



POSITIVE ACTION STRATEGY 2019 - 2022

Safety. Teamwork. Respect. Innovation.

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INTRODUCTION

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) aspires to have a workforce which is representative of the people and communities of Scotland that we serve.

In line with the Fire & Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016 and as outlined within the SFRS Strategic Plan 2019-22, our aim is to remain an Employer of Choice, fully committed to strengthening the diversity of our workforce.

This Strategy outlines the benefits of diversifying the workforce and details the priorities and actions the Service intends to develop and implement, in collaboration with internal and external partners, to promote SFRS as an Employer of Choice to Scotland's diverse communities, to attract, recruit and retain people from underrepresented groups.

SFRS shares the Scottish Government's ambitions for an inclusive economy and equality of employment opportunity for all. This Strategy supports the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and National Outcomes.

CONTEXT

This Strategy provides for the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 which rationalises previous equality based legislation and reinforces the requirements of the Public-Sector Equality Duty, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people.

SFRS aspires to have a workforce which is representative of the people and communities of Scotland that we serve. We recognise that there are underrepresented groups within many areas of our workforce, with the widest gap in representation between the Scottish population being the gender profile imbalance in our uniformed workforce.

The service is committed to addressing all areas of underrepresentation within the workforce and to broadening the workforce profile. We want to encourage people of diverse backgrounds, experience and beliefs, who share our values and want to make a difference in the community, to consider working for us.

Positive Action is about taking specific steps to improve equality in the workplace and create a level playing field for all. It involves activities which assist employers to identify and remove any actual or perceived barriers to the recruitment, retention and progression of people from underrepresented groups.

Positive Action is not about giving more favourable treatment to particular groups in the recruitment process and does not detract from the principle of appointment or promotion on the grounds of merit against the agreed selection criteria.

To address areas of underrepresentation and achieve a workforce truly reflective of the diverse communities we serve, SFRS will implement Positive Action initiatives wherever appropriate. Action will be targeted and will aim to encourage applications for employment, offer a more inclusive employment experience and career progression opportunities, with appropriate support, information and guidance provided to underrepresented groups and to ensuring an inclusive workplace culture which supports all SFRS employees.

AIM

As an inclusive Service, this Strategy aims to support SFRS to create a diverse and vibrant community of employees made up of a rich and wide range of skills, talents, experiences and backgrounds.

Working closely with internal and external partners, we aim to develop a plan and programme of activity and initiatives that will encourage people from all backgrounds to consider career opportunities with SFRS.

In demonstrating our approachability to those in our communities as part of a focused engagement strategy, we can develop a better understanding of their needs and identify any potential barriers within the working environment, our practices and recruitment processes that will help us to act to overcome any disadvantage experienced and allow all to participate more fully in SFRS recruitment and selection processes.

This approach will allow us to recruit from a wider pool of talented, skilled and experienced people, from which we can spark innovation, develop and retain talent, maximise the potential of our workforce and support and encourage progression and development within the Service.

OBJECTIVES

Through early engagement with our Strategic Leadership Team and working in partnership with the recognised Trade Unions, other key stakeholders and community partners, we have identified four key objectives which will underpin this Strategy and its aims. These are outlined below:

- **IDENTIFYING AND REMOVING BARRIERS TO ATTRACTION**

This Strategy sets out how we will improve our engagement with various underrepresented groups across the communities of Scotland to promote the wide-ranging employment opportunities offered by SFRS. We will work closely with our internal / external stakeholders and identify opportunities to engage with communities and develop long term partnerships so we can better understand their employment needs, raise awareness of the wide-ranging employment opportunities available within SFRS and address societal stereotypes.

- **ENHANCING SFRS EMPLOYER BRAND AS AN INCLUSIVE 'EMPLOYER OF CHOICE'**

Inclusive organisations derive a range of benefits from their workforce – increased morale, productivity, skills & experience, employee retention and a healthy talent pipeline. We will ensure that we have an 'across all thinking' approach in place and regularly review supportive and inclusive policies. A commitment has also been given to the promotion of flexible working arrangements, the consideration of workplace accessibility and inclusivity and other practices that remove perceived barriers and help foster a supportive, positive and healthy workplace that safeguards the dignity and wellbeing of all our employees.

- **FACILITATING MEANINGFUL CAREER AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

We recognise that attracting people to SFRS is just the first step and retaining a diverse workforce that remains engaged and motivated is equally important. When employees feel valued for their individuality and unique contribution they are more likely to remain within an organisation. To support this aim, we will ensure that personal and career development opportunities are accessible to all. Effective communication strategies together with the provision of targeted training, guidance and coaching will assist with promoting the availability of these opportunities to maximise uptake in groups that are underrepresented within specific roles or grades.

- **ENSURING THE PROVISION OF ROBUST WORKFORCE MONITORING DATA**

An accurate workforce data profile will be critical to the successful execution of this Strategy. It is necessary to identify where underrepresentation exists within our workforce to be able to target Positive Action and resources appropriately. Equality monitoring information will be taken from the SFRS HR Payroll system and this information will be used to inform the development of the action plan and Positive Action initiatives required to target underrepresented groups. We are committed to regular interval reporting to ensure that the Strategy remains relevant and in accordance with data insight. The action plan will be sufficiently agile to be able to react to any changing demographics and workforce trends.

DELIVERING THE POSITIVE ACTION STRATEGY

To truly alter the landscape of the SFRS, this Strategy requires the support of the SFRS Board, and the Strategic Leadership and Senior Management Teams to proactively engage with and be leaders in diversity and inclusion initiatives, ensuring that the decisions SFRS makes support the general equality duties and that SFRS fosters a culture where equality and diversity is mainstreamed and part of all we do.

It is recognised that effective delivery of this Strategy and the development of the supporting Positive Action plan will be reliant on joint working with community based organisations, supported by senior managers and employees within all Service Directorates, where networking will be key to accessing and sharing knowledge, information and experience to inform initiatives.

At a national level, the Human Resources and Organisational Development function will develop policy, guidance and good practice to support and aid local implementation of Positive Action initiatives in conjunction with key stakeholders. Local Senior Officers and Directorate staff will support local delivery of the initiatives and will act as positive role models promoting SFRS as an inclusive employer.

• IDENTIFYING AND REMOVING BARRIERS TO ATTRACTION

Key Actions:

Internal

- Evaluate and review the effectiveness of previous Positive Action initiatives and develop a programme of events for all underrepresented groups which provides insight, training and development to support applications for roles in the Service.
- Utilise available workforce data and engage with stakeholders to develop an ongoing programme of Positive Action events which can be delivered in a range of ways to target underrepresented groups within all employee and grade groups.
- Engage with senior management and local delivery teams to encourage collaborative working in the delivery of the Positive Action Strategy and improve accessibility to recruitment opportunities within SFRS.
- Engage with employee networking forums to build cooperative relationships, understand needs and support facilitation of employee feedback on proposed initiatives to maximise the benefits of Positive Action.
- Identify ambassadors and role models from Senior Leaders, all grade groups, Directorates, Trade Union and Employee Networks to test and support the facilitation and promotion of Positive Action initiatives.
- Develop promotional material that can be distributed at Positive Action Events.
- Develop and deliver management development and guidance to ensure successful achievement of Positive Action Strategy.

External

- Engage with organisations across the UK who have delivered successful diversity & Inclusion programmes to identify opportunities for learning.
 - Establish links with networking forums where there are prospects for information sharing and benchmarking.
 - Build collaborative relationships with underrepresented groups across Scottish communities to understand their needs and address any perceived barriers to employment.
 - Understand legal and political backdrop to any proposed Positive Action interventions.
 - Establish partnerships with schools, careers services, job centres and other organisations to promote the range of roles available within SFRS and attract young people to these roles.
- **ENHANCING SFRS EMPLOYER BRAND AS AN INCLUSIVE 'EMPLOYER OF CHOICE'**

Key Actions:

Internal

- Demonstrate commitment to building a reputation for inclusion by ensuring all staff are informed of the reasons why initiatives have been introduced.
- Consider cultural and operational factors within the service that may have to be addressed, i.e. changes to buildings, uniforms and equipment to support the promotion of an inclusive workplace.
- Ensure provision of balanced, fair and equitable employee terms, conditions and policies, including regular review and monitoring of these to ensure these are fully inclusive.
- Provision of equality and diversity training for all staff, covering topics from understanding the issues to experiencing and understanding behaviours.
- Undertake a review of flexible working arrangements and practices to ensure these meet a range of diverse needs and promote SFRS as an employer of choice.
- Develop and implement an ongoing Positive Action communication strategy that meets internal and external requirements.
- Develop a SFRS mental health strategy, supported by appropriate health and wellbeing mechanisms, training and guidance to ensure a supportive, positive and healthy workplace.

External

- Targeted marketing and promotion recruitment programs aimed at specific underrepresented groups.
- Celebrate the benefits of diversity and share success stories.

- **FACILITATING MEANINGFUL CAREER AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Key Actions:

Internal

- Ensure that career and personal development opportunities are attuned to and reflective of a diverse workforce.
- Provide and promote learning opportunities that are flexible and accessible to all.
- Use effective communication strategies to maximise the 'reach' and awareness of all development opportunities.
- Promote the SFRS Leadership and Management Development Framework as an opportunity to develop professional and technical skills and develop targeted training and guidance as appropriate to support underrepresented groups in considering promotion within the Service.
- Promote good practice in the application of the SFRS Appraisal process to support employees and allow them the opportunity to reach their full potential.
- Review internal recruitment processes to identify any barriers that may be affecting individuals from underrepresented groups considering development or promotional opportunities and ensure appropriate support is provided to those who wish to progress.

External

- Engage with underrepresented groups to inform, change perceptions and promote the wide range of opportunities within SFRS.

- **ENSURING THE PROVISION OF ROBUST WORKFORCE MONITORING DATA**

Key Actions:

Internal

- Creation of a reporting suite that provides meaningful measures of employee diversity within SFRS.
- Regular review of MI to understand where underrepresentation occurs across the Service and ensure that the Positive Action plan remains current and relevant to organisational Strategy.
- Ensure that Positive Action plan continues to deliver value and is agile to respond to changing trends / employee demographics
- Commitment to utilise all other means of employee metrics and insight to inform Positive Action Strategy, e.g. SFRS Staff Survey.
- Develop a process for monitoring equality data from vacancies and campaigns to inform or evaluate effectiveness of attraction methods and Positive Action initiatives
- Monitor interest and levels of attendance at Positive Action events and establish a mechanism for keeping in contact with applicants to support them in any applications they make to the SFRS.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

This Strategy is an open framework and while four key objectives have been highlighted, these priorities are not the limit of our ambitions.

The actions identified will sit within the Balancing the Workforce Profile Action Plan. This is the formal plan, introduced by SFRS in 2018 to maximise attraction from underrepresented groups to SFRS.

Progress will be monitored by the Head of HROD with regular updates provided via governance routes. While this plan is maintained by HROD, it will be delivered through a Service-wide approach that will embed the use of Positive Action to support the longer-term equality objectives of SFRS.

Paramount to the successful delivery of this strategy will be a reliance on collaborative working with key stakeholders, trade unions and employee networking groups and their continued support will be embraced in the delivery of Positive Action initiatives.

In addition, a targeted communication strategy will be developed to support the implementation of the Strategy and promote the use and benefits of Positive Action initiatives to SFRS.



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