



**NORTH YORKSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

Workforce Strategy 2017/18 – 2020/21

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Contents

Introduction	3
Underpinning Principles	3 - 4
Inclusion	4
Professional Standards	4 - 5
Operational Competence (Operational Staff Only)	5
Acquisition of Skills	6
Maintenance of Competence	6
Individual Assessment	6
Leadership Development	6
General	6 - 7
Organisational Excellence	7
Professional Workforce	7 - 8
Sustainable Workforce	8
Workforce Planning	8
Resourcing and Recruitment	8
Recruitment and Selection	8 - 9
Retained Duty System (On-Call Firefighters)	9
On-Call Firefighter Recruitment	9
Development	10
On-Call Firefighter Retention	10
Flexible use of On-Call Staff	10
On-Call Firefighter Career Progression	11
Organisational Culture	11
Health and Safety	11
Staff Wellbeing	11 - 12

Introduction

This strategy sets out how North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRS) aims to train, develop and maintain the competence of staff at all levels across the organisation in way that supports the organisational Vision, which is “Working Together for Safer Communities”.

This strategy supports four strategic aims:

- **Strategic Aim One** – The provision of a resilient intervention service
- **Strategic Aim Two** – The provision of a resilient and effective protection (technical fire safety) service
- **Strategic Aim Three** – The provision of a resilient and effective prevention (community safety) service
- **Strategic Aim Four** – The provision of a legally compliant and sustainable organisation with the appropriate level of governance

To achieve these aims, the Service recognises the value of its staff and the need to invest in the provision of short, medium and long-term development plans. This strategy aims to provide a flexible framework that will provide a highly-skilled workforce capable of delivering a wide range of services. Since 2010, the Service has been required to adapt to reductions in public spending and changes to operational demand, an operating environment that is set to continue for the foreseeable future. As a result, this strategy describes how the Service will strive to deliver committed, well-trained and competent staff capable of meeting a diverse range of demands.

Underpinning Principles

To meet the strategic objectives, the Service will:

- Meet current and foreseeable future Service needs by recruiting the required number of people with the appropriate skills, personal attributes and attitude;
- Develop staff to maintain an effective balance between safety and the risk critical nature of emergency response within a culture of ‘risk awareness’ rather than ‘risk aversion’;
- Maintain a competent, motivated, flexible and well-led workforce that is representative of the communities it serves and which promotes equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that people are treated according to their needs;
- Enable the continuous improvement of the Service’s leadership skills and capacity at all levels of the organisation, recognising the importance of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service as a key community stakeholder and achieving a culture of continuous improvement in organisational, team and individual performance;
- Recognise the contribution of its employees by facilitating the development and deployment of individuals to reach their full potential in order to improve services;
- Achieve effective outcomes from its investment in staff development, including the efficient and effective targeting, deployment and management of human resources and expertise in driving up performance, delivering value-for-money services and meeting community expectations;

- Support and maintain its culture as an outward facing community focussed Service, continue to develop collaborative methods of working, effective partnerships and promote the Fire and Rescue Service as an employer and partner of choice.

Inclusion

The Service recognises the benefits of an inclusive workforce and the need to reflect the communities it serves. In addition, the development of an inclusive and diverse organisational culture is recognised as being a positive asset to both staff and the communities of York and North Yorkshire.

In support of an inclusive organisational culture, the Service will take positive action to ensure that the employment of specific groups meets the requirement to develop a diverse workforce at all levels, including senior managers. Positive action will include specific recruitment and transfer initiatives alongside access to leadership development.

In support of developing a diverse workforce and inclusive culture, the Service recognises the positive work of the National Joint Council (NJC) led Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) and will pro-actively support this group by providing representation. In addition, the Service is committed to the IFSG Memorandum of Understanding entitled 'Equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the Fire Service'. The following principles set out the Services commitment to workforce equality and diversity:

- In accordance with Service values (PROTECT), staff will be supported to perform their roles, free from inappropriate or unprofessional behaviour.
- Staff will be expected to take personal responsibility for supporting inclusion and diversity within the workplace.
- All staff will be free to report workplace concerns without fear of retaliation or reprisal.
- Employees will be treated and will treat each other with trust and respect.
- The level of diversity within the workforce will be monitored and improved where necessary by the recruitment and progression of people from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Best practice will be used to inform recruitment initiatives, management and leadership development to help promote a culture of inclusion and diversity that embraces difference.
- The Service will establish and develop an inclusivity governance group which will provide support in developing new policies and challenge existing procedures in relation to inclusivity.

The Service also gives a commitment to support relevant national and local diversity initiatives by sharing best practice and information.

Professional Standards

The Service has developed a range of professional standards, which are based on the foundations of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS, 2003). The foundation principles have been developed further following the implementation of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Fire Professional Framework.

The Fire Professional Framework outlines five strands which cover the development of an effective Fire and Rescue Service. The strands are:

- Operational Competence
- Outstanding Leadership
- Organisational Excellence
- Professional Workforce
- Sustainable Workforce

The areas of development set out in the Fire Professional Framework provide guidance on the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, developing an individual towards competence and the maintenance of skills and knowledge in the workplace. The Service is committed to developing its professional standards in line with the Fire Professional Framework and where appropriate, will develop external quality assured elements as part of learning and development. Leaders will be developed to a nationally recognised standard and the Fire Professional Framework provides a robust framework for individuals to document their competence in role and maintain continual professional development to a recognised standard.

Operational Competence (Operational Staff Only)

Dealing with emergencies is fundamental to the role of the Service. The maintenance of skills and competence are a priority for operational staff and are aligned to safe working practices in order to reduce risk to the Services staff and communities, given the highly risk critical environment our staff must operate in.

There are a nine core operational areas which are considered essential to assure operational competence and effectiveness:

- Driving
- Command and Control
- Breathing Apparatus
- Hazardous Materials
- Working at Height
- Water Rescue
- Fire Service Pumps
- Extrication and Rescue
- Casualty Care



Source: NFCC Fire Professional Framework (2017)

Acquisition of Skills

Acquisition of core skills will be measured through competence assessments set out in an individual's development folder. Once an individual takes up a new post they will receive a [Personal Development and Performance Review](#) (PDPR) which will identify the training needs required to fulfil the role. A development plan can then be agreed between the line manager and the post holder to ensure they can meet the skills, knowledge and competence requirements to succeed in the role.

Maintenance of Competence

The maintenance of operational competence is underpinned by the [Training and Development Strategy](#) which provides an [Operational Licence Policy](#) in support of risk critical skills. Following the achievement of competence, individuals will continue to record evidence of personal development using FireWatch, including the maintenance of their Operational Licence.

Individual Assessment

The [Incident Command Training and Assessment Procedure](#) sets out the requirements for all roles to maintain their operational licence in the context of incident command. This procedure also sets out the requirements for individuals acting up or in temporary appointments, as well as the requirements for maintaining competence in command situations. The Service provides a dedicated incident command training facility, which facilitates individual learning and reflection, including the ability to share experiences and learn from others. All incident command training is developed on the principles of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) and involves key partners where appropriate.

Leadership Development

General

The Service takes a structured approach to leadership development through alignment with its succession planning process and encourages leaders to enhance their skills, competencies and knowledge, using both formal and informal learning methods. This will be achieved by recruiting new staff with the appropriate skills, attitude and behaviours that are aligned to the Services' values and aims, alongside developing existing staff that are identified as having the relevant personal qualities and attributes. The Service recognises the need for the leadership structure to reflect the community it serves in order to make appropriate decisions about the service it delivers.

Effective leadership is not confined to operational staff and the Service will develop all managers to achieve the highest standards of leadership. Leaders are supported to participate in cross-sector mentoring schemes such as Yorkshire Accord and the Common Purpose Programme, which supports individual development with a view to improving organisational efficiency and capacity.

The development of effective leadership is fundamental to the future of the Service and individuals who are identified as suitable for progression will be supported to enhance their skills and personal competencies alongside 'traditional' management development programmes. The assessment of potential for individuals seeking promotion is facilitated using a three stage process for each level of leadership, supervisory, middle and strategic and is defined in the promotion policy.

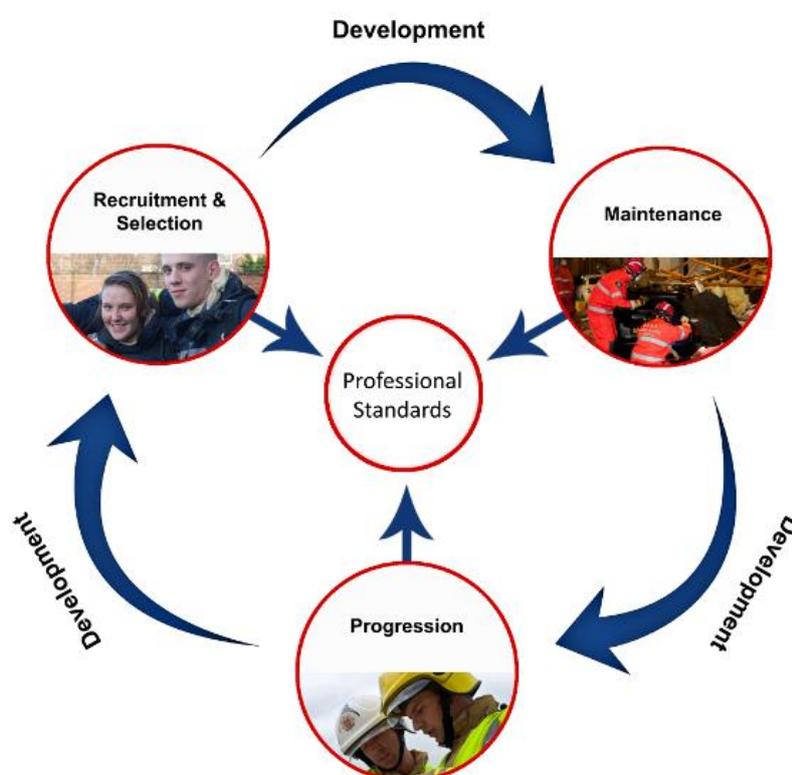
Support staff are developed on a bespoke basis which is dependent on their area of expertise and the needs of their role. Leadership development schemes are open to both operational (uniformed) and support (non-uniformed staff).

Organisational Excellence

Through the Workforce Strategy, the Service will take a systematic approach to enabling organisational excellence through the involvement of its people; one that aligns strategy, people and processes. Service development is an intervention that is led at principal officer level and focuses on developing organisational capability through alignment of strategy, structure, management processes, people, rewards and metrics.

Professional Workforce

The Professional Workforce strand of the Fire Professional Framework accords with the Services approach to the development of individuals to meet the requirements of their role; this is illustrated in the form of a development helix:



Source: NFCC Fire Professional Framework (2017)

The Fire Professional Framework identifies three key areas of an individual's learning requirements to operate effectively and efficiently in role:

- Non-management skills
- Role related skills
- Specialist skills

The Service is committed to investing in training and development and prides itself on being a 'learning organisation'. This strategy recognises the importance of developing the Services workforce and effective succession planning. Where possible, the Service will develop

individuals to obtain professional development and sector specific qualifications, such as those provided by the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE).

Targeted investment in training and development is carried out through the annual Training Needs Analysis (TNA), linking personal and workforce development plans to the Service's strategic objectives. The most appropriate use of finite resources will ensure that skills and competence are aligned to safe working practices in order to reduce risk to our staff and communities; given the highly risk critical environment our staff must operate in when responding to emergencies.

Sustainable Workforce

The Service recognises the importance of creating and maintaining a sustainable workforce that recruits and retains the right people, whilst addressing key and future occupational shortages as well as diversity and inclusion issues.

Workforce Planning

The purpose of workforce planning is to plan and implement the human resource requirements that underpin the Services' needs. From time to time functions may need to re-shape or re-invigorate their structure to accommodate changes in demand, or to provide for appropriate succession planning opportunities. Workforce planning is recognised as a dynamic process, involving frequent modifications of direction in response to predicted leavers, changing economic and Service conditions. Planning will normally be carried out on a periodic basis by the relevant Function Head in consultation with the appropriate Principal Officer.

Resourcing and Recruitment

The recruitment and selection process will be facilitated in order to meet the needs of the organisation and obtain the best possible person-to-job fit, which will contribute towards the Services' efficiency and effectiveness. As the Service develops and changes, new employees will need to demonstrate a continued willingness to learn, adapt to new arrangements and work effectively as part of a team.

The Services' Recruitment Policy will ensure that the process is:

- Fair and consistent
- Non-discriminatory
- In accordance with all statutory regulations and agreed best practice

To ensure that these policy aims are achieved, all appointing managers will receive training in effective recruitment and selection.

Recruitment and Selection

The Service will utilise the most effective and efficient means of attracting the best candidate for each job vacancy. Vacancies at all levels will be advertised in line with current policy and consideration will be given to using external recruitment agencies for specialist posts where there is a clear need.

For all roles within the Service, recruitment practices will provide equal opportunities for suitably qualified candidates, regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstances. The application process will be open to all candidates who meet the role requirements and the Service aims to attract job applicants from as wide a talent pool as possible in order to build a

diverse workforce. The Service recognises the importance of maintaining a workforce that reflects the communities that it serves and the need to deliver its services in an inclusive manner.

For operational firefighter roles, new entrants to the Service will be required to pass the National Point of Entry Selection Tests (POEST). The POESTs are recognised as an objectively justified means of testing a number of role-related operational requirements; however, the Service is committed to providing an inclusive recruitment process. Whilst the Service recognises the need to recruit candidates with the correct level of aptitude, positive action will be undertaken to assist with any potential barriers to recruitment, including gender or other diversity issues.

Retained Duty System (On-Call Firefighters)

On-Call Firefighters are a significant part of the organisations workforce and the Service is committed to supporting the recruitment, development and retention of its on-call staff. The Services' [Community Safety Plan](#) sets out the number of on-call stations within the Service area and how they support the prevention and response strategies.

On-Call Firefighter Recruitment

The recruitment of on-call Firefighters remains a high priority for the Service and this is supported by a number of resources, including:

- District Group and Station Managers
- District Watch Managers and Community Safety Officers
- Central recruitment team and training staff
- Local station staff
- Central recruitment support
- Use of social media
- Regional practitioners group sharing and developing best practice
- National NFCC steering group sharing and developing best practice

The Service closely monitors the staffing profile of each on-call station and workforce planning is carried out on the basis of predicted leavers and potential new entrants to the Service. This process is given a high priority and is overseen by the relevant Principal Officer in accordance with the needs of the Community Safety Plan.

Continuous review and improvements will be made to the recruitment process to ensure that it remains accessible for candidates at all stages.

Workforce diversity remains a priority for on-call recruitment and positive action will be carried out within each district area to improve the number of women, black and minority ethnic employees recruited to the Service. In terms of increasing the diversity of its on-call workforce, the Service recognises this as an area for continuous improvement and focus.

Development

On-Call Firefighters are provided with a clear development path at point of entry, with training and assessments aligned to National Occupational Standards. The Services' training programme is designed to accommodate the needs of on-call staff and course availability is managed in a flexible manner, including the provision of sufficient weekend courses. On-Call Firefighters are trained and developed in accordance with the NFCC Operational Competence Model.

District based training instructors provide additional support to on-call staff in order to maintain operational competence and this is provided in a flexible manner to suit individual requirements and organisational need.

Supervisory managers are provided with support to achieve an appropriate qualification and this is supported by a dedicated Learning and Development Advisor. The Service provides a dedicated command training facility which supports the training and development of Supervisory on-call managers.

On-Call Firefighter Retention

Retention of On-Call Firefighters is supported by a number of means, including:

- Periodic review of on-call employees terms and conditions of employment
- Impact assessments on new policies, procedures and organisational changes
- Employer engagement
- Analysis of information provided by leavers
- Feedback received from on-call staff
- Flexible contracts (75% and 100% and 75% prime hours cover)
- Support for flexible roster systems
- Maintaining a fair leave policy (work / life balance)
- Offering promotion and development opportunities to on-call staff
- Appointing for wholtime vacancies using on-call staff
- Access to leadership development

Flexible Use of On-Call Staff

The Service has implemented a number of arrangements that support the flexible use of on-call staff, including an Operational Staffing Reserve (OSR) and Retained Variable Hours Contracts (RVHC). These arrangements allow on-call staff to be deployed across the Service area when required. These arrangements provide a cost effective means of providing additional resilience and provides on-call staff with personal development and additional training opportunities.

On-Call Firefighter Career Progression

On-call staff will be encouraged and supported to take advantage of career progression opportunities. Where possible, the Service will seek to appoint on-call staff to roles within the

organisation to make best use of individual skills and attributes. This will be achieved by supporting individuals through established development and promotion processes.

Organisational Culture

Health and Safety

The Service has a positive health and safety culture, which is supported by engagement with representative bodies. In delivering an emergency response, it is recognised that staff will be placed in high risk situations and a particular emphasis is maintained on health and safety.

A current health and safety policy will be maintained, along with a suite of associated procedures. Safe systems of work are embedded at all levels and active monitoring takes place within workplaces and at operational incidents. Operational audit and de-brief processes are in place to identify lessons learned and any subsequent improvements.

Staff Wellbeing

The Service places a high importance on the health and wellbeing of all its employees. Emerging evidence shows that organisations with a high level of staff wellbeing also perform better. Happy, healthy employees are more likely to be present, motivated and productive and they are also more likely to be flexible and prepared to commit to change.

The Service will focus on the following initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of its staff:

- The provision of an Employee Assistance Programme (E.A.P) providing staff with access to 24/7 telephone counselling, face to face counselling and physiotherapy interventions.
- The provision of training for managers in recognising signs and symptoms of mental health, and providing access for support mechanisms for employees.
- Providing access to different duty systems to promote the balance between work and family, and allowing individuals to apply for flexible working.
- Promoting health and wellbeing across the Service by putting in place station based fitness champions, who are able to promote and support employees in engaging in physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices.
- The provision of functional fitness training equipment and annual fitness testing to ensure all operational staff have the required fitness standard to carry out their role competently.
- Periodic staff surveys with a focus on health and wellbeing issues

The Service maintains a proactive approach to sickness absence management. Managers are trained in dealing with sickness management, incorporating return to work interviews and absence review meetings. Individuals will be supported during ill health absences through the Occupational Health Unit.

Where sickness absence exceeds a set level then individuals will be managed closely to improve their attendance records, and the full suite of management options will be available. Individuals who are on long term absence from work (over 28 days) will be individually case managed in order to expedite their return to work.

The Service recognises that terminal illness requires a high level of support and understanding. Terminally ill workers will be provided with the security of work, peace of mind and the right to choose the best course of action for themselves and their families. The Service supports the TUC's Dying to Work Campaign and will not dismiss any person with a terminal diagnosis because of their condition.

The Service will continue to benchmark itself against other Fire and Rescue Services to ensure it is achieving a low level of sickness absence across all duty systems.