

**Highland and Islands Fire Board/
Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service**

Disability Equality Scheme

Annual Report 2006/2007

Summary

1.1 Introduction

The Highland and Islands Fire Board/Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service (HIFRS) introduced their Disability Equality Scheme on 4th December 2006 in line with legislative requirement and identifies key actions to be taken by HIFRS to meet our commitment to promote equality of opportunity for people in the Highlands & Islands. It should be read alongside our Diversity Strategy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Fairness at Work Policy, Race Equality Scheme (2005-2008), Gender Equality Scheme (2007-2010) and Service action plans.

The full Disability Equality Scheme is available at: http://www.hifrs.org/opencms/export/download/Policy_Documents/HIFRS_Disability_Equality_Scheme_2006-2009.pdf; and at: <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/yourcouncillors/committeeofficebearers/cllrs-hi-fire-members.htm>

Priorities for action were:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination
- To eliminate unlawful harassment
- To improve accessibility of the service
- To promote equality of opportunity

1.2 Progress

During the past year progress has been made in all of the above areas.

An impact assessment process and policy document, covering all areas of equality has been produced and reviewed by an external organisation.

The screening of policies for disability impact assessment falls into two areas. All existing policies have been identified with functional accountability designated. Key documents have been independently assessed through IODA and a timetable for outstanding documents will be completed in the near future. All new policies and key changes to practice or procedure require a completed EIA as part of the sign off procedure.

Whilst all identified appropriate staff have received training in completing an EIA by Angela Webb of HMI, further training will take place in 2008 by an external provider.

Disability monitoring is seen as essential for promoting disability within the Service. To this end, disability monitoring has been defined as key performance indicators in the Services business planning in the following areas:-

- Recruitment
- Promotion
- Transfer
- Disciplinary
- Grievance
- Dismissal

Progress has been made to eliminate unlawful discrimination in staff guidance, and training in this regard for fulltime and selected retained staff has taken place. All mainland retained stations and outstanding fulltime staff are programmed for training in 07/08. Island status is to be programmed for 09/10.

Access to the translation and interpreting service for our operational crews, Control, Headquarters and District Offices is provided. The development of Control procedures to deal with requirements of the deaf is in progress.

To ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities in line with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, staff receive training and have access to HIFRS Disability 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 Well Being Alliance Group sub committee on equality and diversity, and it is this forum that provides essential links to the disabled community and service users.

Highland Wellbeing Alliance is the Community Planning Partnership for Highland. It 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 and Highland Wellbeing Alliance, with an expanded membership, took on that responsibility for Highland.

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. Highland Wellbeing Alliance 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.

1.4 Future Plans

The HIFRS is committed to promoting disability equality and will support the further implementation of the Action Plan 2006-2009. Progress will be made by the end of next year, supported by the newly appointed Equality & Policy Adviser.

The tables on the following pages represent our targets.

HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN - DECEMBER 2006-DECEMBER 2009

1: TO ELIMINATE UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION					
Objective	Accountable	Timescale	Outcome	Progress to Date	Completed
1.1 Prioritised plan for Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of existing functions/policies	Departmental Heads	April 07	1. Screen functions and policies for relevance to disability equality. Set priorities for equality impact assessments (EIA)	T&D – Currently undertaking a review of T&D policy documents, updating as required including impact assessments.	
	HR Manager in association with HWBA	April 07	2. Complete report of multi-agency involvement of people with disabilities. With partners, report feedback to organisations and individuals involved in the preparation of the Schemes. Identify priority areas for action, including opportunities for partnership action.	Ops Support – Includes as departmental action for 2007 / 2008. Policies are being assessed as they are produced or revised. Action plan in place.	
1.2 All new and revised policies, where relevant to disability equality, include outcome of EIA.	HR Manager	April 07	1. Agree EIA template through Service decision making process.	T&D – Achieved Ops Support – Achieved.	
	HR Manager Commander Development	Apr 07	2. Ensure staff undertaking EIA are informed and understand the requirements a) staff guidance completed		

			<p>b) training for relevant staff</p> <p>c) EIA undertaken according to priority timescale</p>	All relevant staff has been trained by Angela Webb of HMI	
1.3 Personnel required to undertake EIA have the appropriate support, contacts and sources of information.	<p>HR Manager through the HWBA Commander CRM</p> <p>Departmental Heads</p> <p>Area Commanders</p> <p>Commander CRM</p> <p>Commander CRM/ HR Manager</p> <p>HR Manager</p>	<p>Dec 07</p> <p>Dec 07</p> <p>Dec 07</p> <p>Dec 07</p> <p>Dec 07</p> <p>Dec 07</p>	<p>1. In association with partner agencies, develop a central register of information on disability.</p> <p>2. Extend this central register to incorporate information gathered in cross-department working eg. Community Fire Safety Activities</p> <p>3. District managers to set up contact links with local disability groups and individuals, and feedback any issues through the appropriate Service channels.</p> <p>4. Develop a process to record details of local engagement</p> <p>5. Implement ongoing involvement with people with disabilities, as part of the review of the Scheme.</p> <p>6. On receipt of DRC impairment criteria, ensure employment monitoring includes desegregated data.</p>	<p>Ongoing with HWBA</p> <p>T&D – Providing HR department on a monthly basis a report of the numbers and names of personnel attending courses.</p> <p>District managers attend Ward meetings where the format is now completely different and they don't have the opportunity to form these links.</p> <p>ongoing</p> <p>Disability is monitored as part of the wider monitoring in the recruitment, promotion, transfer, disciplinary, grievance and dismissal process</p>	

1.4 Diversity Awareness Training	Commander Development Commander Development	Apr 07 Dec 08	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to deliver staff training on diversity awareness. Plan a roll-out programme to deliver diversity awareness training to remainder of the Service. 2. Identify and plan a refresher training programme, and how training will be delivered to new starts post the current round of training. 	T&D – Majority of full time staff and selected retained staff completed training during 06/07. All mainland retained stations and outstanding fulltime staff programmed for 07/08 currently on target. Island status to be programmed for 08/09. New retained staff, section of recruit course to include E&D training via appropriate instructor. A refresher programme will be in place by e.learning modules by 09/10.	

2: TO ELIMINATE UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT					
Objective	Accountable	Timescale	Outcome	Progress to Date	Completed
2.1 Record and Monitor incidents of harassment and discrimination of people with disabilities.	HR Manager	Jun 07	1. Ensure related policies are updated and revised and communicated across the Service	Related policies are updated and revised.	
	Commander Development	Jun 07	2. Identify any further training requirements that are required, and timetable accordingly.	ongoing	
	HR Manager in association with HWBA	Nov 07	3. Further widen the scope of the Racist Incident Multi-Agency Strategy with our partners to include all hate incidents/crime.	Ongoing, external Agency to support.	

3: TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE SERVICE

Objective	Accountable	Timescale	Outcome	Progress to Date	Completed
3.1 Identify barriers to access and plan rectification programme, where appropriate.	Head of Corporate Services	In line with Capital plan	1. Review progress of DDA compliance plan of built environment through performance management processes.	Ongoing	
	Head of Corporate Services	Nov 07	2. Develop access compliance audit through relevant access panels.	ongoing	
	Head of Corporate Services	In line with IT project	3. Ensure that the review of the Service website considers accessibility requirements for people with disabilities.	ongoing	
	Commander Operations Support	Dec 07	4. In partnership with other Public Agencies Continue to develop our Interpreting and Translation Service ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are met.	Translation and Interpreting Service access provided for operational crews, Control, HQ and District Offices. Developing Control procedures to deal with requirements of deaf.	

4: TO PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Objective	Accountable	Timescale	Outcome	Progress to Date	Completed
4.1 Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities in line with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act.	HR Manager through the Service's DDA Review Group	March 08	1. In association with Occupational Health Advisor ensure reasonable adjustments are appropriately identified and implemented and develop guidance for line managers about making reasonable adjustments.	All documents include the Disability Equality Duty	
	HR Manager/ Departmental Heads	Dec 07	2. Incorporate the provisions of the Disability Equality Duty in the Service's Diversity Strategy and related documents.		

5: ANNUAL REPORTING

Objective	Accountable	Timescale	Outcome	Progress to Date	Completed
5.1 Open and transparent publication of outcomes.	Head of Corporate Services Head of Corporate Services	Jan 08 Dec 07	1. Publish Action Plan Results in Public Performance Report. 2. Research and consider other ways of publishing results/outcomes from Action Plan through the Media and Service website		