

# **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority**

## **Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024**

### **Annual Report 2020-2021**

Published 2022

## Legislative Framework

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### The Equality Act 2010

#### The General Public Sector Equality Duty (April 2011)

The Equality Act 2010 amalgamated previous disparate pieces of equality legislation, harmonising and strengthening equality legislation under one new Act. The Act includes a public sector equality duty that requires public sector bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
- **advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;**
- **foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.**

The Equality Act lists a number of characteristics which must not be used as a reason to treat some people worse than others. These are the 'protected characteristics'.

When we talk about protected characteristics we mean:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief/Non-Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

#### The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

There are also associated specific statutory equality duties for Wales (Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011) that enable a public authority in Wales to meet the general duty. The specific regulations include:

- publishing Equality Objectives;
- publishing a Strategic Equality Plan;
- engagement and involvement provisions for protected characteristic groups;
- ensuring published material is accessible;
- assessing impact of relevant policies and practices;
- training and collection of employment information;
- promoting knowledge and understanding amongst employees of the Equality Act;
- addressing unfair pay differences;
- reviewing progress on the Strategic Equality Plan and associated Equality Objectives;
- procurement practice provisions;

The broad purpose of the specific duties in Wales are to help listed bodies in their performance of the general duty and to aid transparency.

Heads of Departments from across the Service have identified equality objectives within their individual service areas, with support and advice from the Equality Adviser.

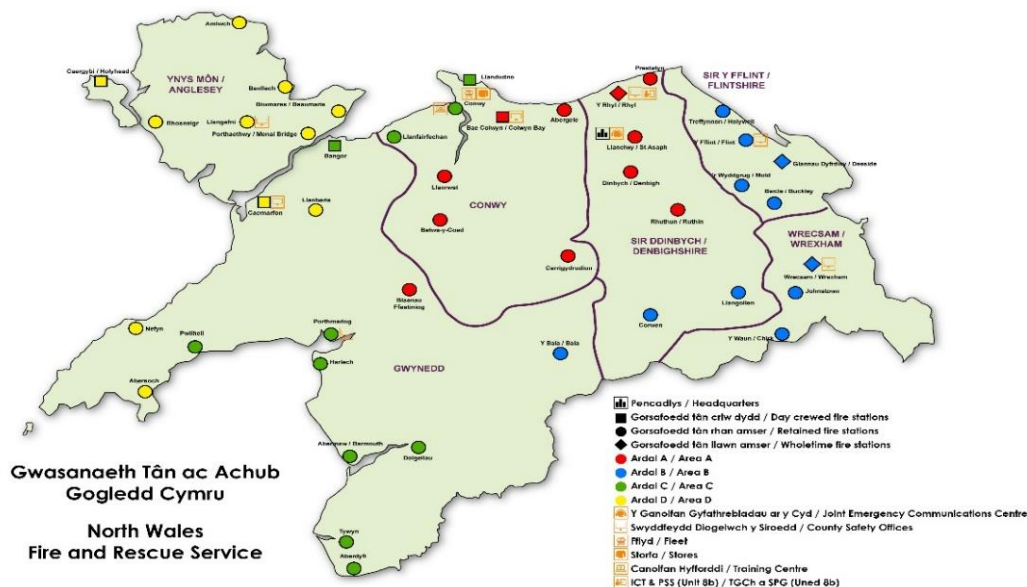
In developing our objectives we have used a number of sources:

- Equality Impact Assessments
- Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Planning Objectives
- Business plans from each of the Heads of Departments
- Existing Strategies and Plans
- Outcome of engagement activities

Legislation allows for the objectives to be changed at any time, so the Service is keen to maintain a level of ongoing engagement to ensure our objectives remain current.

We will continue to look at the most effective methods of engagement via our existing links with community groups and organisations. We will also endeavour to establish relationships with new groups and local communities making sure we meet the needs and expectations of everyone involved.

## North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority



**Map of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Area**

The role of the Authority is defined in a range of laws and regulations but the Authority has always sought to improve and enhance the services it provides and to do more than meet the minimum requirements.

The Authority has a legal duty to provide a fire and rescue service that meets the needs of local communities. The Authority has to be prepared to deal with a wide-range of emergencies, from house fires and road traffic collisions to floods and chemical spills. It also has to deliver fire prevention to help keep people and property safe from fire.

**FIRE PREVENTION:** Fire and rescue authorities must arrange for fire safety to be promoted in their area. This includes informing people about fire prevention and advising them how best to react if a fire does break out.

**FIRE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT:** Fire and rescue authorities have a duty to enforce fire safety in non-domestic premises (hotels, schools, shops and offices, etc.). This duty includes exercising powers to issue alteration, enforcement and even prohibition notices if they find that fire safety arrangements in premises are unsatisfactory.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE:** Fire and rescue authorities must make arrangements for receiving 999 calls

and for sending trained and equipped personnel to extinguish fires and protect life and property at those fires. They must also make arrangements for rescuing people from road traffic collisions and for protecting them from serious harm. In April 2017 the Welsh Government also created a statutory duty to respond to flooding or water rescue incidents that pose a threat to life.

**PLANNING AND RESPONSE TO OTHER EMERGENCIES:** Fire and rescue authorities must make arrangements for mass decontamination of people after chemical, biological or radio-active incidents, and for rescuing people from trains, aircraft and collapsed buildings. They must also be prepared to assist with large-scale emergencies elsewhere in the UK.

The Service is also committed to actively engaging with other organisations to improve the safety of the community, including providing wide ranging education programmes. The Service helps support and signpost people who are vulnerable to risks not directly related to the fire service, such as older people who may be at risk from severe weather, households at risk of crime, or people at risk of domestic violence.

## North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Profile

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Executive responsibility for running the Fire and Rescue Service rests with the Chief Fire Officer who provides strategic leadership, manages the overall coordination of the Service's activities and optimises its use of resources. The Chief Fire Officer also provides professional advice to the Authority.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service contributes to the achievement of this vision in numerous ways including through active participation in Community Safety Partnerships.

It supports other fire and rescue services in the UK when required and remains continually prepared to protect in the event of large scale disasters.

### Executive Panel

The Executive Panel has a varied role dealing with topics such as the appointments of senior officers, policy and constitutional issues. It considers responses to consultation papers and other policy developments, and makes recommendations to the Fire and Rescue Authority on its key policies including the Combined Improvement and Well-Being Plan.

The Panel's Terms of Reference were set in 2001 and are reviewed as and when required. It consists of the chair and vice chair and two members from each constituent authority (fourteen members in total). It is chaired by the Chair or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chair.

It meets four times a year, between each meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority, although additional meetings may be held depending on workload and, in particular, what personnel issues require its involvement.

### Standards Committee

The Standards Committee was established in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000 and its Terms of Reference were set in 2003. Its duties include the consideration of complaints against Authority member's referred to it by the Ombudsman and the granting of dispensations. It also advises the Authority on issues to do with standards.

The committee consists of seven members, five of whom are independent. The Fire and Rescue Authority representatives on this Committee cannot be an office holder on the Authority. The Chair and Deputy Chair are drawn from the independent members.

## **Audit Committee**

The Committee has four primary roles of governance audit and scrutiny, financial and resource management audit and scrutiny, risk management and assurance audit and scrutiny and performance audit and scrutiny.

The Committee's membership consists of all non-executive (panel) members and meets a minimum of twice per year. The Chair and Deputy Chair are appointed from different constituent authorities in the interests of representations of the communities of North Wales.

The Committee has the facility to set-up time-limited task groups to undertake reviews and the discretion to co-opt Executive members with relevant expertise onto these groups.

## **Operational Service Areas**

We provide fire protection and prevention services across North Wales to around 696,000 people over a geographical area of 2,400 square miles. Community Safety offices are located in:

### **Gwynedd and Ynys Môn Community Safety Office**

Llanberis Road  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55 2DF

### **Conwy and Denbighshire Community Safety Office**

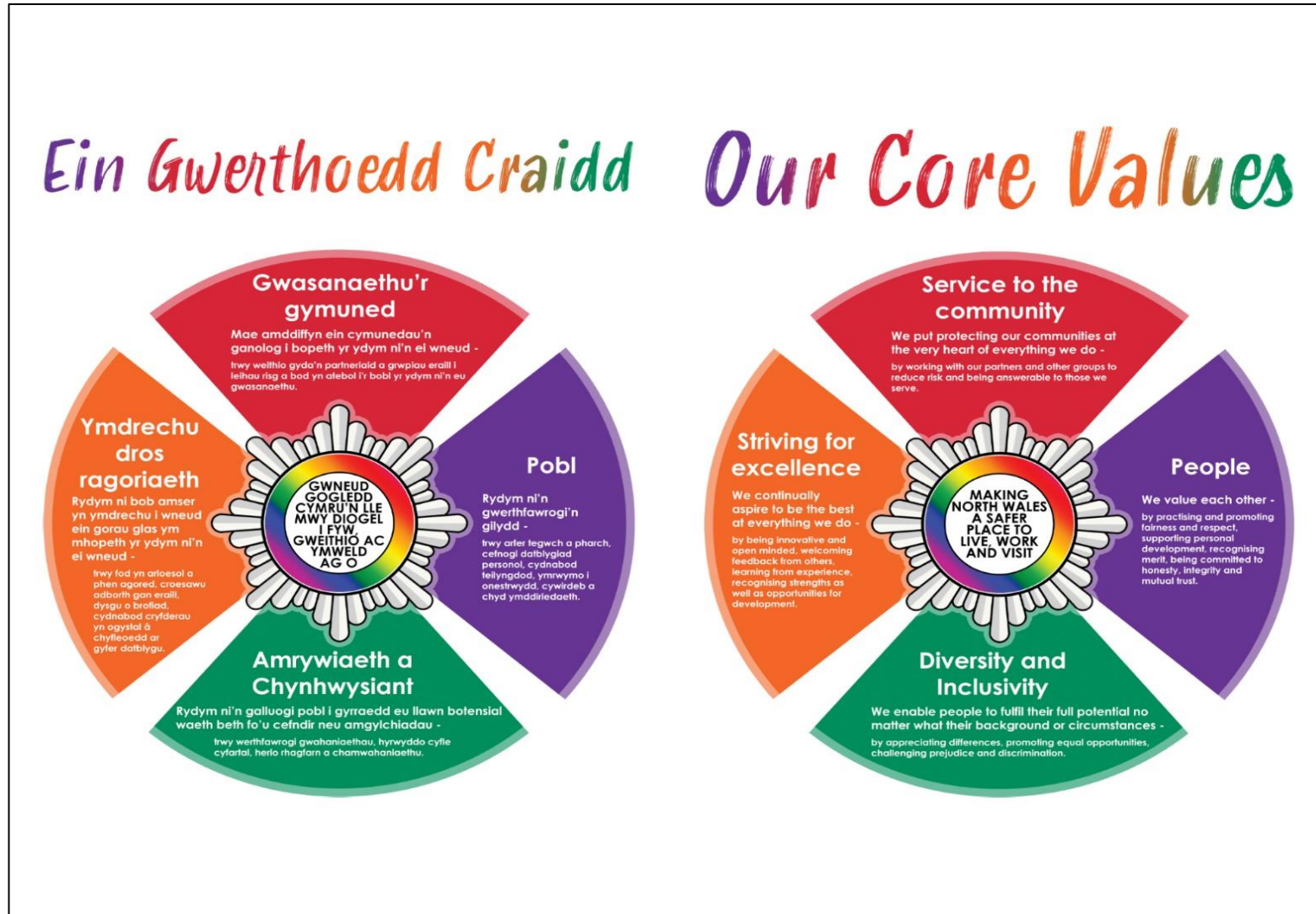
Colwyn Bay Fire Station  
Abergele Road  
Colwyn Bay  
Conwy  
LL29 8AA

### **Wrexham and Flintshire Community Safety Office**

Bradley Road  
Wrexham  
LL13 7ST

## The Fire and Rescue Service Core Values

The Service Core Values summarise the principles by which we operate and the personal values that staff are encouraged to adopt and demonstrate. The core values are:



## The Equalities Objectives 2020-2024

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### Priority 1 LIFE AND HEALTH

#### Equality objective 1 – Life and Health

Reduce dwelling fires and associated casualties through a comprehensive strategy that specifically targets people who can be shown to be at greater risk because of their particular characteristics and/or circumstances.

#### Working to achieve this objective, the Service has:

- worked with relevant partner agencies that have access to high-risk individuals and families and who can refer the most at risk in society to NWFRS for a SAWC so that they can be prioritised. COVID-19 has created challenges for NWFRS, including a reduction in referrals from other agencies. A programme of re-engagement with all partner agencies is underway.
- continued to engage with the business community through social media, making them aware of the language option facility on the NWFRS website.
- planned targeted campaigns and events throughout the year through the Service's Campaign Steering Group. These campaigns bring the Service into direct contact with the targeted groups through a wide range of planned activities from face to face activities to print and electronic media. The campaigns seek to include those who are more at risk from fire and those who have contact or caring responsibility for them.

### Priority 2 - EMPLOYMENT

#### Equality objective 2 – Employment

Through our own employment practices, programmes and schemes increase the employment prospects of people who might otherwise find it difficult to gain access to the world of work.

#### Working to achieve this objective, the Service has:

- placed face to face positive action events on hold during COVID-19. Virtual recruitment days/events have been undertaken which has incorporated positive action.
- advertised all posts offering agile working to ensure it attracts candidates from a broader pool and improve the diversity within the workforce.
- produced a short bilingual video outlining the careers and roles within the Service. The video will be used during online recruitment and at virtual recruitment fairs to promote the different career options available within the Service.
- experienced some difficulties engaging with local colleges, and attending recruitment events due to lockdown and the COVID-19 restrictions. It is likely that any future events may be undertaken on a virtual basis.
- sort alternative ways to conduct interviews and online assessments using Skype and WebEx. Video-conferencing and Facebook live events have been used to engage with potential applicants, and to assist with positive action.
- monitored the equality data gathered as part of recruitment processes, this data helps to advise and direct activities for future campaigns if trends are identified.

- aligned the organisation's core values to the selection and development processes. The assessment centre scenarios include the measurement of behaviours aligned to equality, diversity and integrity, through one to one and group role-plays.

## **Priority 2 - EMPLOYMENT**

### **Equality Objective 3 - Employment**

We will progress an inclusive culture where leaders and staff demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality and support for a fair and inclusive workforce.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, the Service has:**

- arranged coaching and mentoring development days for FDS and Station Support Officers.
- created two electronic equality learning packages, these have been added to the Service's learning Management System. The packages contain interactive multimedia elements and specifically cover "challenging inappropriate behaviour" and "equality, diversity and inclusion".
- reviewed the Integrated Impact Assessments for Supervisory and Middle Manager Technical Tests and Assessment Development Centres. A draft promotion panel process is presently in development, and a revised integrated impact assessment has been created.
- actively supported a work placement programme for young persons who otherwise would not have engaged with employment, education or training. The programme is delivered in partnership with an education provider. NWFRS have seen young people go on to complete apprenticeship programmes, and find full-time employment in a range of different fields.

## **Priority 2 - EMPLOYMENT**

### **Equality Objective 3 – Equal Pay**

We will progress an inclusive culture where leaders and staff demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality and support for a fair and inclusive workforce.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, the Service has:**

- undertaken the Gender Pay Gap analysis and action plan, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Government suspended enforcement of the Gender Pay Gap reporting deadline for 2020.
- published the statistics on the government website. Discussions have continued to ensure progression of the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan during the 2021/22 year on an All Wales basis. The narrative to support the statistics relating to gender pay is ongoing. Once finalised, this will be published on the Service's information site for staff to access.
- produced the Strategic Equality Plan's Employment Monitoring Report 2020-2021 This report includes all employment data broken down by age, disability, race, religion sex and sexual orientation and reported by contract type - permanent, fixed-term, full-time, part-time and other flexible working arrangements. This report assists in identifying underrepresentation amongst staff, and forms the basis for continuity planning.



## **Priority 3 - EDUCATION**

### **Equality objective 4 – Education**

Through a comprehensive programme of tailored education and advice provided singly and in collaboration, to empower people living, working and visiting North Wales to continue to reduce their own level of risk from fire and other hazards throughout the different stages in their lives.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, the Service has:**

- developed a regular programme of engagement with specific communities' schools and colleges, this programme is delivered by the Services Educationalists, however this year's activity has ceased due to COVID-19 restrictions. Schools presentations over the past 12 months have been delivered virtually.
- ensured all residential landlords are aware of the requirement to provide evacuation information and in particular a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEPs). These PEEPs are provided for individuals who are more at risk from fire due to their protected characteristics.
- a Campaigns Steering Group that meets regularly and comprises of key individuals from a cross section of FRS functions. The group create a campaign calendar of events based around the causes of fire. In 2021 the category of 'inclusivity, diversity, cultural and religious events' was added to the calendar. A series of Equality Information Leaflets have been placed on the website to offer advice around specific religious and cultural events and activities.
- ensured all staff have received awareness training covering safeguarding and 'Ask and Act', this incorporates modern slavery. Staff have been made aware of the referral mechanism should they have occasion to report a safeguarding issue.
- had to reduce the number of fire safety face to face visits it conducts with local businesses due to the COVID-19 restrictions. However, engagement has continued through social media, with a number of remote audits being conducted on premises.

## **Priority 4 - PERSONAL SAFETY**

### **Equality objective 5 – Personal Safety**

Reduce the risk of death or injury from fires in North Wales by the provision of effective prevention and protection services and emergency fire and rescue response.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, the Service has:**

- ensured all staff have received awareness training covering safeguarding and 'Ask and Act' training, incorporating modern slavery. Staff are aware of the referral mechanisms that must be used. This training is not specific to underrepresented groups but is applicable to the community as a whole.
- reduced the number of fire safety face to face visits with local business due to Covid restrictions. Engagement has continued through media and social media. Remote audits of numerous premises were conducted.

## **Priority 5 - PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATION**

### **Equality objective 6 – Participation and Communication**

By being open and accountable about what we do and what our plans are, encourage more people to involve themselves in the process of determining the way fire and rescue services are delivered in North Wales and aim to increase the range of representative voices that contribute to that process.

#### **Working to achieve this objective, the Service has:**

- recently started to use 'Recite Me' an accessibility add-on to the Service's website which further improves accessibility e.g. more languages. The Service's website recently underwent an accessibility review in line with statutory requirements, this has led to further accessibility improvements being adopted.
- continued to engage with the business community through social media making them aware of the language option facility available on NWFRS's website.
- attended regular meetings of the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network who meet bi-monthly via Teams. The group have identified engagement with underrepresented groups as one of their key objectives for the coming year.
- arranged the Service's first Virtual Open Day it was held at the end of 2020 as a pilot event, it was successful and very well received. The Service is currently planning a further event to encourage firefighter recruitment.
- public procurement routes in place via Frameworks as well as working collaboratively with the other Fire and Rescue Services across Wales who have specialist procurement staff to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted.
- with the Socio-Economic Duty implementation date delayed by COVID-19, the duty was introduced in March 2021. The Service will consider the duty against strategic organisational decisions, and this has now been incorporated into the Service's Integrated Impact Assessment template.

In accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, specified employment information in respect of employees and applicants as at 31 March 2021 will be published on our website as soon as available (no later than 31st March 2022).