Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority

Standards and Human Resources Committee

17March 2015

**Progress on Implementation of the**

**Single Equality Scheme Action Plan**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Chief Fire Officer

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1. Purpose of Report

This report updates Members on:

* Changes in the structure of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan; and
* Progress on the main actions identified in the Plan from March 2014 to March 2015.

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|  | Recommendations  The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report. |

1. Background

This report:

* Outlines changes in the format of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan to provide greater clarity and simplicity and to reflect the changing focus of Equality and Diversity E&D) priorities and work;
* Provides details of major actions within the Action Plan; and
* Provides the latest version of the Action Plan.

1. Changes in the Structure of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan

At its meeting on 17 October 2013 the Committee noted changes in the format of the Equality Action Plan to simplify presentation of the key issues and monitoring of progress of E&D actions. E&D priorities have since been reviewed, and duplicated and outdated actions have been removed from the Action Plan.

The revised Action Plan groups actions by key themes and includes measurable service delivery and employment outcomes, to enable simplified tracking of progress.

The revised Action Plan for the final quarter of 2014/15 is attached for Members’ information.

1. Progress on the Main Equality and Diversity Actions

Under the previous Action Plan:

* 11 actions had been completed, were in progress or were recurring;
* 3 had yet to be started; and
* 4 had been deleted.

At the end of February 2015 the revised Plan includes actions incorporated from the previous Plan and several, which are new. The current position can be summarised as follows:

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| **In progress** | **Not yet started** | **Complete** |
| Section 1 - Policy | | |
| 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Section 2 - Recruitment, selection, training and development | | |
| 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Section 3 - Communication, external events, networks and partnerships | | |
| 12 | 5 | 1 |
| Section 4 - Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and reporting | | |
| 8 | 4 | 2 |
| Section 5 - Research and consultation | | |
| 1 | 1 | 0 |

1. Examples of Equality and Diversity Work

**Employment-focused Equality and Diversity work** **over the past year has included:**

* Drafting Brigade Orders, covering policy on Equality of Opportunity and Fairness in Employment, Service Delivery and Engagement with the Public and on Disability
* Gypsy and Traveller Cultural Awareness training for Retained Duty System employees has been completed. This was a challenging piece of work, which raised core E&D issues both for participants and the Service itself. Three Members took up an invitation to take part in the training, and said that they had found it both useful and engaging. Feedback from RDS employees has also been very positive.
* The Service’s Positive Action programme aims to encourage under-represented sections of the community to apply for employment with the Service, and is sanctioned under the Equality Act 2010. Women’s Taster Days have been held at Craven Arms, Shrewsbury and Oswestry Fire Stations to encourage women to apply for employment as Retained Firefighters. This work has led to the appointment of four women as Retained Firefighters. It has also notably raised the media profile of the Service and its E&D work.
* The programme of reasonable adjustments to the working conditions of disabled employees has expanded over the year, and has again attracted favourable comment from JobCentre Plus. Most of the work is with dyslexic operational employees, providing personal tuition, specialist equipment and peer support as appropriate. The costs are partly met by Access to Work. The programme continues to be highly effective in enabling employees to carry out their roles with increased confidence and effectiveness.
* E&D ‘refresher’ training has been further developed in response to course evaluations, and has now been completed with wholetime firefighters and non-uniformed staff. It is being planned for Control staff later in 2015. As with the Gypsy and Traveller Cultural Awareness training, this work has generated important learning outcomes for employees and the Service itself.
* E&D Induction Training has been reviewed, and is currently being extensively revised to make it more participative and to include the relevant personal experiences of new employees.

**Externally-focused E&D actions over the past year have included:**

* The working relationship between E&D and Prevention Departments has been developed, and has contributed significantly to achieving the E&D Steering Group’s aim of focusing more on external-facing E&D work. This has led to E&D and Fire Safety sharing experience, developing multi-language introductory leaflets for use by Business Fire Safety, and exploring revised ways of engaging with people in seldom-heard communities.
* Another aspect of this shared work has been the development of the ‘South Asian Fire Attitudes Research Initiative (SAFARI) project, exploring attitudes among South Asian communities towards the job of a firefighter, and towards different aspects of fire safety. The outcomes should provide good data, from which to review recruitment and fire safety initiatives.
* The Service has worked with statutory and voluntary sector partners to complete the Partnership lesbian, gay and bisexual survey project, analysing the data and writing the research reports.
* Frequent articles and notices in the Service’s newsletter, ‘The Pink’, and on Yammer have provided employees with information about equality-related issues and events.
* Attendance at, and ongoing support for local E&D groups and events, including:  
  + Provision of meeting rooms for local groups, including FRESh (Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire) and SAAR (Shropshire Action Against Racism)
  + Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January) posters and information sent to all watches and stations, and a display at Brigade Headquarters
  + Attendance at and support for FRESh Ltd official launch (21 March)
  + Flying Rainbow flags over Brigade Headquarters and the Training Centre to mark International Day against Homophobia (17 May) and the Rainbow Film Festival (16 to 18 October)
  + Attendance at a local Africa Day celebration event (24 May)
  + Supporting and attending Dyslexia Information Day (18 October)
* October contains several E&D international commemorative events, and local festivals. The Service has, therefore, initiated an annual ‘Celebrating Diversity’ month in October, with displays to mark commemorations and the introduction of Celebrating Diversity open events in Shrewsbury and Telford, which proved popular with the public and generated media interest in equality and diversity.
* Support for setting up FRESh Ltd, a local community co-operative taking on and developing the functions of the former Shropshire Council-funded Equalities Forum.
* Support for, and close work with Shrewsbury Action Against Racism, the Rainbow Film Festival and Shropshire Disability Network, and developing relationships with Age UK, Older People’s Forums, Safe Ageing No Discrimination (SAND), and other local equality and anti-discrimination groups.
* The Service is about to initiate a community Hate Crime Reporting Centre, based in Headquarters Reception. This has been developed in partnership with the Shropshire Hate Crime Partnership Steering Group, and will provide an important local support and information point for Hate Crime victims in Castlefields and Ditherington.

1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

1. Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1. Initial Impact Assessment

This report contains merely statements of fact / historical data. An Initial Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

1. Equality Impact Assessment

This report contains merely statements of fact / historical data. An Equality Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

1. Appendix

Single Equality Scheme Action Plan March – June 2015.

1. Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

**Appendix Single Equality Scheme Action Plan March – June 2015**

**Recruitment, selection and training**

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| **Number** | **Issue/ work area** | **Outcome** | | **Current Action** | **Who’s responsible** | **Target date** | **Progress since last quarter** | **New Action** |
| **Employment** | **Service delivery** |
|  | Dyslexia | Improved awareness and initial recognition of dyslexia in employees | Greater confidence in service provision by Service and service users | * T&D new watch managers training arranged * Commission awareness training DVD for employees | E & D  E & D | 01/15  05/15 | Completed.  Initial discussions held | Story board to be agreed  Filming and production schedule  Publicise the support SFRS gives its employees with dyslexia in local media |
|  | Dementia | Raised awareness of symptoms and appropriate responses to dementia | Dementia-sensitive service provision, leading to appropriate support for relevant service users | Training for BFS, CFS and other HQ employees:  18/02/15  04/03/15  16/04/15 | E & D | 07/15 | Training completed for BFS 02/15 and CFS 01/15 | Need for training for operational employees to be reviewed |
|  | SAND (Safe Ageing No Discrimination)  (LGB) |  | Sensitive service provision, leading to appropriate support for relevant service users | Training for CFS | E & D | 07/15 | Training arranged for 03/15 | Need for training for other departments to be reviewed |

**Recruitment, selection and training**

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| **Number** | **Issue/ work area** | **Outcome** | | **Current Action** | | **Who’s responsible** | **Target date** | **Progress since last quarter** | **New Action** |
| **Employment** | **Service delivery** |
|  | Hearing impairment | Improved awareness and initial recognition of hearing impairment in employees | Hearing impairment-sensitive service provision | | Development of practical guide to effective communication | E & D | 07/15 | Meeting with Care & Support, T & W Council to agree production of joint leaflet | Leaflet to be drafted, agreed and produced |
|  | E & D refresher | All employees understand:   * the importance of E&D to the Service * their responsibilities for good E & D practice in their work | * More sensitive and aware service delivery * Service delivery models anti-discrimination practice | | * Rolling programme to be arranged * Ongoing review and revision of content * EDO to review e-learning package on learning pool academy. | E & D  E & D  E & D | 12/14  🡺  06/15 | * Rolling programme to be prepared * EDA training commenced as an administrator and author for e-learning package. | New programme to be agreed by operational management |
|  | Induction | All new employees understand:   * the importance of E&D to the Service * SFRS E & D policy framework * responsibilities for good E & D practice in their work | * New employees understand core values of Service * More sensitive and aware service delivery * Service delivery models anti-discrimination practice | | * Review content of current programme for relevance and interest * Ensure new non-uniformed employees participate in E & D induction * Initiate separate E & D / HR induction sessions | E & D  E & D  E & D / HR | 08/15  06/15  10/14 | Started review  Completed – new induction sessions started | Review supporting materials |
|  | Gypsy & Traveller culture | Increased awareness of the need for sensitivity with colleagues | Greater sensitivity in delivering services to the needs of G&T’s | Training requested by some whole-time Watches | | E & D / Op. mgmt. | 09/15 |  | Discussion with ops management about feasibility of delivery to wholetime FF |

**Recruitment, selection and training**

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| **Employment** | **Service delivery** | |
|  | Positive action | * Challenge to social prejudices about firefighting for under-represented groups * Increased representation of women, BMOE and LGBT people in operational posts | | * More representative service delivery * Increased interest in working for SFRS from women, BMOE and LGB people | A programme of positive action events to encourage applications for employment as firefighters | | E&D / CFS / T&D /  Ops mgmt. | 12/15 | Rolling programme in place for 2015 – Dates:   * 21 Feb & 18 March (women) * 2 May & 3 June (women) * 12 Sept & 17 Oct (BMOE) | * Develop revised BMOE & LGBT PA approaches |
|  | Reasonable adjustments | * Disabled employees provided with at least their legislative entitlements to reasonable adjustments to their working environments. * Disabled employees enabled to perform their job roles to the standards required for their posts | | Services delivered by all employees to the same high standard | | Reasonable adjustments programme to be maintained and developed | E&D / T&D / Line mgmt / Ops mgmt | Ongoing | Dyslexic employees are being offered a joint training session on how to understand training manuals. | Set up another dyslexia networking evening to provide ongoing support encourage recently diagnosed individuals to attend to support form colleagues |

**Policy**

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| **Number** | **Issue/ work area** | **Outcome** | | **Current Action** | **Who’s responsible** | **Target date** | **Progress since last quarter** | **New Action** |
| **Employment** | **Service delivery** |
|  | Impact assessments | Current equality, diversity and human rights impact assessments exist for employment policies and procedures | Current equality, diversity and human rights impact assessments exist for all service delivery and community engagement policies and procedures | Assess implementation of new system | All managers and officers | Ongoing: annual review in March | N/a |  |
|  | Impact Assessment BO | * Clear guidance for employees on IIA process * Framework for analysing potential equality & human rights impacts | Framework for analysing potential equality & human rights impacts of SFRS policies and practice on communities and service users | Revised policy and guidance on conducting impact assessments and equality & human rights assessments | EDO | 09/15 |  |  |
|  | Equality & Diversity Policy Statement | Update: incorporate changes in legislation, Service policy and scope | Update: incorporate changes in legislation, Service policy and scope | Review and revise current E&D Policy Statement | E & D | 11/14 | Draft completed 02/15 | Send out for consultation |
|  | Disability BO | Disability policy framework based on social model and reasonable adjustments. | Disability policy framework based on social model and reasonable adjustments. | Disability policy framework for SFRS | E & D | End 02/15 | Draft completed 02/15 | Send out for consultation |

**Policy**

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| **Employment** | **Service delivery** |
|  | Transgender guidance | Framework for supporting employees going through gender reassignment |  | Set out Brigade policy and support framework on transitioning | EDO | 09/14 | Drafted. | Complete consultation, add to brigade orders and e-learning. |
|  | Equality Monitoring BO | Policy framework to enable adequate data on equality characteristics for SFRS workforce and service users | Policy framework enables adequate analysis of service users’ equality characteristics | Set out Brigade policy on monitoring linked with other monitoring requirements and processes. | EDO | 05/15 | Finalise Brigade Order. |  |

**Communication**

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| **Number** | **Issue/ work area** | **Outcome** | | **Current Action** | **Who’s responsible** | **Target date** | **Progress since last quarter** | **New Action** |
| **Employment** | **Service delivery** |
|  | Plain English | * Better communication with employees * Modelling good practice | * Better communication with service users * Modelling good practice | * SFRS P.E. competition for ‘Pink’ | E & D | 12/14 | Completed – no response |  |
|  | Images and stereotypes | Positive images of non-stereotypical and/or non-traditional roles | Positive images of non-stereotypical and/or non-traditional roles | * Use role models in publicity, training materials and at events to challenge stereotype images * Annual review of images used in SFRS material * Draft review process for annual review of SFRS images * Review our website for women role models | All | 12/15 | Quizdom f/f training presentations reviewed | Job related test video will feature women firefighters |
|  | Translated materials |  | Information available in languages and imagery appropriate to communities | (Attend monthly fire safety meetings for BFS & CFS)  Translation of BFS leaflets and pro-forma letters into community languages | E & D / BFS | 10/14 | Completed  Work with Chinese Business Support to incorporate SFRS Risk Assessment information into their material | * Support for WT Watches to enable better community communication during short FS audits |

**Communication**

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| **Employment** | **Service delivery** |
|  | Visual accessibility (Corporate Identity) | All employees able easily to read Service documents | Members of the public able easily to read Service documents |  | E & D  All | 06/15 |  | Articles in ‘Pink’ and Yammer reminding employees about corporate identity standards |
|  | Groups, networks and organisations | * Service able to hear community concerns and feedback * Service able to communicate information to communities effectively | * Better awareness of available services * Engagement with Service policy and service development * Access to Service resources to support their work | * **FRESh:** Providing exhibition and photography at Cultural Diversity Day – 25th July 15   Providing meeting rooms   * **Rainbow Film Festival**: Flying rainbow flags * **Shropshire Hate Crime Steering Group**: Posters on Service appliances |  |  | Photographer booked | Book outreach vehicle and watch to attend |

**Research**

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| **Number** | **Issue/ work area** | **Outcome** | | **Current Action** | **Who’s responsible** | **Target date** | **Progress since last quarter** | **New Action** |
| **Employment** | **Service delivery** |
|  | SFRS Cultural Audit (or substitute sampling) | Identification of positive and negative issues about SFRS among employees |  |  | ACO | 12/15 |  | ACO to consider smaller-scale project to profile a specific topic or section of SFRS employees |
|  | SAFARI - South Asian communities and attitudes to fire research project | Reliable data on any barriers to recruitment of South Asian people as f/f | Reliable data for South Asian people on:   * Perceptions of SFRS * Any issues of attitudes and/or practice for domestic and business fire safety | Ongoing project management and implementation | E & D | 04/15 | Research interviews progressing  Issues with data collection from Muslim community  Data entry and analysis in progress |  |