



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY 2018 - 2020

Safety. Teamwork. Respect. Innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Engaging with young people is a key part of our overall strategy for improving lives and promoting safer communities across Scotland. We also recognise the need to strengthen diversity within our workforce to better reflect the communities we serve, as well as the need to balance the age profile of our workforce to safeguard future staffing levels. Within SFRS just 3.6% of the total workforce is under 25. Within the support staff group where over 40% of employees are aged 50 or over, under 25's account for just 2.8% of employees. [Data extracted from iTrent, 30/01/2018]. This presents a significant risk to the SFRS in terms of maintaining required staff numbers, a significant loss of skills through retirement and an inability to develop and sustain skills and expertise within the organisation.

This strategy details the priorities and actions the HROD Directorate will take, in collaboration with internal and external partners, to promote the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to young people as an employer of choice, giving them meaningful opportunities to engage with us and experience first hand the range of careers available to them within the Service.

In doing so we will look to create opportunities for young people of all backgrounds to engage with the SFRS as a prospective employer through initiatives such as work experience placements and apprenticeships and to raise awareness of these opportunities through targeted activity. As well as creating opportunities we will ensure that appropriate support is available to young people in the workplace to enable them to achieve their full potential.

We also recognise that some young people face significant barriers to entering employment and this strategy seeks to enable young people to overcome these barriers. In particular we recognise the difficulties faced by care experienced young people and this strategy will link with the SFRS Corporate Parenting Plan to improve access to employment and development activities.

This strategy support the Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy and its aims to improve the life chances of everyone living in Scotland as well as the SFRS Strategic Plan, specifically Workforce Development.

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CONTEXT

Youth engagement and the development of young people in Scotland are a key area of focus with the Scottish Government's National Outcomes. A number of strategies support these outcomes including the National Youth Work Strategy (Scotland) 2014 – 2019, which highlights three essential features that should underpin work with young people: young people participate by choice; work with young people is based on their individual needs; and the young person and whoever is working with them are recognised as partners in any learning process. SFRS is committed to actively engage with young people and work to ensure their needs are considered as part of our service development and our role as a potential employer and provider of other workplace opportunities.

We want to ensure that young people are supported to make positive choices about their future, helping them develop important practical skills and an understanding of risk. We also recognise the need for SFRS to meet its own workforce requirements and the risks to sustainable staffing levels and the maintenance of knowledge and skills within the Service that an ageing workforce presents.

In developing this strategy we have considered a number of key government policies and strategic documents. In particular, the following have significant links to our work:

Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations, 2013

A Community Learning Development approach places learning at the centre of communities and is at the heart of our youth engagement through learning, personal development and active citizenship. Our programmes will be developed to offer young people opportunities for learning and personal development and will seek to empower young people, individually and collectively, to make positive choices that make a real difference to their lives and their communities.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014

This legislation places Corporate Parenting responsibilities on a number of publicly funded organisations including the SFRS. We will embrace our role as corporate parents by building on the support we already provide to care experienced children and young people.

Equality Act 2010

This strategy focuses on the creation and promotion of opportunity for young people. It is recognised they are currently an under represented group within many areas of the SFRS workforce. Additionally this group comprises other under-represented groups. Where evidence suggests a particular group covered by the above legislation is under-represented within our workforce, these groups will be targeted to encourage applications for employment and appropriate support provided within the workplace.

Positive Action initiatives allow for targeted marketing and promotions campaigns to encourage interest in a career with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service from members of particular community groups. They also allow for the provision of training and guidance to specific under-represented groups prior to application for employment.

Developing the Young Workforce

To embrace this strategy we will build genuine, long-term partnerships between schools, colleges, training providers, employers, parents and young people. It is only through a partnership approach we will widen the range of choices available to young people and support them to make the most appropriate choices for their futures.

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC is the Scottish Government's national approach to improve outcomes for children and young people. One of the key indicators of wellbeing contained within the GIRFEC approach is 'achieving'. This strategy will enable achievement through the creation of personal development and early career opportunities for young people thus contributing to the overall aim of GIRFEC of supporting the wellbeing of Scotland's young people.

AIM

Working closely with internal and external partners e.g. Prevention and Protection Directorate, Skills Development Scotland, we aim to develop initiatives that will engage our young people and provide them with opportunities for personal development, further education and employment. In doing so we will create a more diverse workforce that better reflects the communities we serve enabling us to serve them more effectively. Furthermore by achieving a greater diversity of age across all sections of our workforce we aim to mitigate risks to future staffing levels.

OBJECTIVES & IMPLEMENTATION

Through working with our key partners and community members we have set out five key areas of work identified as vital to the success and development of youth attraction and employment within the SFRS. These are:

1. Promoting SFRS as a Future Employer
2. Increasing Opportunities for Young People with SFRS
3. Promoting Young People's Wellbeing & Corporate Parenting
4. Developing our Workforce
5. Recording and Reporting

For each of the above areas we have detailed the actions we intend to undertake and the potential impact they will have for our communities and delivery services. Proposed timeframes for these actions are contained within the Youth Employment Strategy Action Plan (Appendix A) which also highlights links with the following SFRS plans:

- Balancing the Workforce Profile Action Plan
- Corporate Parenting Action Plan
- Positive Action Review Action Plan
- Workforce and Strategic Resourcing Plan

PROMOTING SFRS AS A FUTURE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

This strategy will set out how we will directly engage with young people to inform them of the wide ranging employment opportunities that SFRS has to offer. We will work closely with our internal and external partners to identify opportunities within communities to reach as diverse a spectrum of young people as possible.

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SFRS

We will research and develop a range of programmes and initiatives for young people affording opportunities for learning and personal development as well as encouraging them to explore the diverse career opportunities we have to offer. This will include short courses, structured work experience and apprenticeships in both uniformed and support roles

PROMOTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING & CORPORATE PARENTING

We will put in place processes to ensure that we effectively safeguard and promote the wellbeing of the young people that we engage with as an employer. In partnership with other corporate parents, we will strive to make positive contributions to the lives of care-experienced young people. This strategy will outline how we will directly engage with this vulnerable group and the steps we will take to attract them to a career with the SFRS.

DEVELOPING OUR WORKFORCE

We will provide appropriate training and support to enable our workforce to engage with young people effectively to promote the SFRS as an employer of choice and to support young people in our workplace. We will review our recruitment and selection processes to ensure these are fit for purpose and allow us to attract and engage with young people without barriers. We will examine opportunities to afford young people additional support in the work place through mechanisms such as a mentoring scheme.

RECORDING AND REPORTING

We will develop our recording and reporting systems to better assess the effectiveness of our activities, determine how things can be improved and identify areas for further development.

DELIVERY OF THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

Through the delivery of this strategy and the objectives contained within, we can detail how attraction and employment opportunities will be achieved through national and local action.

At a national level, the Human Resources and Organisational Development Directorate will develop policy, guidance and good practice to support and aid local implementation of initiatives. Directorate staff will also build working relationships with relevant national partners such as Skills Development Scotland to access knowledge, information and support to deliver the youth employment initiatives outlined in this strategy.

In other areas of the SFRS, Local Senior Officers are responsible for local service delivery, details of which are outlined in their respective Local Fire Plan. They have a duty to contribute to local community planning arrangements and support the priorities contained within Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) and Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs). All ambitions and activities relating to work focused on children and young people should therefore be reflected in these key documents and local partnership arrangements fostered to support delivery.

Working in close partnership with the Prevention and Protection Directorate who are instrumental in understanding local issues and providing a direct method of engagement with partners, the local delivery of the strategy's objectives will be supported by the use of operational firefighters, community firefighters, Local Area Liaison Officers (LALOs). This includes engagement with schools, colleges, universities and community based organisations, along with attendance at community events. Community Fire Stations provide the location for many of our activities, including the delivery of youth engagement courses, station visits and Open Days.

PROMOTING SFRS AS A FUTURE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

In support of the Scottish Government's Developing the Young Workforce Strategy we are committed to building a workforce that is reflective of the communities we serve. We are also committed to helping develop and support our young people,

Strong links with schools and community groups already exist where we play a crucial role providing general fire safety advice. We will look to build on these strong relationships and develop new ones to offer opportunities for young people to engage with the SFRS as an employer.

By using positive action marketing strategies such as "People Like You" we will look to attract young people from under-represented groups such as women, members of the BME community and members of the LGBT community helping us towards our goal.

Key Actions:

Establish current levels of attendance at local careers fairs in schools and colleges with a view to identifying where activity could be increased to reach a greater number of young people.

- Develop standard recruitment materials that can be distributed locally at Community Engagement events and venues such as schools, colleges, universities and job centres.
- Evaluate the benefits of participation in national careers events in collaboration with Skills Scotland and make recommendations for future attendance.
- Develop dedicated recruitment pages for young people on the SFRS website outlining opportunities and initiatives available to young people.
- Explore new and innovative ways to use social media to promote workplace opportunities to young people with particular emphasis on reaching under represented groups within this age range.

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SFRS

The SFRS seeks to add value to Scotland's youth work landscape by providing structured youth engagement courses and activities which are not normally available through mainstream education. Learning from successful programmes delivered by fire services across the country, we will develop a range of tools and supporting guidance that will allow LSO teams to deliver courses and activities that can be tailored to suit individual needs. These courses are intended to support young people to develop their skills for learning, life and future employment.

We will work with recognised bodies to identify relevant qualifications and awards that can be gained through attendance on our courses. This will mean children and young people can gain formal recognition for their work, which may assist them in gaining further workplace opportunities.

The SFRS are committed to supporting the Scottish Government's Developing the Young Workforce Strategy, the aim of which is to ensure positive destinations are available for young people leaving education. Modern Apprenticeships can provide an alternative recruitment method to fill vacancies which is specifically targeted at young people, a group currently under represented within many areas of the Service. Working in partnership with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Skills for Justice we will develop further apprenticeship roles for both uniformed and support staff roles.

In addition to the creation of apprenticeship roles we will work to introduce other opportunities e.g. work experience placements for young people both those still within education and those not.

Key Actions:

- Undertake a mapping exercise to better understand the nature and spread of current youth engagement activity across SFRS and identify areas for future development.
- In collaboration with our Skills for Justice Partners explore the feasibility of introducing an apprenticeship scheme for the role of operational firefighter with SFRS acting as an approved training provider.
- Develop a planned Modern Apprenticeship programme for Support Staff roles.
- Develop a procedure to facilitate meaningful short term work experience placements and ensure they are effectively managed, recorded and evaluated.
- Introduce opportunities for longer term work experience placements for young people of school age within SFRS through partnership with 'Career Ready'.
- Explore methods to recognise the wider achievement of young people participating on SFRS programmes through formal recognition and / or qualification awards.
- Work in partnership with Skills Development Scotland to introduce the Certificate of Work Readiness Scheme which offers unemployed young people the opportunity to gain an SQA recognised qualification and work experience.

PROMOTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING & CORPORATE PARENTING

The SFRS has a responsibility to ensure that the children and young people we come into contact with are safe from harm. In addition, the introduction of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places specific duties on the Service, along with other public sector partners; this includes supporting the work of the Named Person and fulfilling our role as Corporate Parents.

SFRS staff delivering youth engagement programmes spend a significant amount of time working with children and young people, building trust and meaningful relationships allowing us to offer positive role models and within the workplace there are further opportunities to offer young people support and opportunities for personal development in a safe and nurturing environment.

It has been identified that care-experienced young people are one of the most vulnerable groups in our communities. We will contribute to the fulfilment of Corporate Parenting Plan by offering targeted opportunities for care experienced young people within the workplace.

Key actions:

- Develop and plan national and local programmes around the needs of children and young people and where appropriate include them in the co-design and co-production.
- Explore the feasibility of establishing a formal role model/mentoring programme for young people in care and the care experienced.
- Consider introducing workplace events specifically for care experienced young people.
- Consider the feasibility of extending positive action in recruitment to care experienced young people.

DEVELOPING OUR WORKFORCE

Our people are our greatest asset and it is vitally important that they have the skills to efficiently and effectively carry out the tasks required of them. The quality of our youth engagement activities and employment initiatives must be underpinned by the support and training that we can provide our staff to successfully deliver these areas of work.

SFRS staff involved in youth engagement and attraction events are spread across the organisation, both geographically and across service delivery and our directorates. Youth engagement training will be reviewed to focus on developing competence through a combination of on-line learning, independent study, classroom based learning and reflective practice.

Additionally it is recognised that with the introduction of new youth employment initiatives further training and development may be required for staff.

A blended approach to learning and development will enable SFRS staff to record a portfolio of training and experience which will assist in their personal and career development.

As well as appropriate training we recognise that SFRS must fulfil its obligations in relation to Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) and Disclosure checks for staff working with young people.

Key Actions:

- Review training provided to those involved in youth engagement and attraction events to ensure that this is adequate for staff to effectively deliver youth engagement activities.
- Identify training requirements for staff in roles supporting young people in the workplace.
- Identify professional development opportunities for staff wishing to be involved in youth employment initiatives.
- Establish the requirement for Disclosure / PVG checks for new roles working with young people.
- Investigate the benefits and suitability of formal accreditation under the Investor in Young People scheme, or similar.

RECORDING & REPORTING

Both nationally and locally SFRS have a duty to report on our activity that positively impacts on the lives of young people across Scotland. We continuously review and improve our youth employment programmes to achieve best value as set out in our strategic aims. This includes reporting to Scottish Government, Community Planning Partnerships, and local Scrutiny Committees. Additional duties for reporting are also set out by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

As the SFRS HR Payroll system iTrent develops, the Service will improve its knowledge and understanding of Equalities monitoring information. We will use this information to guide us towards targeting under-represented groups enabling us to take positive action in youth attraction and employment events in the future. Furthermore we will monitor the impact of the above actions both individually and collectively to determine the impact they have on balancing the age spectrum of SFRS's workforce profile.

Key Actions:

- Identify current areas of reporting on youth engagement activity and age profile of the SFRS's workforce.
- Develop a process for recording and reporting on the youth employment activities introduced including number of young people engaged with.
- Evaluate all learning and development activities introduced under the scope of this Strategy to establish their effectiveness as meaningful opportunities for young people and in promoting SFRS as an employer of choice.



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