



Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service

Gender Equality Scheme

Annual Report 2009/2010 and interim action plan 2010/2011

This report is in 12 point font to improve accessibility under the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

Summary

1.1 Introduction

Highlands and Islands Fire & Rescue Service is committed to ensuring equality for all who use our services and we will endeavour to do this through implementing our Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan, along with other documents, which work towards our equality objectives.

In order to do this the Service will ensure that the organisation understands its responsibilities and that there is clear communication throughout so that our intentions are transparent. We will continue to consult with our communities on this Scheme and any other relevant functions in the future.

Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service introduced its Gender Equality Scheme in June 2007 in line with legislative requirement and identifies key actions to be taken by the Service to meet our commitment to promote equality of opportunity for people in the Highlands and Islands. It should be read alongside our Diversity Strategy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Fairness at Work Policy, Race Equality Scheme (2008-2011), Disability Equality Scheme (2006-2009) and Service action plans.

1.1.1 How We Are Meeting our Duties

The service has already introduced many good practices to overcome gender inequalities and to encourage under-represented groups to apply for positions within the Service.

We have been monitoring our employees and potential employees for many years and will continue to do so. As an organisation we will ensure that this information is utilised effectively to review our policies and identify patterns of concern.

The initiatives that the Service introduces along with a change in culture will help to meet the target.

The Service aims to be recognised as an equal opportunities employer and has policies to help achieve its goal. These policies cover all aspects of employment, including selection, recruitment and training, positive action and flexible conditions of service. To make sure those policies remain effective, the Service does ensure that all staff are held accountable for their implementation.

The Service also maintains records of employees' and applicants' gender for monitoring purposes only. Ongoing monitoring and regular analysis of such records provide the basis for appropriate action to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination, and to promote equality of opportunity.

The Service's long-term aim is to ensure that the composition of the workforce more closely reflects that of the community of the Highlands & Islands. Where necessary, steps may be taken to assist under-represented groups to compete for jobs, as permitted by the relevant legislation.

The Service's equality and diversity policies and the measures to implement them have been devised on the basis of advice from relevant bodies as well as through consultation with the appropriate representative bodies.

The Service encompasses a range of roles, including Administrative Staff, Control Operators, Community Fire Safety, Finance, Firefighters, Human Resources, IT, Mechanics, Performance Team, Procurement and Training. These jobs require a range of skills and provide opportunity of employment for a wide range of people.

1.1.2 Employees within the Service

These numbers are current as at April 2010.

	Number of people	Men	%	Women	%
Fire control	18	2	11%	16	88.9%
Non uniformed	81	34	42%	47	58%
Retained staff	1042	974	93.5%	68	6.5%
Community Response Units	146	129	88%	17	12%
Uniformed Wholetime staff	128	127	99%	1	1%

The number of employees at HIFRS are 1415, 89.5% are men and 10.5% are women.

1.1.2 Profile of the Area We Serve

Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service serves the Authorities of the Highland Council, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council and the Western Isles

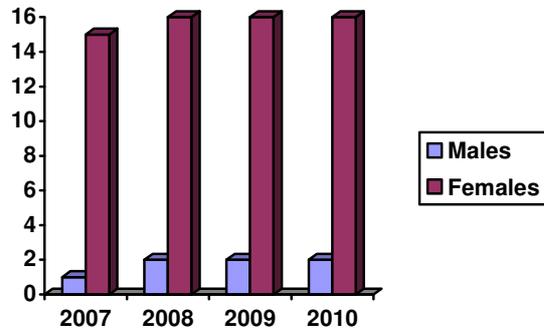
Highland	Population 208,914
	Male 48.97%
	Female 51.03%
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Population 26,502
	Male 49.36%
	Female 50.64%
Shetland	Population 21,988
	Male 50.35%
	Female 49.65%
Orkney	Population 19,245
	Male 49.35%
	Female 51.03%

(The above statistics are taken from Scotland's Census Results online, Census Data 2001).

1.2 Progress

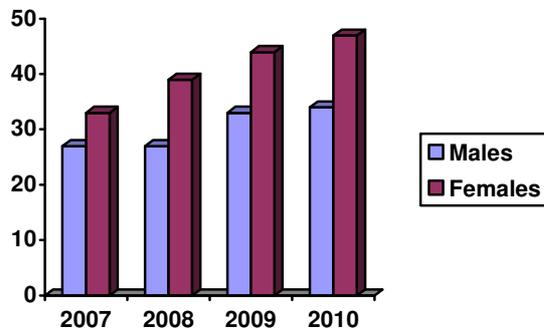
The overall percentage of female staff within the Service has increased over the past year from 10.4%% to 10.5% and progress can be shown in a number of areas.

Control Room Staff



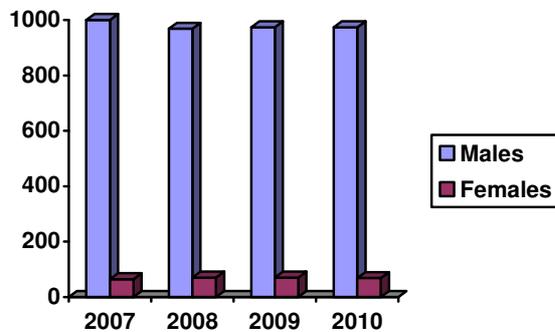
This is a traditionally female working environment. The Service reviewed all of our recruitment literature for adverse gender impacts, and removed these barriers to encourage equality of access. There have been no recruitment requirements for this team since the last report.

Civilian Support Staff



The non-uniformed section of the Service continues to attract more females into traditionally perceived clerical roles. The Service increased the number of non-uniformed staff over the past 12 months by 4 roles. Of these, 1 was male and three female, resulting in an increase percentage of females in this category to 58% of total employed.

Retained Firefighters



The Service is keen to address the imbalance of males and females in the Retained Service and has had Positive Action days in place to encourage applications from females.

However, there has been a reduction of two in the number of female retained Firefighters over the past year, but we will arrange further Positive Action Initiatives in the future to address this issue.

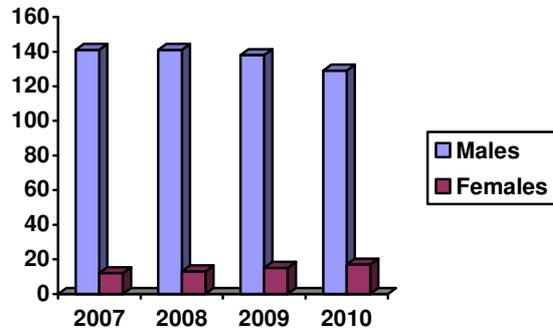
Whilst the overall number of retained firefighters appears fairly static (an average of 1042 over the past four years), the number of starters and leavers each year is on average between 90 and 100 employees.

Of the 98 new starts for 2009-10, 12% were female.

The statistics would therefore show that whilst we are able to attract and recruit females into the retained fire service, the challenge is one of employee retention, and more work needs to be done in investigating this area.

HIFRS will continue to look at more flexible contracts that will allow more flexibility for family friendly working hours to members of the community with caring commitments.

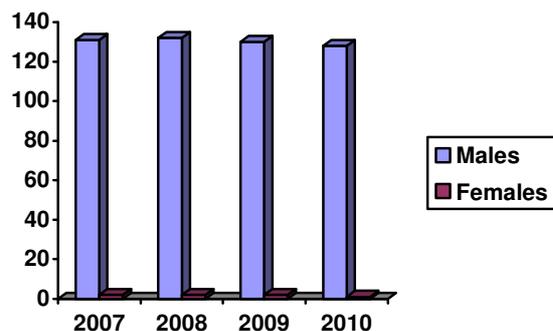
Community Response Units



The overall number of staff employed within the Community Response Units has decreased by 7 over the past financial year. However, although this has resulted in a reduction of males within this role, the number of females has increased from 15 to 17.

Since 2007 when the Service began collating this information, the number of females employed within Community Response Units has increased from 18.4% to 24.8%, and shows real success for the Service.

Whole Time Firefighters



The number of female whole time operational staff still remains a significant challenge for HIFRS. The Service held a whole time recruitment campaign in the first half year of 2009. We ensured that all of our processes and literature were thoroughly reviewed, and we included areas on our application forms for applicants to be considered for job sharing and modified hours. We also offered positive action days/evenings to encourage females to apply.

Of the 288 applications that we received for the post, 6.25% were female. All of the female applicants failed to pass successfully through the process, resulting in the appointment of two male firefighters.

The Service has not held a whole time recruitment campaign within 2009-10, but is investigating the use of the National Point of Entry Selection Tests as a means of providing a more vocational assessment of skills. It is hoped the new approach may remove perception barriers of strength and fitness requirements, and focus on the requirements of the role.

Other Actions

Equality and diversity continues to be mainstreamed into our Service Plan through our annual business planning process. This ensures that all actions identified through the Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan are not the responsibility of one or two individuals, but rather are owned by staff across all levels and departments.

Equality is a standing agenda item on key HIFRS committee meetings and an impact assessment process and policy document, covering all areas of equality has been produced and reviewed by an external organisation.

All new policies and key changes to practice or procedure require a completed EIA as part of the sign off procedure and all existing policies have been identified with and a timetable for outstanding documents will be completed in the near future.

The Service investigates gender differences in service use by using information from the IRMP consultation processes and other community and partnership working exercising to continually inform service delivery mechanisms that meet the needs of men, women and transgender people.

The Service analyses gender on the community engagement activities such as Youth Engagement courses, Safe Highlander, HiFiReS, Young fire setter and tackling anti-social behavior initiatives in addition to work undertaken by our bi-lingual Community Safety Advocate.

The Service continues to employ a number of full time Fire Safety Advocates, working at the heart of our communities, who will detect any gender imbalance in the use of our services. Gender has also been analysed through a monitoring form issued to those who have received a Home fire Safety Check.

The Service has prepared and published an equal pay statement which is available on our homepage.

The Service has already delivered training to personnel on equality and diversity which includes cultural awareness and harassment and bullying. This training is ongoing and frameworks are now being considered to ensure all new employees to the Service receive this training during the early stages of their career with us, as well as refreshing training for existing employees to ensure that the training has a permanent and positive impact.

The training given to staff will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

To ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities, staff also have access to HIFRS Gender Equality Scheme and Action plan as well as access to the Equality and Diversity forum.

Further reports on progress made against the Scheme's Action Plan will be incorporated within our Public Performance Report.

1.3 Information Gathering

An Equality and Diversity Forum has been set up and monitors ongoing Equality plans on behalf of the Service. This group is chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, and has representatives from each recognised Union, as well as from a broad selection of work areas from within the Service. Two members of the Highland and Islands Fire Board also sit on this committee to act as equality champions.

HIFRS is an active member of the Highland Community Planning Partnership Equality and Diversity Group and it is this forum that provides essential links to the various gender communities and service users.

The Highland Community Planning Partnership has grown from a group formed in 1996 of five public organisations in order to express their commitment to improve the wellbeing of the people of the Highlands and to develop collaborative ways of working.

Legislation in 2003 required the setting up of Community Planning Partnerships across Scotland to take forward the process of community planning.

Community planning is the process through which the connections between national priorities decided by the Scottish Executive and those at Highland, local and neighbourhood levels are improved.

- It is about making sure that people and communities in the Highlands are genuinely engaged in making decisions on public services which affect them.
- It requires a commitment from organisations in the Highlands to work together, not apart, in providing better public services.
- It provides the over-arching partnership framework within which other initiatives and partnerships can be co-ordinated and, where necessary, acting to rationalise and simplify public sector working arrangements. In Highland community planning involves representatives of the voluntary and business sectors as well as public sector agencies.

Not only do public sector organisations need to strengthen a joint-working culture and practice between each other but also with and between communities. The Highland Community Planning Partnership recognises that these relationships require considerable levels of support and action in order to enable full community participation in the community planning process to take place.

The future

This review of our Gender Equality Scheme 2007-2010 and production of an Interim Gender Equality Action Plan has come at a time of change in equality law. The Action Plan sets out how we will include gender equality in our Single Equality Scheme which we hope to publish by the end of 2010 in anticipation of guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission relating to the new all encompassing public duty, early 2011.

In general, we are satisfied with our progress toward gender equality, and with the exception of one item, achieved all the target that were set at the original publication of the initial scheme and action plan in 2007(appendix 1).

However, we recognise that there is still a lot of work to be. Appendix 2 sets out our interim action plan for 2010/11 to ensure gender, or sex equality as proposed remains distinct yet integrated into a Single Equality Scheme that should be published in the winter of 2010.

The HIFRS is committed to promoting gender equality and will support the further implementation of the Action Plan 2007-2010.

The Gender Equality Scheme is published in paper format and is available on request; it is also placed on our website: www.hifrs.org
The results of the monitoring are published annually and are available on the website within the annual Public Performance Report.

Appendix 1

HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE COMPLETED GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN - JUNE 2007-JUNE 2010

1: POLICY MAKING					
Objective	Accountable	Timescale	Outcome	Progress to Date	Completed
1.1 Commitment to gender mainstreaming in all areas of the business	Executive Command	Ongoing Commitment	Equality and diversity will be a standing agenda item on all HIFRS committee meetings	Initiatives commenced at Equality Diversity Forum e.g. new advertising literature, positive action campaigns and exit interview procedures.	
1.2 To periodically review our policies, and amend where necessary to address any gender imbalance. This will include assessing the impact on men and women according to their different needs	Heads of Department	As determined through the EIA process	All policies and procedures will be adopted only with a completed EIA, and all policies will be impact assessed according to a rolling programme.	<p>T&D – Currently undertaking a review of T&D policy documents, updating as required including impact assessments.</p> <p>Ops Support – included in Departmental plan for 2007 -2008. All revised and new policy documents are subject to EIA.</p> <p>Ops command has one policy which is currently part of the 2008 service plan. The MIRG National Agreement has been developed into a specific HIFRS Operational procedure</p>	<p>January 2008</p> <p>January 2008</p> <p>June 2008</p>

				<p>and policy which has been impact assessed for gender.</p> <p>Human Resources – all new policies are equality impact assessed and existing policies are scheduled to be impact assessed by end of July 2008. Completed August 2008</p> <p>All relevant policies for CRM dept have been assessed.</p>	<p>August 2008</p> <p>October 2008</p>
1.3 Monitor the process for assessing policies for adverse impact to determine its effectiveness and amend if necessary	HR Manager	September 2007	EIA process to be externally verified by an external consultant to ensure equitable and robust over all equality strands	EIA process has been verified by IODA in May/June 2007	June 2007

2: SERVICE DELIVERY					
Objective	Accountable	Timescale	Outcome	Progress to Date	Completed
<p>2.1 To investigate gender differences in service use (a gender profile of service users)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do men, women and transsexual people use our service in different ways? - Do these groups have different needs from HIFRS? - Are there particular who do not use, or under-use our services, e.g. women's groups? 	<p>Commander IRMP Area Commanders Community Fire Safety Advocates</p>	<p>Ongoing commitment</p>	<p>We will use information from our IRMP consultation processes and other community and partnership working exercising to continually inform service delivery mechanisms that meet the needs of men, women and transsexual people. We will also keep a questionnaire on our web site so that the public can contact us at times to suit them.</p>	<p>Gender analysed on our community engagement activities such as Youth Diversion courses, Young firesetter and tackling anti-social behaviour initiatives in addition to work undertaken by our Bi-lingual Community Safety Advocate.</p>	<p>April 2008</p>
<p>2.2 To investigate and discrepancies in the use of our services by gender, and to target those underrepresented groups</p>	<p>Commander IRMP Area Commanders Community Fire Safety Advocates</p>	<p>Ongoing commitment</p>	<p>We have Community safety teams in all areas of the service, and at the heart of the community to detect any gender imbalance in the use of our services.</p>	<p>Gender is analysed through the new monitoring form issued to those who have received a Home fire Safety Check. 2000 Questionnaires issued recently.</p>	<p>September 2008</p>

3: EMPLOYMENT					
Objective	Accountable	Timescale	Outcome	Progress to Date	Completed
3.1 To prepare and publish an equal pay statement	HR Manager	28 th September 2007	We will have a statement that outlines the Service's policy on equal pay between men and women.	Our equal pay statement 2007 is available on our homepage.	December 2007
3.2 To complete the Single Status review	HR Manager	April 2008	To conduct a job evaluation exercise that harmonises terms and conditions employment for all civilian staff, ensuring all processes and procedures have undergone gender EIA	The job evaluation process has been started and is to be completed by the end of the financial year. Staff has been informed and Job Evaluators are trained at the moment.	June 2008
3.3 To complete an Equal Pay Review	HR Manager	April 2009	Following the implementation of the Single Status Review, and following on from the 'rank to role' process, an organisational equal pay review will provide an audit of our processes to identify where pay gaps or occupational segregation exists within the organisation.		Implementation of Single Status delayed
3.4 To investigate the introduction of mentors within the Service	HR Manager	December 2008	Mentoring may be seen as an avenue for encouraging and supporting men, women and transsexual people within the Service,	Information on mentoring has been gathered and work on this project is ongoing.	December 2008

			especially where feedback relating to stereotyping and confidence issues has been raised. If successful, this approach could be used to support all areas of under-representation within the service, and not just gender.		
<p>3.5 To report annually by producing a gender profile on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff in post – existing employees, including salaries/grades, part-time, full-time, uniformed and civilian. - Applications for employment - Applications for training - Applications for promotion - Employees raising grievances - Employees ceasing employment - Employees involved in harassment 	HR Manager Commander Learning & Development	Quarterly report to Equality and Diversity forum.	We already monitor employment statistics in line with Race and Disability Equality Duties. These will be amended to reflect the new Gender Equality Duty. All statistic will be published annually as part of the Services Public Performance Report	T&D – Providing HR department on a monthly basis a report of the numbers and names of personnel attending courses. Reports are forwarded to the Equality & Diversity Forum rquarterly	July 2008

3.6 Investigate accommodation on fire station (toilets / showers / changing facilities for male, female and transsexual)	Head of Corporate Services Area Commanders	December 2007	We recognise that we have limited facilities for either sex on many stations. A list of facilities and a long term programme for updating will be established.	Detailed list of facilities completed. Incremental plan for improvement contained in each 3 yr capital programme which is regularly reviewed.	August 2008
3.7 Develop refresher training on the six strands of equality, including gender awareness training	Commander Learning & Development	December 2007	Whilst there is significant work and resource being targeted into initial training, consideration now needs to be directed to ongoing awareness and refresher training in all areas of equality.	T&D – Included in the training plan currently being run out by Robin Iffla.	March 2008
3.8 Develop positive action materials to help with recruitment initiatives.	HR Manager	December 2007	Whilst district staff actively target different groups for their recruitment activity, (e.g. mother and toddler groups), this needs to be supported by underpinning corporate initiatives to promote equality within the service. This should include job advertisements in the paper and HIFRS web site.	Positive action initiatives are in place and in planning.	January 2009
3.9 Carry out positive action initiatives prior to the whole time recruitment	Area Commanders HR Manager	July 2007	HIFRS is about to undergo its first full time recruitment campaign in four years and is determined to	Recruitment methods have been adjusted. - change of radio advert to address diverse applicants	July 2007

<p>campaign to actively raise awareness in under represented groups including females within the service.</p>			<p>engage with all sections of the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve the job center for a more diverse applicant base <p>A further wholetime recruitment campaign is planned for April 2009. Positive action initiatives are planned prior the recruitment campaign for minority groups (disability, gender, race, religion/faith, age and sexual orientation). Engagement with local minority groups/organisations, Job center, etc. will take place</p>	<p>February 2009</p>
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4: PROCUREMENT					
Objective	Accountable	Timescale	Outcome	Progress to Date	Completed
4.1 Request that contractors who submit tenders are compliant with current equality legislation	Head of Corporate Services	Ongoing commitment	Agreement needs to be made with the Highland Council that all tendering processes that go through them are compliant. All ongoing independent tenders need to comply.	Highland Council procurement manager also acts as adviser to Fire Board. He ensures we remain compliant.	August 2008

Interim Gender Equality Action Plan

Action	Department	Person Responsible	Deadline	Status
Develop draft Single Equality Scheme	People Services	Head of People Services	August 2010	Complete
Establish Equality Task Group to Develop Single Equality Scheme Action Plan	All	ACFO	September 2010	
Publish Single Equality Scheme & Action Plan	People Services	HR Manager	December 2010	
Work Environment Survey	Corporate Services / Operations Support	Property Manager / Health & Safety Adviser	June 2011	
Equality and Diversity Training for Supervisory Managers	People Services	Training Manager	April 2011	
Develop electronic Equalities system and establish reporting mechanism.	Corporate Services	Performance Manager	June 2011	
Develop electronic EIA system and establish reporting mechanism	Corporate Services	Performance Manager	June 2011	