



Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service

Disability Equality Scheme

Annual Report 2008/2009

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 Disability 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.

The Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service (HIFRS) introduced its 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 (2008-2011), Gender Equality Scheme (2007-2010) and Service action plans.

The full Disability Equality Scheme is available on our webpage www.hifrs.org

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Priorities for action were:

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

This is the third annual report produced since the introduction of the scheme and it details the progress HIFRS has made during the period 2008-2009.

1.1.1 How We Are Meeting our Duties

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

We have been monitoring our employees and potential employees a number of 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 and good practice.

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 ensures that all staff are held accountable for their implementation.

The Service also maintains records if employees' and applicants' consider themselves to have a disability 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 underrepresented groups to compete for jobs, as permitted by the relevant legislation. We are also user of the disability symbol.



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 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

	Highlands & Islands	Highlands & Islands %	Scotland
Total population	279,649	100.00%	5,062,011
Limiting Long term Illnesses	50,727	18.14%	20.31%
Percentage of economically inactive people who are permanently sick/disabled	47,507	16.99%	21.25%
Percentage of households with one or more carers resident	43,840	15.68%	16.84%

1.2 Progress

The following information provides progress of the Action Plan which is part of the Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009

Action 1.1.1 Screen functions and policies for relevance to disability equality. Set priorities for equality impact assessments (EIA)

All departments have undertaken a review of the existing policy documents and updated them as appropriate, and work continues to raise the importance of equality impact assessments.

Action 1.1.2 Complete a report of multi-agency involvement of people with disabilities in association with Highland Community Planning Partnership Equality & Diversity Group(HCPP) (previously known as Highland Wellbeing Alliance (HWBA))

The HCPP has produced a report on the Disability Equality Duty called Working with Individuals and Disability on "life in the Highlands" in 2007.

Action 1.2.1 Agree EIA template through Service decision making process

An EIA template was agreed and introduced in November 2007.

PRO-FORMA FOR THE INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Department		Person responsible for the assessment	
Name of the Policy to be assessed		Date of Assessment	Is this a new or existing policy?
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy			
2. Are there any associated objectives of the policy, please explain?			
3. Who is intended to benefit from the policy and in what way?			
4. What outcomes are wanted from this policy?			
5. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?			

6. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy?		7. Who implements the policy and who is responsible for the policy?	
8. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact on racial groups?	Y	N	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
9. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to gender?	Y	N	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
10. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to disability?	Y	N	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
11. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to sexual orientation?	Y	N	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			

2. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact on people due to their age?	Y	N	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
13. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact on people due to their religious belief?	Y	N	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
14. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact on people due to them having dependants/caring responsibilities?	Y	N	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
15. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact on people due to them being transsexual?	Y	N	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			

16. Could the differential impact identified in 8-15 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact in this policy?	YES	NO			
17. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or any other reason?	YES	NO	Please explain for each equality heading (question 8-15) on a separate piece of paper		
18. Should the policy proceed to a partial impact assessment?	YES	NO	19. If yes, is there enough evidence to proceed to a full EIA?	YES	NO
20. Date on which Partial or Full impact assessment to be completed by					

Signed (completing persons) _____ Signed (Head of Department) _____

Action 1.2.2 Ensure staff undertaking EIA are informed and understand the requirements of the EIA

Relevant staff were identified and trained by Angela Webb of HMI in November 2006. Further training was provided in August 2008 by IODA.

Action 1.3.1 In association with partner agencies, develop a central register of information on disability

ongoing

Action 1.3.2 Extend this central register to incorporate information gathered in cross-department working eg. Community Fire Safety Activities

ongoing

Action 1.3.3 District managers set up contact links with local disability groups and individuals, and feedback any issues through the appropriate Service channels.

District staff attends appropriate local forums including ones which are directly linked to Fire Safety and provide guidance appropriate to the individual group's needs.

Action 1.3.4 Develop a process to record details of local engagement
 Departmental plans reflect all partnering initiatives in addition to the Service Partnership Register. A further review of the Partnership Register to identify purpose and benefits of partnership working has been completed. The Community Risk Management team is developing an interactive recording mechanism for the community engagement activities and our Performance Manager is looking at ways to integrating it with the Service Intranet.

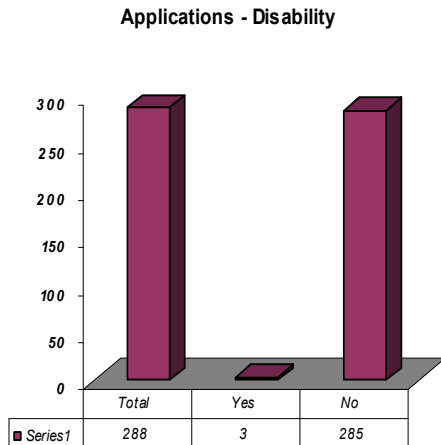
Action 1.3.5 Implement ongoing involvement with people with disabilities, as part of the review of the Scheme

The Service recently presented to the Highland Strategic Working Group on Sensory needs. A project is currently being undertaken to produce a safety DVD encompassing BSL sign language.

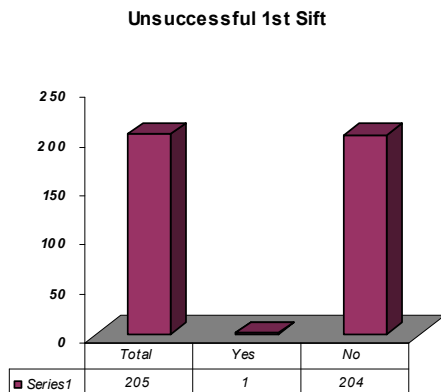
Action 1.3.6 On receipt of DRC impairment criteria, ensure employment monitoring includes desegregated data.

Disability is monitored as part of the wider monitoring in the recruitment, promotion, transfer, disciplinary, grievance and dismissal process.

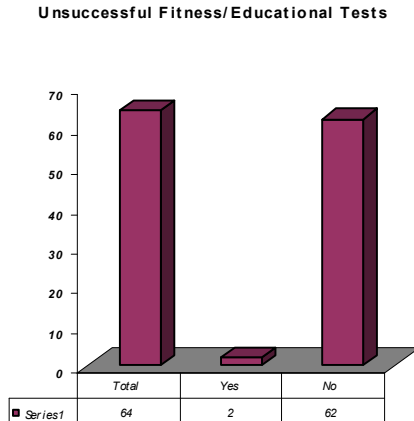
Monitoring on our wholetime recruitment campaign beginning auf 2009 showed that 3 applicants considered themselves to have a disability.



One of the applicants did not pass the 1st sift.



Two of the applicants proceeded to the Fitness and Educational Test. Both candidates did not attend the tests and therefore failed.



Prior to the wholetime recruitment campaign we held positive action days/evenings in Inverness Station and in our District Offices in Stornoway, Lerwick and Kirkwall to encourage applications from under represented groups.

We raised awareness through various radio Stations and Newspapers in the Highlands & Islands in combination with the job advertisement for wholetime firefighters.

To ensure our employee monitoring information is up to date, personal data held on our system is being updated during 2009. A questionnaire was issued to all personnel in February 2009 and the data will be updated in the service's Human Resource Management system (FireWatch) by the end of the financial year 2009/10.

Action 1.4.1 Continue to deliver staff training on diversity awareness. Plan a roll-out program to deliver diversity awareness training to remainder of the Service.

The majority of full time and retained staff has been trained. Further initial training is ongoing to provide training for all HIFRS staff.

Action 1.4.2 Identify and plan a refresher training program, and how training will be delivered to new starts post the current round of training.

An appropriate refresher programme and cycle has been identified using the Scottish Fire and Rescue services e-learning platform and all staff will be given access by 2009/2010.

Action 2.1.1 Record and monitor incidents of harassment and discrimination of people with disabilities and ensure related policies are updated and revised and communicated across the Service

All related policies are updated and revised. No incidents of harassment and/or discrimination of people with disabilities have been reported.

Action 2.1.2 Identify any further training requirements that are required, and timetable accordingly

Training has been identified for the service's Disability Discrimination Review Group and this will be provided by Leonard Cheshire and the local Careers Centre.

Action 2.1.3 Further widen the scope of the Racist Incident Multi-Agency Strategy with our partners to include all hate incidents/crime.

The HCPP has launched the Hate Incident reporting in March 2009. www.hatefreehighland.org

Action 3.1.1 Review progress of DDA compliance plan of built environment through performance management processes.

Identified resources are in the capital plan, the rolling program starting with DDA improvements to HQ in 2007/2008. Resources are identified for the next 2 financial years.

Action 3.1.2 Develop access compliance audit through relevant access panels.

Disability access audit of the entire built estate will be undertaken in 2010 and urgent remedial works will be programmed in the same year. All immediate building and facility requirements for disabled employees will be met from current resources.

Action 3.1.3 Ensure that the review of the Service website considers accessibility requirements for people with disabilities

Our new website with Level AA conformance (Priority 1 and 2 checkpoints) has gone online in June 2009.

Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service
 HELPING MAKE THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS A SAFER AND BETTER PLACE TO LIVE

Friday, 30 October 2009

Text Size: **A A A** Google Translate Select Language

Welcome to the Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Website

- About Us
- Access to Information
- Community Safety
- News
- Performance
- Recruitment
- Contact Us

Latest Incidents

28 Oct: Inverness Station
 A quantity of rubbish in recycling bin on fire. Extinguish [\[more\]](#)

28 Oct: Invergordon
 Wheelie bin and contents destroyed by fire. Extinguish [\[more\]](#)

28 Oct: Invergordon
 Bonfire left unattended. Fire crews used one hose reel [\[more\]](#)

[More Incidents](#)

26/10/2009 - Public Performance Report - Our Public Performance Report for 2008-09 is now available for you to view or download. [\[more\]](#)

23/10/2009 - New Fire Station for Aultbea - Fire Board Convener, Richard Durham and Chief Fire Officer, Brian Murray will open a new fire [\[more\]](#)

07/10/2009 - New Chaplain for Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service - The Rev. John de la Hoya is the new Chaplain for the Highlands [\[more\]](#)

FIREWORKS: Be Safe Not Sorry, Always Follow the Code - visit www.hifrs.org/Fireworks

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Action 3.1.4 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 is provided for operational crews, Control, HQ and District Offices. Control procedures are being developed to deal with requirements of deaf. An audio loop system has been introduced at the reception of the Service's HQ to support enquiries from users that are hard of hearing.

Action 4.1.1 Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities in line with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act. In association with Occupational Health Advisor ensure reasonable adjustments are appropriately identified and implemented and develop guidance for line managers about making reasonable adjustments.

Guidance for managers is approved by SLT and is under consultation with the Unions at present time. Training on reasonable adjustments for managers will be in place with an Access to Work adviser and a representative of a Disability Group beginning of 2010.

Action 4.1.2 Incorporate the provisions of the Disability Equality Duty in the Service's Diversity Strategy and related documents.

All relevant documents are signposted include the Disability Equality Duty.

Action 5.1.1 Publish Action Plan Results in Public Performance Report.

Action plan results are sign posted in the Public Performance Report.

Action 5.1.2 Research and consider other ways of publishing results/outcomes from Action Plan through the Media and Service website

The results of the Action Plan are published on the Service's web-site and can also be accessed through the minutes of the Fire Board who monitor the action plans.

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 is supported by the Service's Representative Bodies, 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 also gathering information on the Equality Schemes by consulting the public via questionnaires published on our website and by contacting disability groups directly. Questionnaires with monitoring forms are also distributed to members of the public who use HIFRS Services like Home Fire Safety Checks.

HIFRS is an active member of the Highland Community Planning Partnership Equality & Diversity Group, and it is this forum that provides essential links to the various disability groups.

The Highland Community Partnership has evolved from The Highland Wellbeing Alliance Group which was formed in 1996 by 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.

HIFRS is committed to promoting disability equality and will support the further implementation of the Action Plan 2009-2012.

The Disability Equality Scheme and the Action Plan are published on our website: www.hifrs.org. They are also available in paper format on request.

The results of the monitoring are published annually and are also available on the website within the annual Public Performance Report.