. The transfer of qualified staff from other fire authorities will also be reviewed in order to assess the potential for the transfer of staff who are currently within supervisory and middle management roles.

The recruitment of retained duty staff (RDS) who can give the availability of cover we require is also a priority. Station managers will be supported to undertake specific recruitment initiatives to ensure we have the appropriate numbers of staff to provide our RDS service.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

West Yorkshire will promote and maintain a healthy and safe working environment and safe systems of work in line with best practice guidance and legislation.

As a fire and rescue organisation delivering an emergency response in sometimes high risk situations, particular emphasis is placed on health and safety.

Safe systems of work are well embedded and a positive health and safety culture is in place at all levels which is well supported by the representative bodies.

The authority's Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy plays a major role in maintaining a healthy and safe environment by identifying its priority topics and delivering on action plans to reduce these and meet its 10 year targets for accident and ill-health reductions.

A number of key themes continue to be important in the reduction of accidents including an effective health and safety training strategy, suitable risk assessments, continuing the rollout of corporate health and safety policies, e.g. work at height and COSHH, all of which contribute to the year on year reduction in accidents.

The Absence Management and Attendance Policy details management's strategy for dealing with both long and short-term absence. Local targets have been set for the reduction of sickness absence and the percentage of staff retiring on ill-health grounds. A range of policies have been introduced to support work life balance. We will review these policies on a regular basis and monitor their impact.

The Occupational Health Unit is responsible for the implementation of these policies and its structure is to be enhanced to support further well being strategies, such as over 40's medicals and healthy living initiatives. We have already implemented a Fitness at Work Policy which supports physical activities to ensure the fitness of our operational staff.

Supervisors and managers will be assisted by occupational health staff with advice and guidance in respect of dealing with absent employees, both in terms of short and long term sickness and in cases where an employee is or becomes disabled. In addition, the authority offers help with counselling and physiotherapy to assist employees.

Stress also is an issue which affects employees in all organisations. We recognise there is a need to ensure absence, because of stress related issues, is dealt with appropriately.

Employee Relations and Communciation

West Yorkshire 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 our representative bodies:

Engagement and leadership which promotes a 'change culture' is vital if we are to achieve continuous improvement.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU)

The Fire Officers Association (FOA)

The Retained Firefighters Union (RFU)

Unison

In addition to the interface we have with representative bodies, management is keen to communicate and engage with staff through other forums and staff meetings. Communication in any organisation is an area which receives much criticism. A recent staff survey indicated that staff wanted more engagement with senior managers and our corporate communications team is addressing this request via their annual action plan and dedicated corporate communication strategy (2008-2011).

We will further develop a culture which values and engages with staff and empowers them to make decisions and have a sense of shared vision. This empowerment, however, brings with it accountability and responsibility which needs to be embraced by managers and staff alike.

Good/great performance comes when people know what is expected from them and how their role fits into the organisation's vision.

Information and reasons for change must be communicated up and down the organisation in an understandable way. By achieving this aspiration, trust and confidence in management will be enhanced and a clearer purpose established.

Reward and Remuneration

WYFRA's remuneration strategy is based on principles of fairness and non discrimination, together with the legal requirements of equal pay for equal value. The aim is to ensure that pay levels and employee costs are competitive in order to ensure that we can attract the right people to the organisation. This approach needs to be balanced with maintaining acceptable levels of control over staffing costs and affordability across any reward strategy.

WYFRA has already completed the National Joint Council (NJC) job evaluation scheme for all non operational posts. This has been in place since 2002.

In addition, the rank to role process linked to pay for operational staff required by the 2003 pay agreement was also concluded in 2007. The disquiet about development rates of pay within this scheme remains however and this may become an issue for the future.

Both processes rely on analytical methods of evaluation which, certainly in the case of the former scheme, reduces the likelihood of equal pay challenges. There is, however, scope for equal pay challenges to be made between non operational staff and operational staff performing the same role. This is an issue which requires attention especially in relation to our progression against the Equality Standard for Local Government. We will undertake an equal pay audit across the organisation to ensure pay differentials between groups of staff are legitimate and stand up to scrutiny.

The NJC evaluation scheme for non operational staff remains, however, problematic in relation to more senior/professional posts. We will, therefore, explore other analytical schemes which may be more appropriate to these roles. This is important if we are to recruit and retain able and talented individuals.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) payments are in place for operational staff. These payments are linked to attendance, discipline and performance records. Non operational staff, because of the differences in conditions of service, are not eligible for these payments. We will review this situation in terms of including non operational staff in a comparable scheme

also linked to attendance etc. for reasons of parity but also to analyse the cost benefit of such an approach.

An additional responsibility allowance scheme for operational staff has been agreed with the representative bodies and will be reviewed on a three yearly basis

Traditional methods of reward and remuneration within local government require further review. Employees require a more flexible approach to this issue. For example, more flexible working may be seen as a benefit within a total reward package or implementing pay structures that are linked to opportunities for personal development (linked grades). There is a need to look at other innovative ways of reward, e.g. offering a scheme to trade leave for payment within the parameters of working time legislation.

All the above and other means of retaining staff and improving morale will be explored to assist in the improved performance of the organisation.



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