# COMMISSIONERS FOR FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

**Papers for the People Committee to be held on:**

## Friday 7 February 2025, 1000hrs

**In person at South Wales Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Forest View Business Park, Llantrisant, CF72 8LX**

**Or**

**Remotely via MS Teams: Link https://bit.ly/40smrDi**

**Please ensure you join the meeting 15 minutes prior to meeting time**

**Any issues please contact**
**01443 232000 and ask for Governance Support**

## A G E N D A

1.  Apologies for Absence

2.  Declarations of Interest
    Attendees are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare both orally and in writing any personal and/or prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (Exercise of Functions) (Wales) Directions 2024 and the Local Government Act 2000.

3.  Chairperson's Announcements

4.  To receive the minutes of;

    People Committee held on 28 November 2024                    3

5.  Update on Outstanding Actions                                 7

**REPORTS FOR DECISION**

**REPORTS FOR INFORMATION**

Signature of Monitoring Officer:

GGreathead

**COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

**MINUTES OF THE PEOPLE COMMITTEE**
**HELD ON THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 1000 HRS**
**IN MEETING ROOM 08 AND REMOTELY VIA TEAMS**

**COMISSIONERS PRESENT:**
Mr V Randeniya

**OFFICERS PRESENT:**
Assistant Chief Officer A Reed – Director of People Services, D Mika – Director of Strategic Change and Transformation, T/Assistant Chief Fire Officer B Thompson – Director of Technical Services, T/Assistant Chief Fire Officer C Hadfield – Director of Corporate Services, G Greathead – Interim Monitoring Officer, Head of People Services – L Shroll, Head of Corporate Services – W Thomas, People Services Manager – J Wells, People Services Manager -S Ford,

**1.    APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Chief Fire Officer F Monahan, T/Assistant Chief Fire Officer – D Loader, T/Treasurer and Head of Finance, Property and Procurement – L Mullan

**2.    DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3.    CHAIRPERSONS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Commissioner Vij Randeniya had no announcements.

**REPORTS FOR INFORMATION**

**4.    TO RECEIVE THE MINUITES OF; PEOPLE COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 JULY 2024**

The minutes were received as a true and accurate record of the Committee meeting.

**5.    UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

There were no outstanding actions.

**6.    ANNUAL REVIEW OF TRAINING, LEARING AND DEVELOPMENT 2023/2024**

The report presented by the T/Assistant Chief Fire Officer Brian Thompson provided an overview of the Training and Development departments performance during 2023/2024, which included highlights from each of the training lead areas that are delivered by Cardiff Gate Training and Development Centre (CGTDC).

The report also highlighted activity, development and advancements for the Service's Learning and Development team within 2023/2024.

Discussions were held around the Hydra 10KV Event. Vij Randeniya showed interest to this event.

**RESOLVED THAT**

6.1    The Commissioner noted the content of the report.

**7.    ANNUAL REVIEW FOR RECRUITMENT 2023/2024**

The report presented by People Services Manager Serena Ford provided an overview of the activity of the Services recruitment and function within 2023/2024. This included attraction, engagement and recruitment and selection activities.

The Commissioner Vij Randeniya suggested raising awareness at career events around other careers within the Fire and Rescue Service, other than a role of a Firefighter and marketing the Service in a way applicable to all.

The Assistant Chief Officer of People Services shared that the Service has faced significant challenge in recruiting for roles in Health and Safety and Finance so are looking at other ways to support in terms of remuneration. A paper will be shared at December's Board of Commissioners presenting options for discussion around this.

It was also shared by the Assistant Chief Officer of People Services that the Service have recently reviewed recruitment processes for whole time employees – the discussion was had at Senior Leadership level. Further discussions are needed under the new Chief Fire Officer.

From a People Services aspect, the department are aware that there is still a lot of change and advancements that are required in terms of the Service's recruitment, but assured the Commissioner that work is ongoing.

**RESOLVED THAT**

    7.1    The Commissioner noted the content of the report.

## 8. JOB EVALUATION AT SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Service undertook a job evaluation exercise between 2020 and 2022. Following this, the Service introduced a period of 12 months whereby no further job evaluations were to be undertaken unless there were no posts or where a department had undertaken a formal restructure.

The report presented by People Services Manager Jemma Wells updated the Commissioner on the outcomes of the original evaluation and forward plans for the scheme.

In terms of comparison externally, the Assistant Chief Officer of People Services advised that the Service are pay negotiated centrally for grey book and green book and follow the NJC pay scale approach. The Service are looking at how we compare and sit in the market with roles in both public and private sector organisations.

**RESOLVED THAT**

    8.1    The Commissioner noted the content of the report.

## 9. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Commissioner would like to see changes made within the People Committee Forward Work Programme for a more tangible approach with regards to the scheduling. He wanted to avoid long periods before items are brought back for discussion/update from a performance management point of view. He would like to see RAG ratings on each upcoming item.

The Commissioner would like to see comparative data in reports.

The Commissioner requested that 'any items to report back to Board of Commissioners' is added to the agenda following 'To consider any items of business that the Chairperson deems urgent' to ensure that information/requests are fed through to Board of Commissioners.

**10. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRPERSON DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OR 2)**

There were no items of urgent business to discuss.

| UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING ISSUES ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS |
|---|

## No Outstanding Actions

| Minute No | Item | Action | Leading Officer | Current Status: |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
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**THIS REPORT IS NOT EXEMPT AND IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN**

**SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**    AGENDA ITEM NO 6
                                          7 FEBRUARY 2025

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER ALISON REED

**GENDER PAY GAP (GPG) 2024**

**THIS REPORT IS FOR DECISION**

REPORT APPROVED BY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, FIN MONAHAN
PRESENTING OFFICER  PEOPLE SERVICES MANAGER JEMMA WELLS

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**SUMMARY**

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 (the public sector Regulations), all public authorities are required to publish Gender Pay Gap (GPG) information by reporting the percentage differences in pay between their male and female employees.

In Wales, public bodies, including fire and rescue services, must comply with the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

These regulations set broader equality duties, which include a focus on gender pay reporting as part of advancing equality and fostering good relations.

The deadline for publication is 31 March 2025.

The report also references specific aspects of the Morris report into the culture of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and how this is likely to impact the GPG in future years.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Commissioners approve the 2024 Gender pay Gap (GPG) Report at Appendix 1 to be published by 31 March 2025.

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**1    BACKGROUND**

1.1    The Equality Act 2010 (GPG Information) Regulations 2017 came into force from 6 April 2017, which requires relevant employers with 250 or more employees to publish specific gender pay gap data annually.

1.2 There are key differences between English and Welsh gender pay gap reporting which stem from legislative frameworks and additional expectations in Wales tied to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other devolved responsibilities (see appendix 5).

1.3 Public sector bodies in Wales, including fire and rescue services, are required to:

- Publish GPG data.
- Set specific equality objectives to address any identified pay gaps as part of their Strategic Equality Plan (SEP). Objective 5 of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Equality Plan identifies some of the ways in which we plan to tackle this and measure the success of changes made to address these gaps.
- Integrate gender pay reporting into broader equality duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).
- Welsh regulations explicitly link gender pay reporting to broader equality outcomes, requiring a proactive action plan.

1.4 The GPG report must be published within 12 months of the 'snapshot date' of 31 March, meaning that the deadline for publication for the 2024 report (see Appendix 1) is 31 March 2025.

1.5 The GPG information should be published, together with a written statement confirming its accuracy, on its own website and the Government website. While there is no legal requirement to do so, organisations are encouraged to publish a narrative to explain their GPG information.

## 2    ISSUE / PROPOSAL

2.1 The GPG (Gender Pay Gap) should not be confused with equal pay, which concerns pay differences between male and female employees performing the same or similar work.

The Service has recently conducted a review of its GPG reporting and noted the differences in reporting requirements between England and Wales (see appendix 5). Previous GPG reports were prepared using calculation guidance from a contracted third-party Employment Law service. It has been established that this guidance differs from Gov.UK guidance. The Service has therefore recalculated last years data to the Gov.UK guidance for accurate comparison and the Service will take steps to update the Gov.UK website for last year.

Public bodies in Wales are required to integrate GPG reporting into their overall equality strategies, ensuring it aligns with other equality priorities (e.g. socio-economic inequalities, disability pay gaps).

Welsh fire and rescue services often go further by detailing recruitment, retention, and cultural strategies to reduce pay disparities over time.

Evaluating within a cultural and operational context, Wales places a greater emphasis on participatory approaches and involving employees and stakeholders in addressing pay gaps.

Reports often include a narrative focusing on localised challenges, such as the specific recruitment and progression barriers faced by females in fire and rescue services.

While both England and Wales require GPG reporting, the Welsh approach is more holistic, embedding the reporting within broader equality, diversity, and well-being strategies.

Welsh public bodies, including fire and rescue services, are expected to take proactive steps to address identified gaps, making reporting more action-oriented and aligned with long-term societal goals.

In Wales, gender pay reporting aligns with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires public bodies to demonstrate how they are working towards seven well-being goals, including creating a more equal Wales.

https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/

This means Welsh public bodies are expected to demonstrate not just compliance but active measures to tackle inequalities in pay, representation, and opportunity.

2.2     Following review of the guidance for calculating GPG in Wales, for the purposes of year-on-year comparison of 2023-2024 data, the 2023 data has been recalculated according to the guidance to provide accurate comparison (see Appendix 2).

2.3     As referenced in the previous GPG annual report and the Morris Report of 2024, whilst the GPG figures identified in the report contained in Appendix 1 indicate an improvement compared to the previous year's figures, the Service remains wholly committed to improving the diversity of its workforce, and a whole system approach is required so that culture improves throughout.

Initiatives to diversify the workforce are anticipated to have a longer return on investment and thus marginal gains are more likely to be achieved year on year, particularly in reference to typical annual Wholetime recruitment.

2.4 Analysis of the 2024 GPG data tells us that:

- The Mean GPG is 7.89% (see Appendix 2)
- The Median GPG is 6.33% (see Appendix 2)
- There was a decrease in the mean GPG and a similar percentage in median GPG between 2023 and 2024 (see Appendix 2)
- Female employees in SWFRS earn less than both the mean and median male hourly pay and the mean and median Service-wide hourly pay. This illustrates the impact of the significantly higher proportion of male than female employees across the Service. (see Appendix 2)
- The Lower Quartile, which is made up of the lower hourly rates of pay is where the highest number of female employees are populated. This could be contributed to by personal and societal factors. (see Appendix 3)
- Female representation at each quartile shows an increase across the Upper, Lower Middle and Lower Quartiles, but a significant decrease at the Upper Middle quartile. This could be partially contributed to by the promotion of existing female employees. (see Appendix 3)
- In comparison to Family Group 4 Fire and Rescue Services, SWFRS is ranked 6th and 7th of 10 respectively, in terms of the mean and median GPG percentages. (see Appendix 4)
- In comparison to Family Group 4 Fire and Rescue Services, we have a lower percentage of female employees at all levels than over half of the Services in the group. (see Appendix 4)

2.5 Initiatives to improve these statistics include supporting recruitment campaigns through female fire-fit sessions, supporting and promoting initiatives such as the recent expedition to the Antarctic by the Antarctic Fire Angels, where one of the females was an employee of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

2.6 Recent decisions taken to support and achieve an improved gender balance in the organisation include:

- Opening up recruitment for all vacancies at all levels in the organisation to external candidates
- Moving to 52 weeks full maternity paid leave
- Commencing a review of our approach to internal placements by ensuring non-operational managerial roles are held by those with the best skills and experience for the role, whether uniformed or non-uniformed
- Current review of agile working, coupled with Service family-friendly procedures e.g. flexitime scheme, care of dependents procedure

- Menopause and Menstruation Procedure and Toolkit
- Provision of sanitary/welfare packs on all stations, appliances and vehicles

Current initiatives that are under consideration and consultation include:

- NFCC Direct Entry
https://nfcc.org.uk/national-fire-chiefs-council-launches-pioneering-direct-entry-scheme/

- Fast Track career progression
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pathways-and-barriers-to-leadership-in-fire-and-rescue-services/pathways-and-barriers-to-leadership-in-fire-and-rescue-services


As noted in 2.2 above, these initiatives will take time to generate anticipated outcomes. Through its positive action the Service has seen some success in increasing the number of employment contracts secured by females, with 17.33% of contracts in March 2024 being held by females, compared to 16.66% at March 2023.  This increase is focussed mainly in the Lower and Lower Middle quartiles (see appendix 4).

2.7   To further enhance our activities to diversify the workforce, a Step Forward project, 'Talent Management' will see the development of a Talent Programme, inclusive of an Apprenticeship, Graduate, Internship, Work Experience and Virtual Work Experience programme (pending approval); along with the proposal to develop an apprenticeship to bridge the gap between our graduating Fire Cadets and eligibility to join as a wholetime or on-call firefighter, further aiding our workforce diversity ambitions as the cadet programme does attract a nigher number of females.

2.8   The Service remains committed to continuing to reduce the overall gap; this is detailed as part of the SWFRS Strategic Equality Plan 2023-2026 Objective 5: Increase the diversity of our workforce at all levels across the Service.  Ongoing work to meet this objective and reduce the GPG is demonstrated through the following initiatives:

Our processes – recruitment, retaining and developing a diverse workforce:

- Mixed gender sifts and interview panels
- Blind sifting where all identifiable characteristics are removed
- Changing the perception of roles in the Service through our media campaigns
- Developing new learning pathways for all staff

- Unconscious Bias Training
- Creating a more inclusive workplace
- Flexible working options

2.9 Attached at Appendix 1 of this report is the GPG report for 31 March 2024.

## 3 IMPLICATIONS

### 3.1 Community and Environment

3.1.1 The GPG is based on the average pay of females and males and is directly impacted by the numbers of each group in different roles and at different levels in the organisation.

3.1.2 Reasons which may contribute to the gap include:

- Differing terms and conditions ie. Green Book/Grey Book and pay scales for groups of staff across the Service.
- A high proportion of female employees in often lower paid part-time roles.
- Pay or promotional choices that are made at various points of an individual's working life.

### 3.2 Regulatory, Strategy and Policy

3.2.1 An employer who has a headcount of 250 or more must comply with regulations on GPG reporting.

3.2.2 Failure to comply amounts to a breach of the Equality Act 2010 and would therefore open an organisation up to action by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The EHRC have a series of actions and penalties that they can impose on organisations depending on the type of business and nature of the breach.

3.2.3 Failure to address the Gender Pay Gap could damage the Service's reputation and adversely impact staff recruitment and retention.

### 3.3 Resources, Assets and Delivery

3.3.1 As outlined in Section 2 of this report, whilst the GPG figures signify an improvement compared to the previous year's figures, the Service remains committed to improving the diversity of its workforce. Failure to achieve this will risk the Service's ability to diversify, grow and improve service delivery.

**4      EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS**

4.1    The Service is required to publish its GPG by 31 March each year.

4.1.1  The GPG at Appendix 1 contains all relevant information and therefore meets the requirements for publication by 31 March 2025.

**5      RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1    That the Commissioners approve the 2024 GPG Report at Appendix 1 to be published by 31 March 2025.

| **Contact Officer:** | ACO Alison Reed |
|---|---|

| **Appendices** | |
|---|---|
| Appendix 1 | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service GPG Report 2024 |
| Appendix 2 | Analysis of GPG Data – Mean and Median Calculations |
| Appendix 3 | Analysis of GPG Data – Quartiles by Hourly Rate |
| Appendix 4 | Analysis of GPG Data – Comparisons of 2023 GPG data across Family Group 4 Fire and Rescue Services. |
| Appendix 5 | Reporting the Gender Pay Gap in Wales |

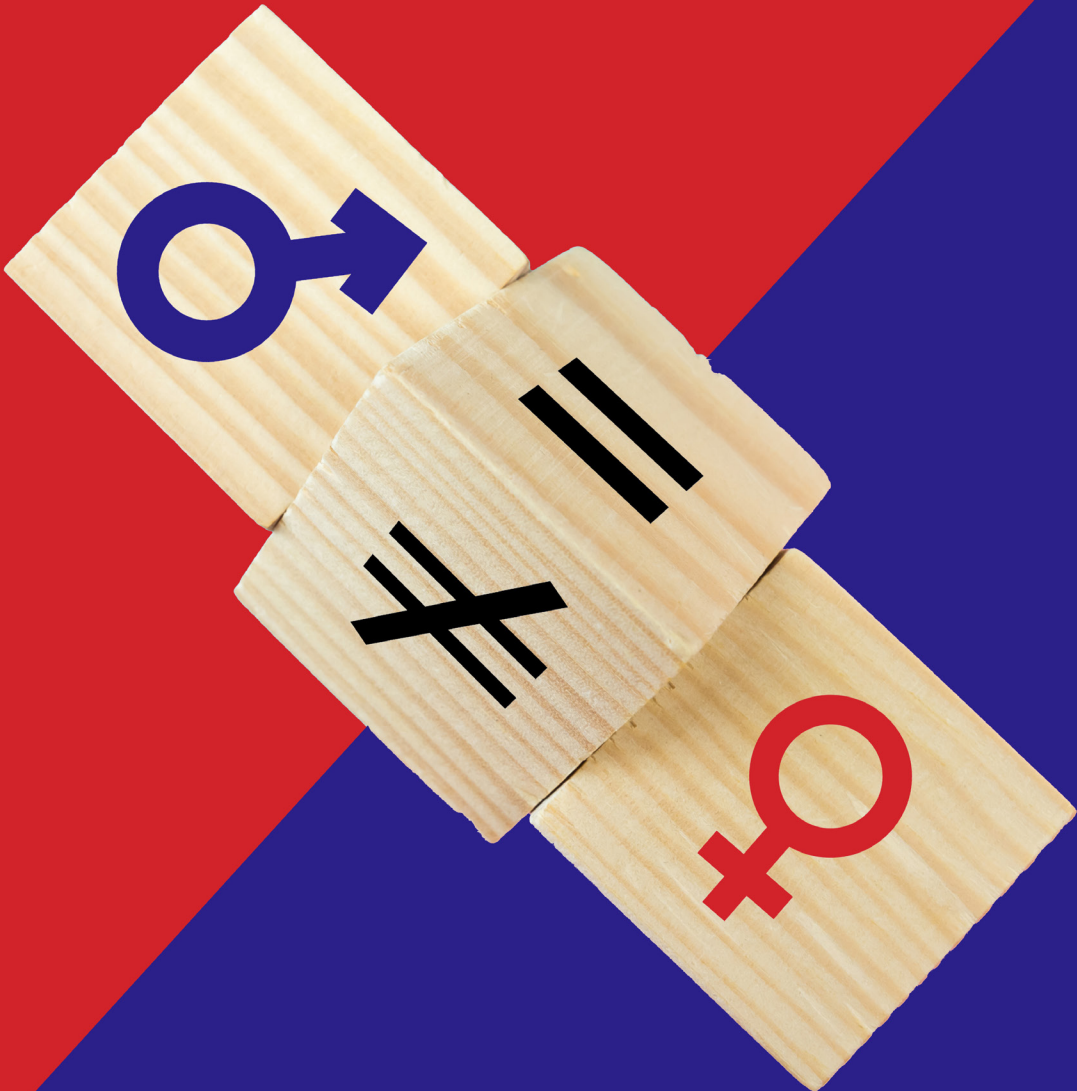**THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY BLANK**

**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub**
De Cymru

South Wales
**Fire and Rescue Service**

SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

# GENDER PAY GAP

REPORT - MARCH 2024

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 (the Public Sector Regulations), all public authorities are required to report annually on their Gender Pay Gap (GPG).

The Gender Pay gap is based on the difference between the average earnings of male and female employees.  All organisations that are required to submit and publish their GPG must do so against six different measures.

**1** Mean Gender Pay Gap – The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees.

**2** Median Gender Pay Gap – The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees.

**3** Median Bonus Gap – The difference between the median bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.

**4** Mean Bonus Gap – The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.

**5** Bonus Proportions – The proportions of male and female relevant employees who were paid bonus pay during the relevant period.

**6** Quartile Bands – The proportions of male and female full-pay relevant employees in the lower, lower-middle, upper-middle and upper quartile pay bands, by hourly pay rate.

The data for calculations for these measures is based on a snapshot of pay data from the 31st of March each year. These calculations are based on each employee's net earnings paid in March and take account of elements such as salary, allowances, honorariums, and salary sacrifice payments. South Wales Fire and Rescue Service does not award bonus payments and therefore does not report on bonus gap or proportions.

We are committed to equal opportunities and equal treatment for all employees, regardless of sex, race, religion or belief, age, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability. We have a clear policy of paying employees equally for the same or equivalent work, regardless of their sex (or anything else listed above). We:

• carry out regular pay and benefits audits;

• evaluate job roles and pay grades to ensure fairness.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is confident that male and female employees are paid equally for undertaking equivalent roles across the organisation, as staff are paid, irrelevant of gender, using nationally agreed pay scales.

Across the UK economy, men are more likely than women to be in senior roles (especially very senior roles at the top of organisations). Male employees are more likely to be in technical and IT-related roles, which are paid more highly than other roles at similar levels of seniority. Female employees are also more likely than men to have had breaks from work that have affected their career progression, for example to bring up children. They are also more likely to work part time, and many of the jobs that are available across the UK on a part-time basis are relatively low paid. Fire and Rescue Services also have differing terms and conditions (e.g. Green Book, Grey Book) and pay scales for groups of staff.

This pattern from the UK economy as a whole is reflected in the make-up of our organisation. Most line managers and senior managers are male.

## South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Gender Pay Gap Data

Contracts held by
**Male Employees**
**1,565** (1,526)

Contracts held by
**Female Employees**
**328** (304)

Through its positive action, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has seen some success in increasing the number of employment contracts secured by females, with **17.33%** of contracts in March 2024 being held by females, compared to **16.66%** at March 2023.

### The contracts above are broken down into:

**Male Wholetime Firefighters**
798

**Female Wholetime Firefighters**
49

**Male On-Call Firefighters**
501

**Female On-Call Firefighters**
33

**Male Control Employees**
6

**Female Control Employees**
28

**Male Auxiliary Firefighters**
84

**Female Auxiliary Firefighters**
12

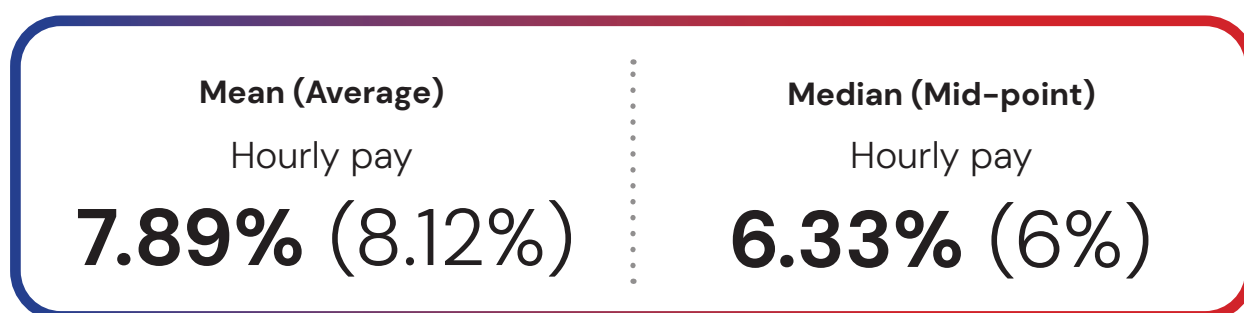**Male Corporate Employees**
176

**Female Corporate Employees**
206

This profile clearly demonstrates that there is a far higher proportion of roles filled by male employees at SWFRS than female, with roles filled by male employees currently making up **83%** of the workforce. It is therefore inevitable that gender disparities are exacerbated, and this disparity will continue until there is an increase in women employed in operational and senior–level roles. There is no quick solution to this, but we are committed to eliminating all barriers to the attraction and progression of female employees to achieve a more diverse workforce.

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## Mean and Median Data

### Difference between male and female employees

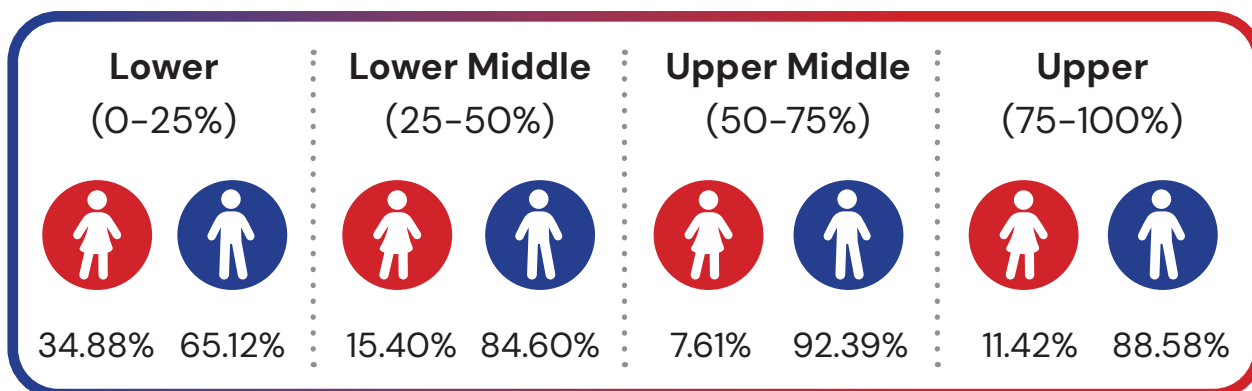| Mean (Average) Hourly pay | Median (Mid–point) Hourly pay |
|:---:|:---:|
| **7.89%** (8.12%) | **6.33%** (6%) |

**Note:** The figures in brackets are the 2023 figures for comparison purposes.

The table above shows our overall mean (average) and median (mid–point) gender pay gap based on hourly pay as at the 31 March 2024. This indicates a positive reduction in the gap between male and female employees.

Also worthy of note is that Grey Book staff, who are predominantly male, did not receive the 2022/23 pay award until April 2023, however Green Book staff, who are predominantly female, received their pay award for 2022/23, in November 2022.

The delay in the Grey Book pay award relating to 2022/23, would have had some impact on the hourly rate differential being captured within this analysis.  The March 2024 figures include the 2 pay awards for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

## Pay Quartiles (based on hourly pay)

| Lower (0–25%) | | Lower Middle (25–50%) | | Upper Middle (50–75%) | | Upper (75–100%) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 34.88% | 65.12% | 15.40% | 84.60% | 7.61% | 92.39% | 11.42% | 88.58% |

The above information illustrates the gender distribution at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, as of 31st March 2024, by Pay Quartile.

| | Hourly Pay Range | 👩 | | 👨 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Upper Quartile** | £79.95 – £18.68 | 54 | 11.42% | 419 | 88.58% |
| **Upper Middle Quartile** | £18.68 – £16.70 | 36 | 7.61% | 437 | 92.39% |
| **Lower Middle Quartile** | £16.70 – £15.82 | 73 | 15.40% | 401 | 84.60% |
| **Lower Quartile** | £15.82 – £7.72 | 165 | 34.88% | 308 | 65.12% |

Since there are many contributing factors to a gender pay gap, there is not one simple solution.

As part of our Recruitment and Attraction Strategy, South Wales Fire & Rescue Service actively encourages applications from women, from all backgrounds, across all roles and is also working actively with focus groups to better understand how we break down any perceived barriers to females undertaking uniformed roles in the Service.

## Closing the Gender Pay Gap

We are committed to continuing to reduce the overall gap and this is demonstrated through the following initiatives to increase the recruitment, retention and development of a diverse workforce:

• Mixed gender sifts and interview panels

• Blind sifting where all identifiable characteristics are removed

• Opening up recruitment for all vacancies to external candidates

• Improving our maternity benefit offering

• Changing the perception of roles in the Service through our media campaigns

• Developing new learning pathways for all staff

• Unconscious Bias Training

• Creating a more inclusive workplace

• Family–friendly Service procedures e.g. flexitime scheme and care of dependants leave.

• Commencing a review of our approach to internal placements by ensuring that non–operational managerial roles are held by those with the best skills and experience for the role, whether uniformed or non–uniformed

• Introduction of a Menopause and Menstruation Procedure and Toolkit.

• Provision of sanitary/welfare packs on all stations, appliances and vehicles.

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**Appendix 2: Analysis of Gender Pay Gap Data – Mean and Median Calculations**
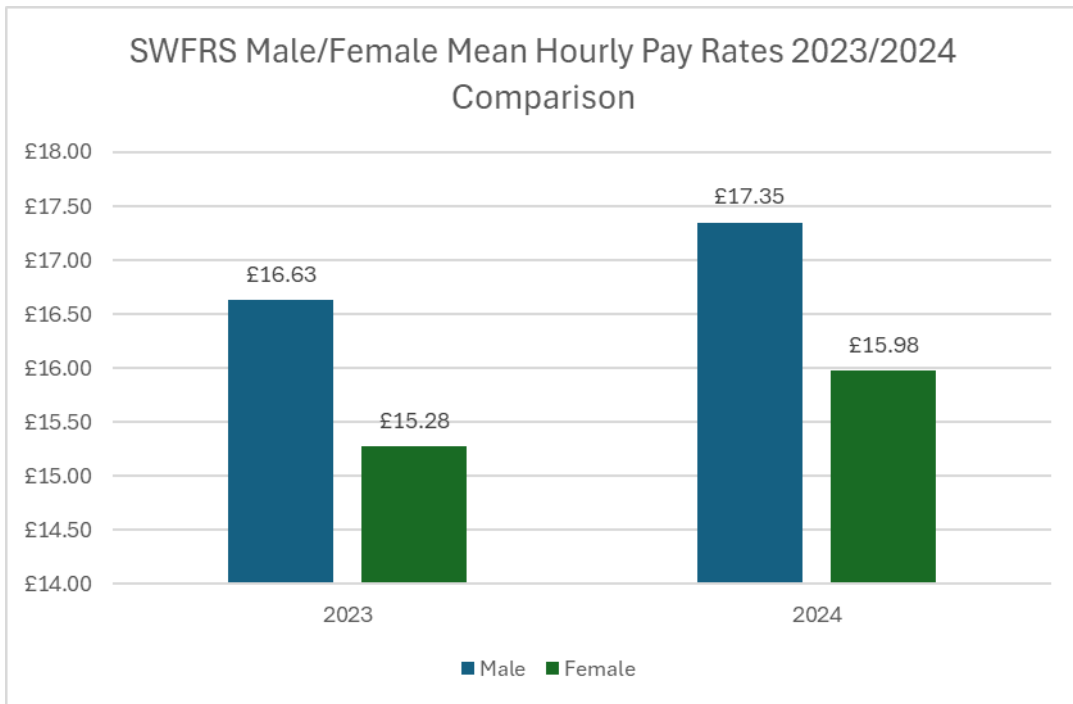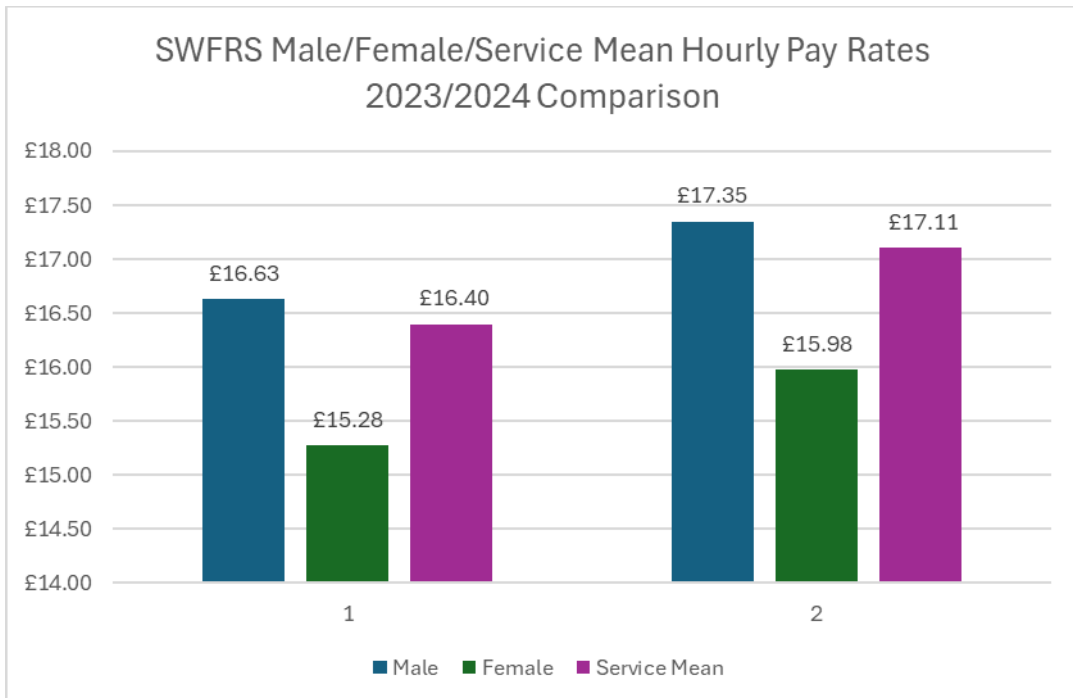
*2023 figures adjusted from published figures for accurate comparison.*

**Mean (Average) Pay**
- The Mean (Average) gender pay gap has decreased, from 8.12% in March 2023 to 7.89% in March 2024. (see Table 1 and Graph 1)
- Mean (Average) pay for female employees increased by 4.58% from £15.28 in March 2023 to £15.98 in March 2024. This compared to a 4.33% increase for male employees (£16.63 in 2023 to £17.35 in 2024).
- Based on the average hourly rates, for every £1 a male employee in SWFRS earns, a female employee earns 92p.
- The mean hourly rate as at March 2024 for the whole Service is £17.11; therefore the mean rate for female employees is below the mean for the Service, and the mean rate for male employees is above it. (see Graph 2)

**Table 1**

| 2024 Mean (Average) Hourly Rate | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Female** | **Male** | **Gender Pay Gap (£)** | **Gender Pay Gap (%)** |
| £15.98 | £17.35 | £1.37 | 7.89% |
| +£0.60 | +£0.72 | | |
| **2023** | | | |
| £15.28 | £16.63 | £1.35 | 8.12% |

**Graph 1**

### SWFRS Male/Female Mean Hourly Pay Rates 2023/2024 Comparison

| | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|
| Male | £16.63 | £17.35 |
| Female | £15.28 | £15.98 |

Legend: ■ Male  ■ Female

**Graph 2**

### SWFRS Male/Female/Service Mean Hourly Pay Rates 2023/2024 Comparison

| | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Male | £16.63 | £17.35 |
| Female | £15.28 | £15.98 |
| Service Mean | £16.40 | £17.11 |

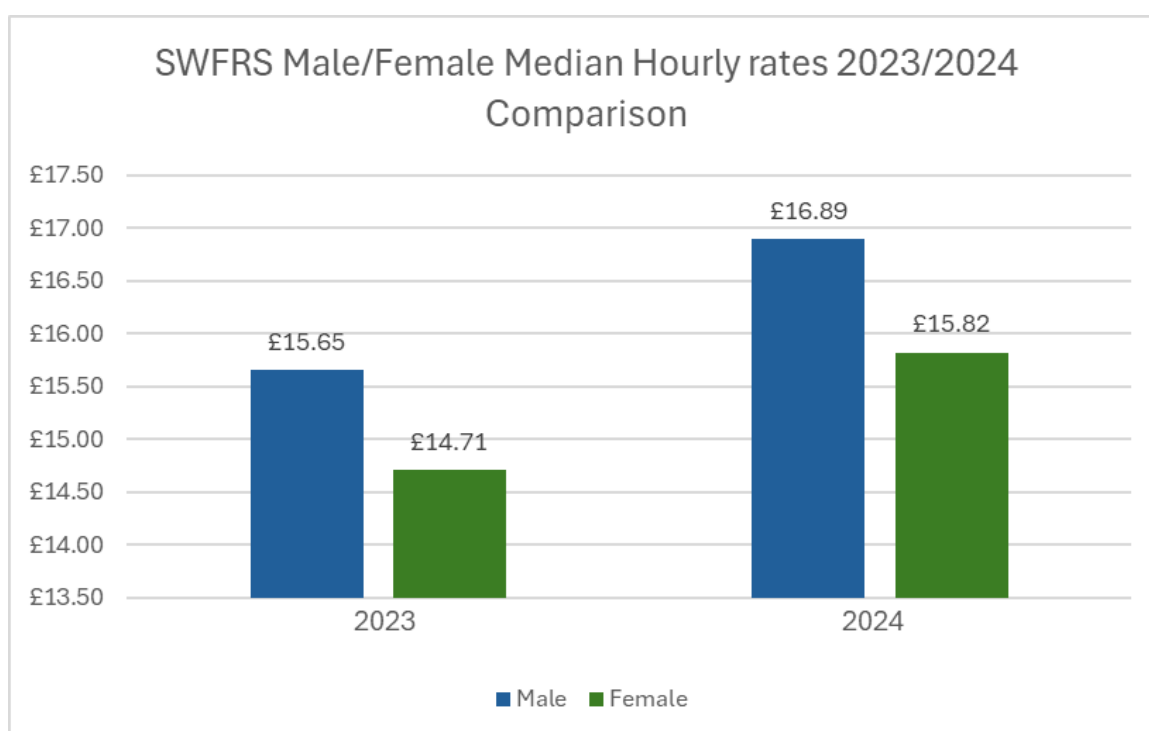Legend: ■ Male  ■ Female  ■ Service Mean

**Median Pay**

- The Median gender pay gap has slightly increased from 6% in March 2023 to 6.33% in March 2024. This is an indication that female employees in SWFRS earn, fractionally less per hour than male colleagues. (see Table 2)
- Median (Middle) rate of pay for female employees increased by 7.55% (£1.11/hr) from £14.71 in March 2023 to £15.82 in March 2024. This compared to a slightly larger increase of 7.92% (£1.24) for male employees from £15.65 in March 2023 to £16.89 in March 2024. (see Table 2 and Graph 3)
- The median hourly rate as at March 2024 for the whole Service is £16.70; therefore the mean rate for female employees is below the median for the Service, and the mean rate for male employees is above it. (see Graph 4)

**Table 2**

| 2024 Median Hourly Rate | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Female** | **Male** | **Gender Pay Gap (£)** | **Gender Pay Gap (%)** |
| £15.82 | £16.89 | £1.07 | 6.33% |
| +£1.11 (7.55%) | +£1.24 (7.92%) | | |
| **2023** | | | |
| £14.71 | £15.65 | £0. 94 | 6% |

**Graph 3**



SWFRS Male/Female Median Hourly rates 2023/2024 Comparison

**Graph 4**

SWFRS Male/Female/Service Median Hourly Pay rates
2023-2024 Comparison

2023:
- Male: £15.65
- Female: £14.71
- Service Median: £15.19

2024:
- Male: £16.89
- Female: £15.82
- Service Median: £16.70

Legend: ■ Male ■ Female ■ Service Median
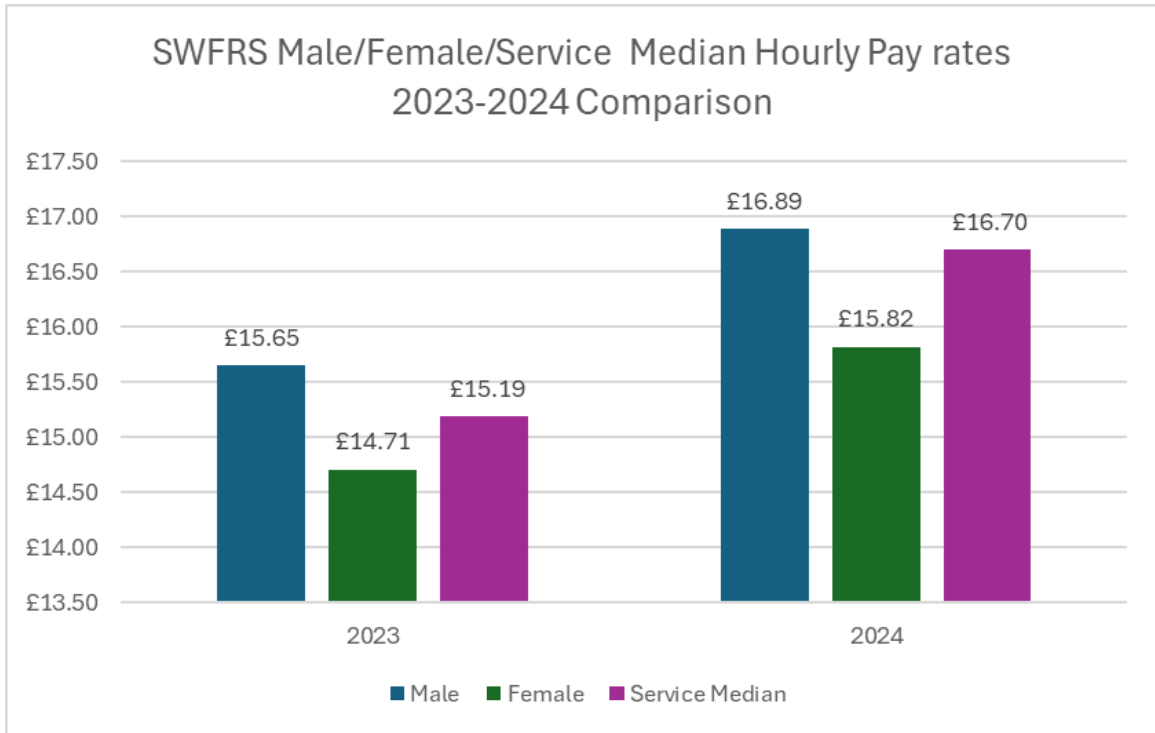
**Appendix 3: Analysis of Gender Pay Gap Data – Quartiles by Hourly Rate**

**Graph 5**



2023/2024 Quartiles Comparison by % Female Employees
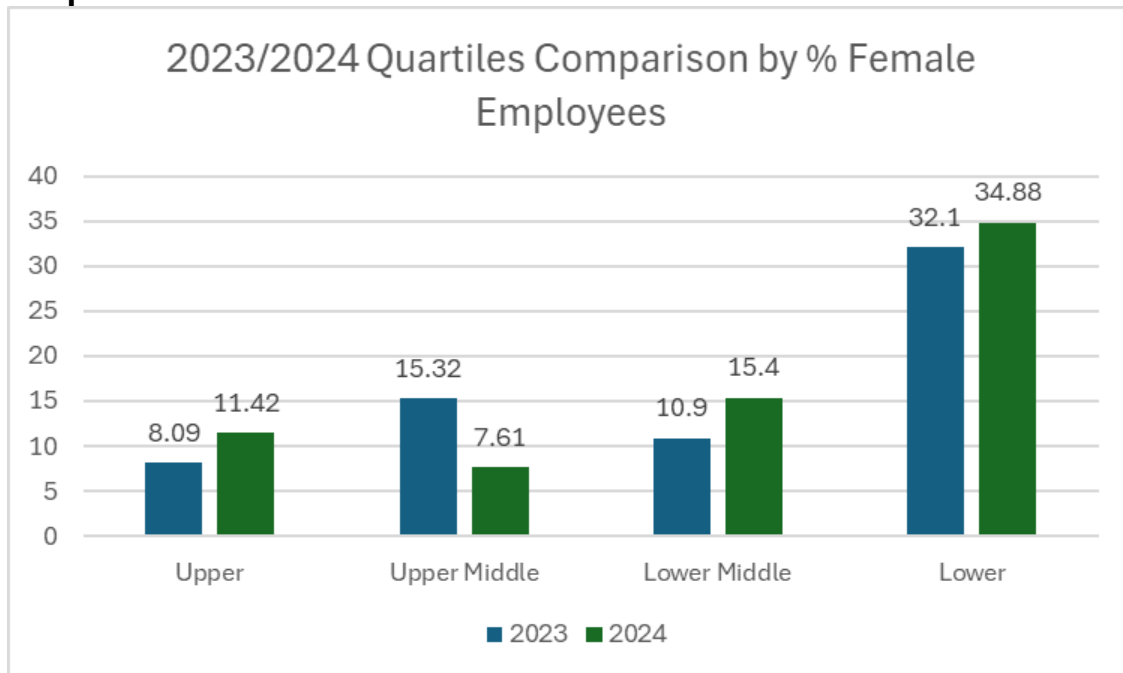
- The percentage of female employees within the Upper Pay Quartile increased between March 2023 and March 2024 from 8.09% to 11.42%. The number of female employees in this quartile increased from 39 to 54, male employees decreased from 420 to 419. %.  This quartile roughly represents roles from Competent Crew Manager to Chief Fire Officer and Grades 10 to 18 on the Corporate Salary Scale.
- The percentage of female employees within the Upper Middle Pay Quartile fell from 15.32% in March 2023 to 7.61% in March 2024.  The number of females decreased significantly, from 70 to 36.  Positions occupied by men in this quartile rose from 387 to 437.  The Upper Middle Quartile roughly represents Development Firefighter to Competent Crew Manager and Grades 9-10 on the Corporate Salary Scale.
- The percentage of female employees within the Lower Middle Pay Quartile increased from 10.9% in March 2023 to 15.40% in March 2024. This represents an increase in number from 50 to 73, while the number of male counterparts in this quartile decreased from 407 to 401. This quartile roughly represents roles from Development Firefighter to Competent Firefighter, and Grades 8-9 Corporate Salary Scale and could be reflective of increases is recruitment of female Firefighters.
- The percentage of female employees within the Lower Pay Quartile increased from 32.1% in March 2023 to 34.88% in March 2024.  The number of females in this quartile rose from 147 to 166, while the number of males dropped from 312 to 308. This rise could also reflect a rise in recruitment of female Firefighters as well as an increased need for

administrative assistance across the Service.  The Lower Quartile roughly represents Trainee Firefighter to Development Firefighter and Grades 4 to 8 on the Corporate Salary Scale. (see Graph 5 above)

**Chart 1**



SWFRS Quartile % of Female Employees  2017 - 2024
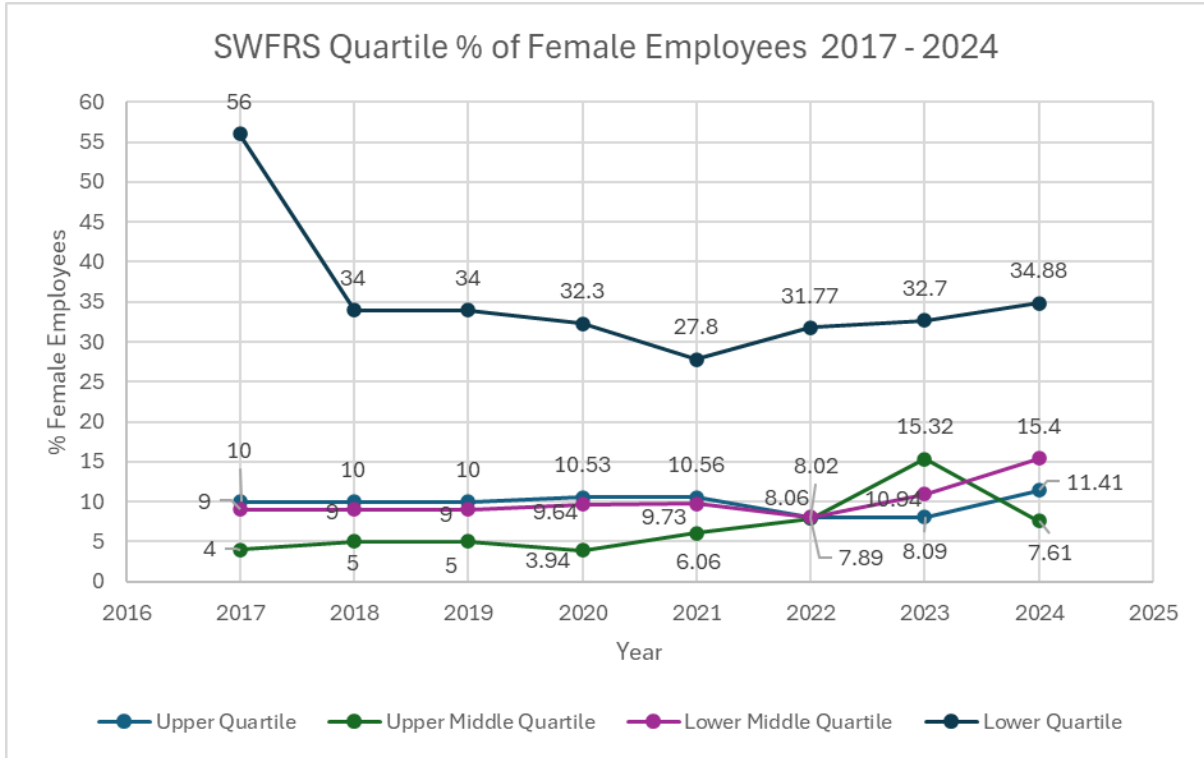
- The overall trend 2017 to 2024, describes a rise in the percentage of female employees at SWFRS represented in each quartile.
- The largest overall increase appears in the Lower Middle Quartile, which increased from 9% in 2017 to 15.3% by 2024.
- The smallest overall increase appears in the Upper Quartile, from 10% to 11.72.
- The Lower Middle Quartile roughly represents Trainee Firefighter to Development Firefighter and Grades 4 to 8 on the Corporate Salary Scale. (see Chart 1, above)
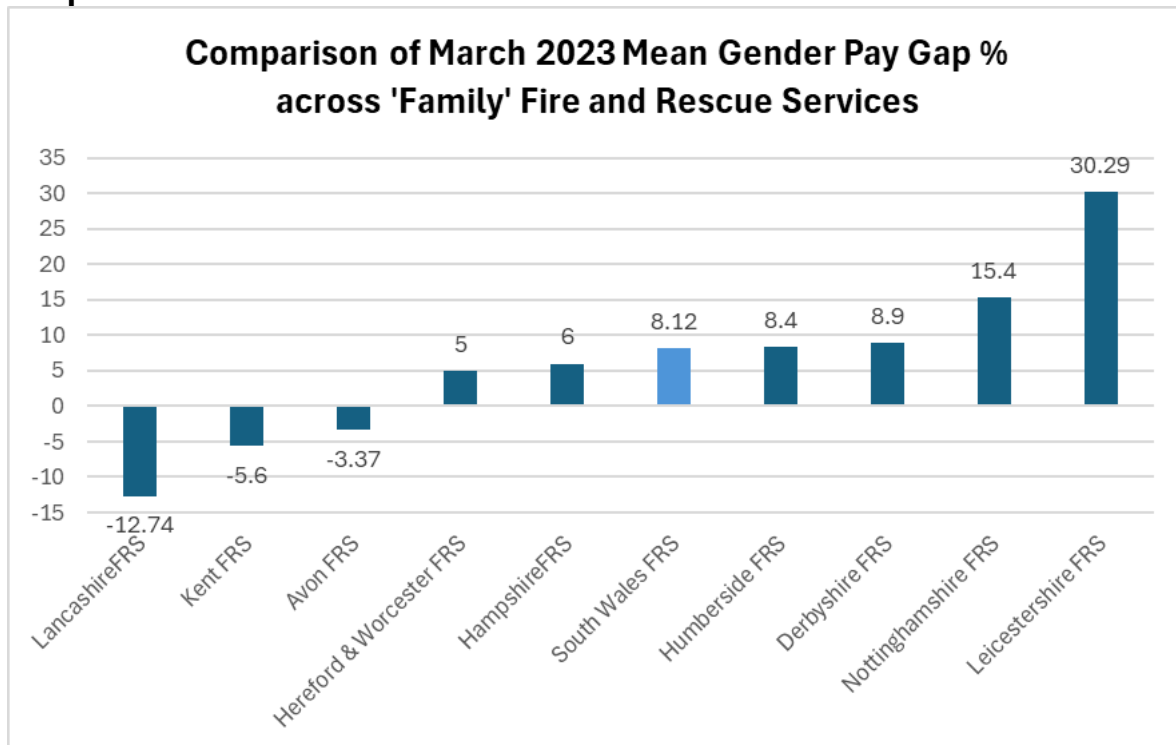
**Appendix 4: Analysis of Gender Pay Gap Data – Comparisons of 2023 GPG data across Family Group 4 Fire and Rescue Services.**

**Graph 6**

**Comparison of March 2023 Mean Gender Pay Gap % across 'Family' Fire and Rescue Services**

| Service | Value |
|---|---|
| Lancashire FRS | -12.74 |
| Kent FRS | -5.6 |
| Avon FRS | -3.37 |
| Hereford & Worcester FRS | 5 |
| Hampshire FRS | 6 |
| South Wales FRS | 8.12 |
| Humberside FRS | 8.4 |
| Derbyshire FRS | 8.9 |
| Nottinghamshire FRS | 15.4 |
| Leicestershire FRS | 30.29 |

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service appears in the middle of the mean gender pay gap percentage range(ranked 6th of 10 Services), compared to associated Fire and Rescue Services across England and Wales (see Graph 6 above).

**Graph 7**



**Comparison of March 2023 Median Gender Pay Gap % across 'Family' Fire and Rescue Services**
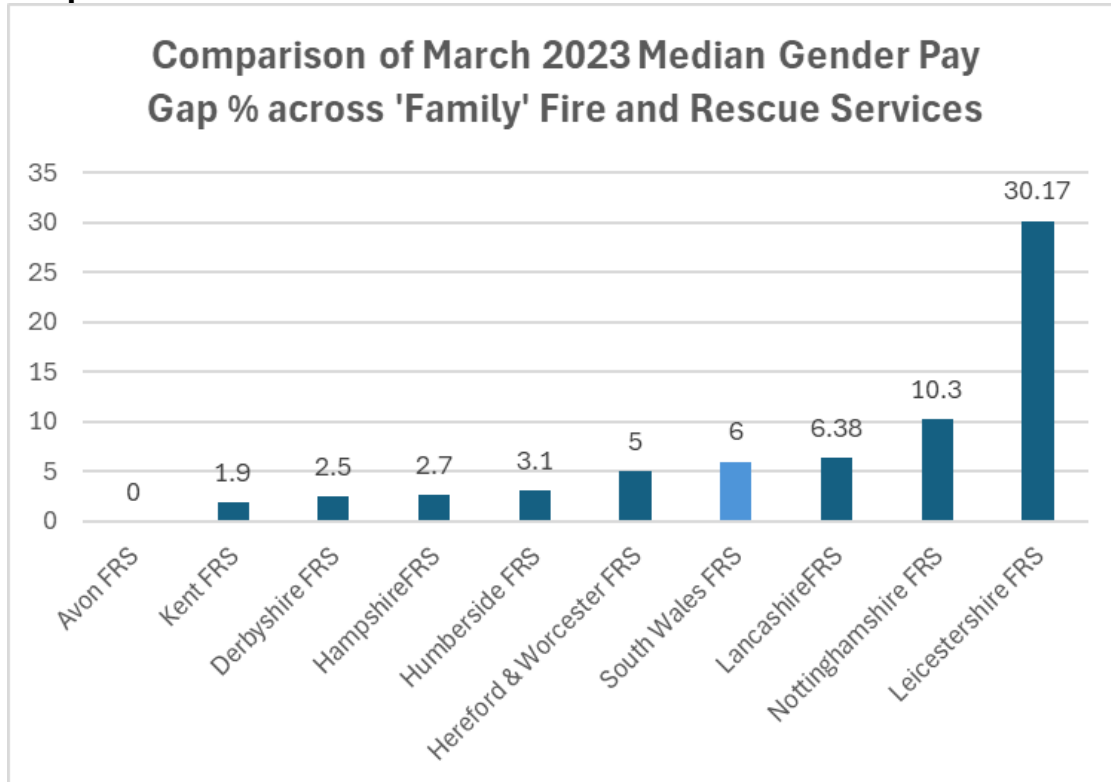
South Wales Fire and Rescue Service appears in the upper half of the median gender pay gap percentage range (ranked 7th of 10), compared to associated Fire and Rescue Services across England and Wales.  (see Graph 7 above)
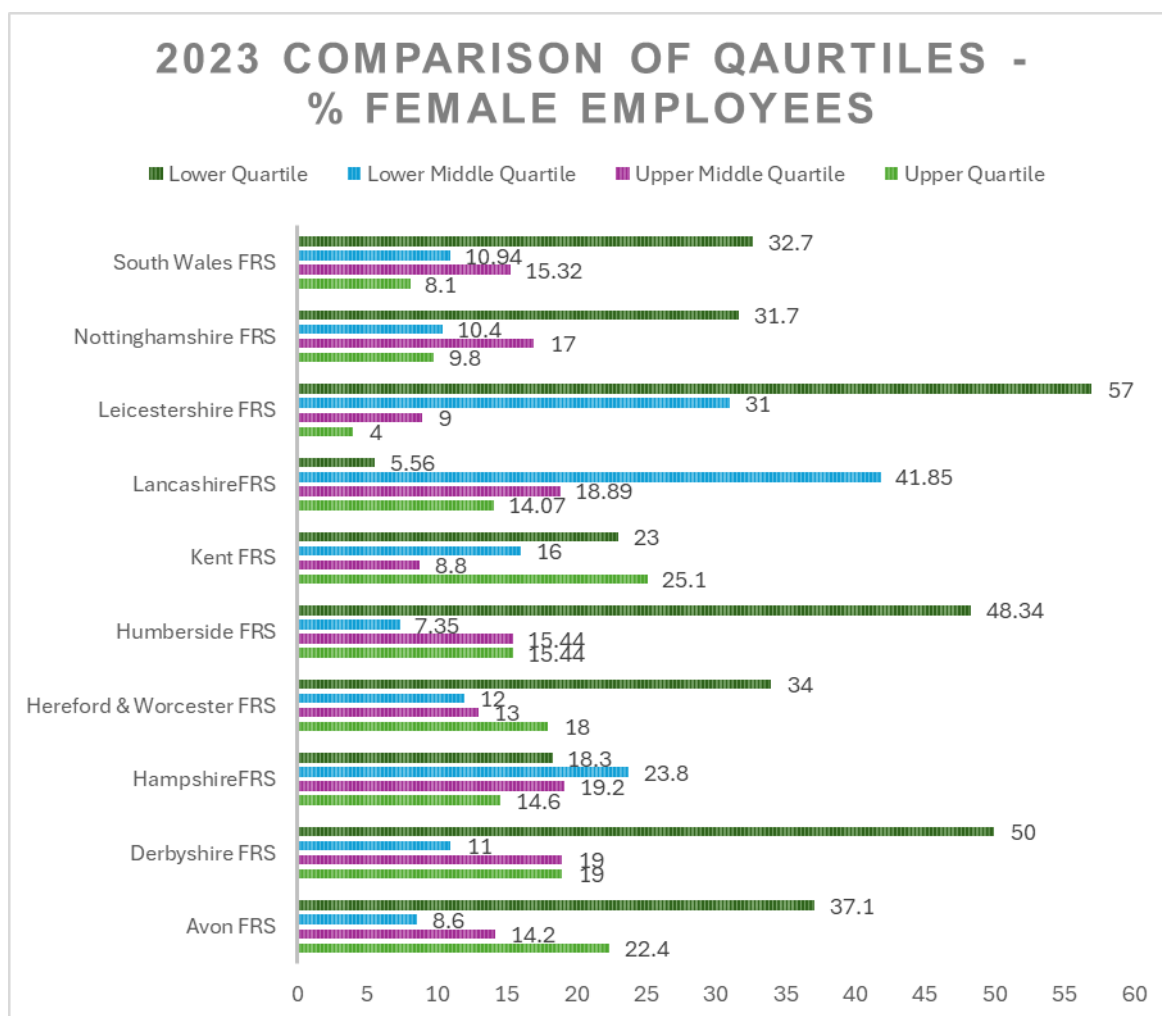
**Chart 2**



**2023 COMPARISON OF QAURTILES - % FEMALE EMPLOYEES**

■ Lower Quartile ■ Lower Middle Quartile ■ Upper Middle Quartile ■ Upper Quartile

South Wales FRS: 32.7, 10.94, 15.32, 8.1
Nottinghamshire FRS: 31.7, 10.4, 17, 9.8
Leicestershire FRS: 57, 31, 9, 4
LancashireFRS: 5.56, 41.85, 18.89, 14.07
Kent FRS: 23, 16, 8.8, 25.1
Humberside FRS: 48.34, 7.35, 15.44, 15.44
Hereford & Worcester FRS: 34, 12, 13, 18
HampshireFRS: 18.3, 23.8, 19.2, 14.6
Derbyshire FRS: 50, 11, 19, 19
Avon FRS: 37.1, 8.6, 14.2, 22.4

**Table 3**

| Comparison of Quartiles by % female employees across Family Group Fire and Rescue Services | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fire and Rescue Service Area** | **Upper Quartile** | **Upper Middle Quartile** | **Lower Middle Quartile** | **Lower Quartile** |
| **South Wales FRS** | **8.1** | **15.32** | **10.94** | **32.7** |
| Avon FRS | 22.4 | 14.2 | 8.6 | 37.1 |
| Derbyshire FRS | 19 | 19 | 11 | 50 |
| Hampshire FRS | 14.6 | 19.2 | 23.8 | 18.3 |
| Hereford & Worcester FRS | 18 | 13 | 12 | 34 |
| Humberside FRS | 15.44 | 15.44 | 7.35 | 48.34 |

| | | | | |
|---|---:|---:|---:|---:|
| Kent FRS | 25.1 | 8.8 | 16 | 23 |
| Lancashire FRS | 14.07 | 18.89 | 41.85 | 5.56 |
| Leicestershire FRS | 4 | 9 | 31 | 57 |
| Nottinghamshire FRS | 9.8 | 17 | 10.4 | 31.7 |

- As a percentage, SWFRS female representation in the Upper Quartile ranks 9th of 10 Fire and Rescue Services.
- Of the Upper Middle Quartile, SWFRS female representation ranks 6th of 10 with 15.32% in a range between 8.8% and 19.2%.
- Of the Lower Middle Quartile, SWFRS female representation ranks 7th of 10 with 10.94% in a range between 7.35% and 41.85%.
- SWFRS percentage of female in the Lower Quartile is 32.7%, which ranks 6th of 10 Services, within a range of 5.56% to 57%.(see Table 3 above)

These percentages tell us that SWFRS has a lower % of female employees represented at all levels than more than half the Services in its Group. (This can of course be influenced by the total number of employees in each Service and the number of roles available at each level of the organisation.)

**Appendix 5: Reporting the Gender Pay Gap in Wales**

The key differences between English and Welsh gender pay gap reporting stem from legislative frameworks and additional expectations in Wales tied to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other devolved responsibilities.
Here is an overview:

**1. Legislative Framework**

| England: | Wales: |
|---|---|
| Gender pay gap reporting in England is governed by the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017, which requires employers with 250 or more employees to publish specific gender pay gap data annually. | In Wales, public bodies, including fire and rescue services, must comply with the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. These regulations set broader equality duties, which include a focus on gender pay reporting as part of advancing equality and fostering good relations. |

**2. Scope and Requirements**

| England: | Wales: |
|---|---|
| Employers with 250+ employees must report: Mean and median gender pay gaps. Proportion of men and women in each pay quartile. Mean and median bonus gaps (if applicable). Proportion of men and women receiving bonuses. There is no requirement for employers to provide an action plan for addressing the gap, though it is encouraged. | Public sector bodies in Wales, including fire and rescue services, are required to: Publish gender pay gap data. Set specific equality objectives to address any identified pay gaps as part of their Strategic Equality Plan (SEP). Integrate gender pay reporting into broader equality duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Welsh regulations explicitly link gender pay reporting to broader equality outcomes, requiring a proactive action plan. |

**3. Focus on Broader Equality and Well-being**

| England: | Wales: |
|---|---|
| Gender pay gap reporting is treated primarily as a compliance activity with no specific tie to broader well-being legislation. | In Wales, gender pay reporting aligns with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires public bodies to demonstrate how they are working towards seven well-being goals, including creating a more equal Wales. This means Welsh public bodies are expected to demonstrate not just compliance but active measures to tackle inequalities in pay, representation, and opportunity. |

## 4. Public Sector Obligations

| England: | Wales: |
|---|---|
| Public sector employers in England follow the same regulations as private sector employers but must also comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). | Public bodies in Wales are required to integrate gender pay gap reporting into their overall equality strategies, ensuring it aligns with other equality priorities (e.g., socio-economic inequalities, disability pay gaps). Welsh fire and rescue services often go further by detailing recruitment, retention, and cultural strategies to reduce pay disparities over time. |

## 5. Cultural and Operational Context

| England: | Wales: |
|---|---|
| English reports are more focused on reporting the raw numbers and tend to be less integrated into broader strategic equality initiatives unless the organisation voluntarily includes these elements. | Wales places a greater emphasis on participatory approaches and involving employees and stakeholders in addressing pay gaps. Reports often include a narrative focusing on localised challenges, such as the specific recruitment and progression barriers faced by women in fire and rescue services. |

**Conclusion**

While both England and Wales require gender pay gap reporting, the Welsh approach is more holistic, embedding the reporting within broader equality, diversity, and well-being strategies.

Welsh public bodies, including fire and rescue services, are expected to take proactive steps to address identified gaps, making reporting more action-oriented and aligned with long-term societal goals.

**THIS REPORT IS NOT EXEMPT AND IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN**

**SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**     AGENDA ITEM NO 7
                                               7 FEBRUARY 2025

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

**REPORT ON SICKNESS ABSENCE AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW**

**THIS REPORT IS FOR DECISION**

REPORT APPROVED BY DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES, ALISON REED
PRESENTING OFFICER - PEOPLE SERVICES MANAGER, HANNAH GOODCHILD

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**SUMMARY**

This report provides information on the Service's sickness absence statistics for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Where appropriate, it also states relevant comparisons against previous year's performance.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the members of the People Committee:
  a) note the content of this report.
  b) comment on the future work and challenges set out in this report.
  c) agree to a further report being presented to the March People Committee which draws on wider research to inform the Wellbeing Strategy.

---

## 1. BACKGROUND

1.1 This is the report on the sickness absence statistics for:

- The period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, showing comparisons with previous years.
- A split of statistics in terms of long-term and short-term absences.
- An analysis of shifts/days lost per employee in each category of staff (excluding MAWWFRS Control staff, agency staff, secondments from other organisations, Members, HDIM, RDSORR, Sessional Workers, Strategic Reserve, USAR, Contract Staff, and Auxiliary)
- Comparison of shifts/days lost to sickness by financial year and Fire Service area.

- There is further analysis of monthly sickness statistics included for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st October 2024.

## 2. ISSUE / PROPOSAL

2.1 **Analysis of Sickness Statistics for the period of 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024**

2.1.1 All figures relate to the number of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence per full time equivalent employee in accordance with the requirement of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service's Annual Statistical Returns submissions to the Welsh Assembly Government.

2.1.2 The definition of short-term and long-term absence is in accordance with the Corporate Health Workforce Indicators (CHR). Short-term equates to those individuals whose continuous period of sickness lasts less than 28 calendar days. Long-term equates to those individuals whose continuous period of sickness is more than 28 calendar days.

**Overview**

- The total number of shifts lost in 2023/2024 was 29,668. This is lower compared to 2022/2023, which was 32,249. (see appendix 1 figure 1)
- The average number of shifts/days lost per person for **Wholetime** for the year 2023/2024 is 13.3 per employee, in comparison to 14.6 for 2022/2023 (See appendix 1 figure 2)
- There has been a slight increase in the number of shifts/days lost for 2023/2024 for **Corporate** compared to 2022/2023. The average number of shifts/days lost per employee is 17.6. (See appendix 1 figure 2)
- The average number of shifts/days lost per employee for **Control** for the year 2023/2024 is 22.1 in comparison with 45.4 for the year 2022/2023. This is a 51% decrease (See appendix 1 figure 2). This is due to several employees retiring from the Service on ill health.
- The total number of absences have decreased year on year for 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 (see appendix 1 figure 1)
- The total number of short-term absence due to sickness for the year 2023/2024 was 5,490 shifts/days lost in comparison to 6,496 for the year 2022/2023. The total number of long-term absences due to sickness for the year 2023/2024 was 24,178, in comparison to 25,754 for the year 2022/2023 (See appendix 1 figure 4).

- In 2023/2024, 81.5% of absences were due to long-term sickness and 18.5% short term absences (See appendix 1 figure 4).
- 'Musculoskeletal' and 'Mental Health' related absences are consistently the highest reasons for absence (see appendix 1 figure 3)

2.2 **Analysis of Sickness Statistics for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 October 2024.**

**Overview**

- The average number of shifts/days lost per employee has gradually increased from 8.42 in April to 10.63 in October (See appendix 2 figure 1).
- The total number of absences has increased from 231 in April 2024 to 282 in October 2024 (See appendix 2 figure 1).
- In October 2024, 69% of absences were due to long-term sickness and 31% short term absences (See appendix 2 figure 2).
- Musculoskeletal and Mental Health absences remain the highest reason for sickness absence (See appendix 2 figure 3)
- In October 40% of sickness absences were due to Mental Health and 29% were due to Musculoskeletal (See appendix 3 figure 4).
- There has been a continual increase in Mental Health related sickness absence (See appendix 2 figure 3)
- Merthyr and RCT consistently highest level of sickness from April to October, Monmouth and Newport remain the lowest (See appendix 2 figure 5)
- Consistency in age profile sickness, with younger employees reporting less sickness than older. Increase can be incrementally in age (See appendix 2 figure 6).

2.3 **Ill Health Retirements**

| Financial Year | Total no of Ill Health Retirements |
| --- | --- |
| 2021-2022 | 4 |
| 2022-2023 | 8 |
| 2023-2024 | 14 |

2.3.1 For 2021/22, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024, the total cost was £488,628 (N.B For each individual who retires from the Service on ill health, the cost is spread over 3 years).

2.3.2 The total number of individuals who have retired from the Service on Ill Health so far in 2024/2025 is 9, which has a total cost of £425,372 to date.

2.4 **Comparison of shifts/days lost to sickness by financial year and Fire Service area.**

2.4.1 South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has the highest levels of sickness across all staff categories, compared to the other two Welsh Fire and Rescue Service (See Appendix 3)

## 3. IMPLICATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| **Community and Environment** | The Service ensures use of inclusive language within all wellbeing information, this is accessible via varying platforms for all employees.<br><br>The Service understands the importance of safeguarding both employees and the public, should any scenario or information provided cause concern or breach service safeguarding protocols action will be taken.<br><br>The Service understand importance of consultation and as such all new policies and procedures are delivered in collaboration with employees and relevant unions. |
| **Regulatory, Strategy and Policy** | The Service understands the importance of adhering to all relevant policy and procedures and endeavour to update these on a regular basis to remain leaders within the sector.<br><br>The Service protects all data submitted by applicants through protected routes of entry, with the introduction of a new management system this will be further achieved. |

| | Financial Implications – Under the National Conditions of Service for both Uniformed (Grey Book) and Corporate Staff (Green Book) there exists national sickness schemes. Under these conditions it is a contractual agreement to pay employees whilst off on sick leave on the basis of full pay for six months and six months at half pay. There is discretion for the ACO People Services to extend full pay beyond six months on a case-by-case basis. |
|---|---|
| **Resources, Assets and Delivery** | The Service recognises the strain on the People Services department to deliver consistent high-end services in relation to ongoing Wellbeing and sickness support. |

## 4. EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Whilst there has been an increase in some areas e.g. Mental Health related absences, the total number of absences and shifts/days lost have reduced across the Service on the previous year.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Commissioners:

      a. Note the content of this report

      b. Comment on the future work and challenges set out in this report

      c. Agree to a further report being presented to the March People Committee which draws on wider research to inform the Wellbeing Strategy

| **Contact Officer:** | Hannah Goodchild People Services Manager | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| **Background Papers** | **Date** | **Source / Contact** |
| None | | |

| **Appendices** | |
|---|---|
| Appendix 1 | Sickness Absence Statistics by Financial Year |
| Appendix 2 | Analysis of Sickness Absence Statistics for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 October 2024. |
| Appendix 3 | Comparison of Shifts/Days Lost to Sickness by Financial and Fire Service Area |

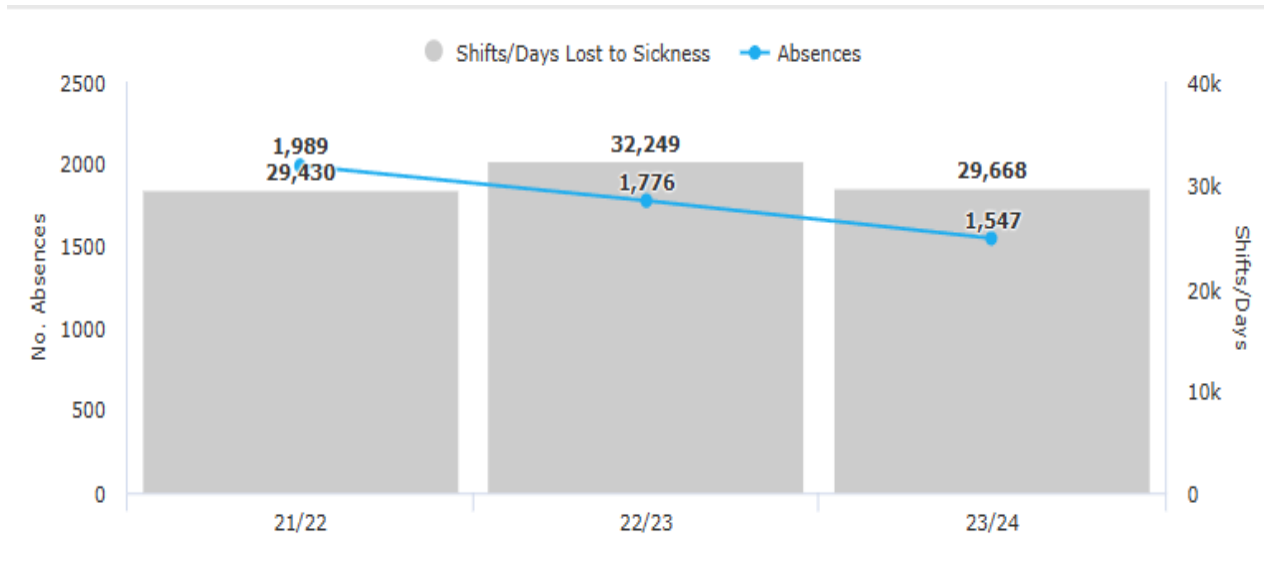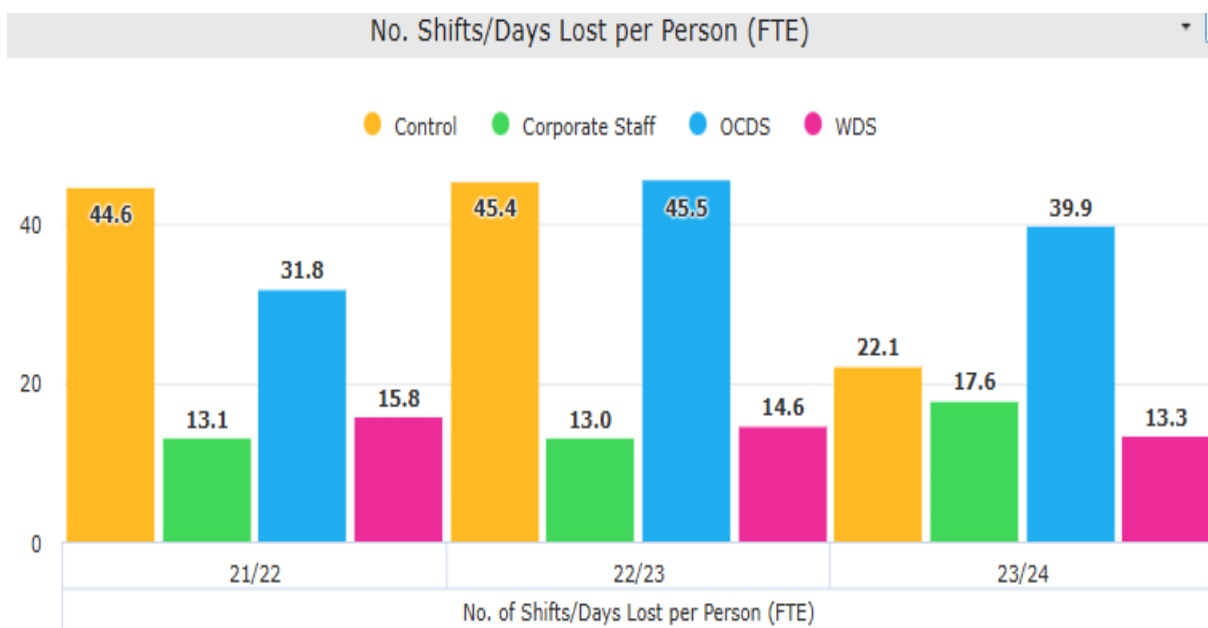**Appendix 1: Sickness Absence Statistics by Financial Year**
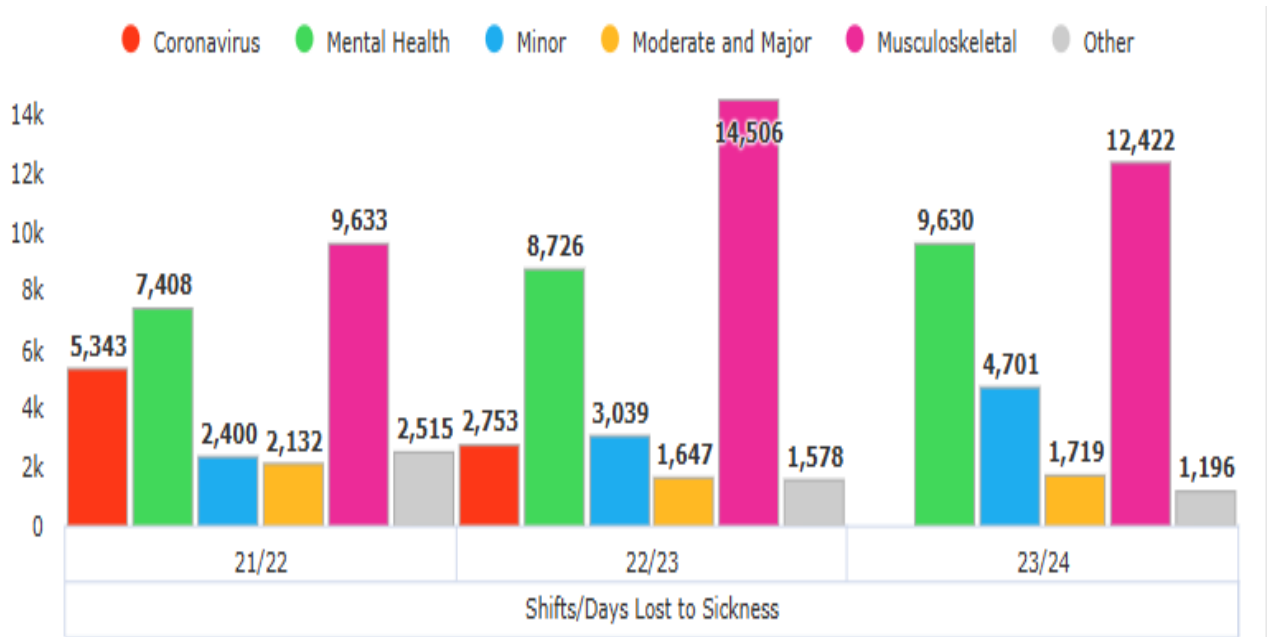
**Figure 1.**



**Figure 2.**
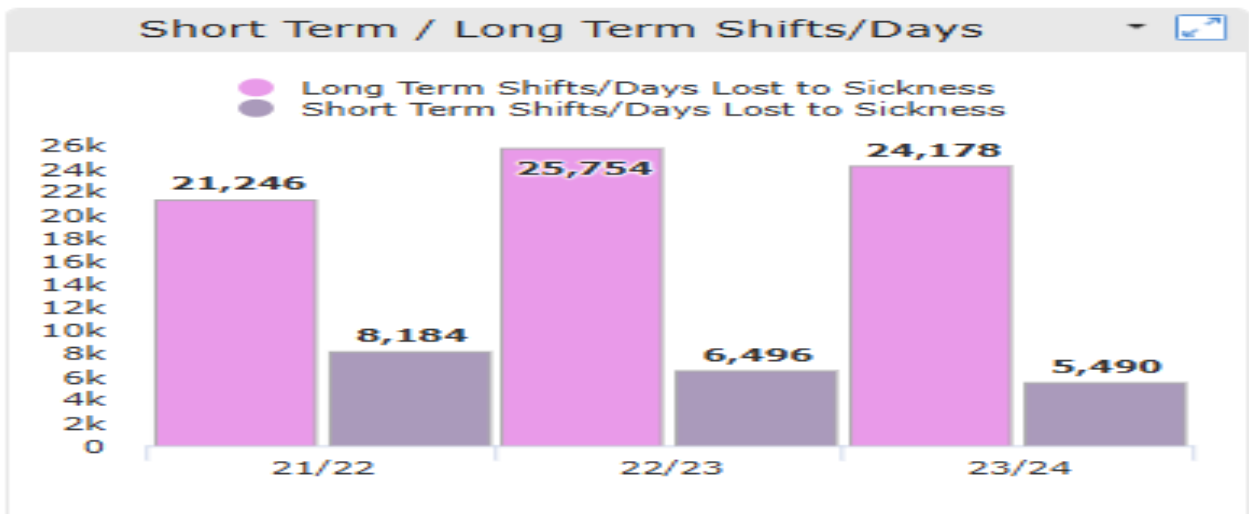
**Figure 3.**



**Figure 4.**

**Appendix 2: Analysis of Sickness Absence Statistics for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 October 2024.**
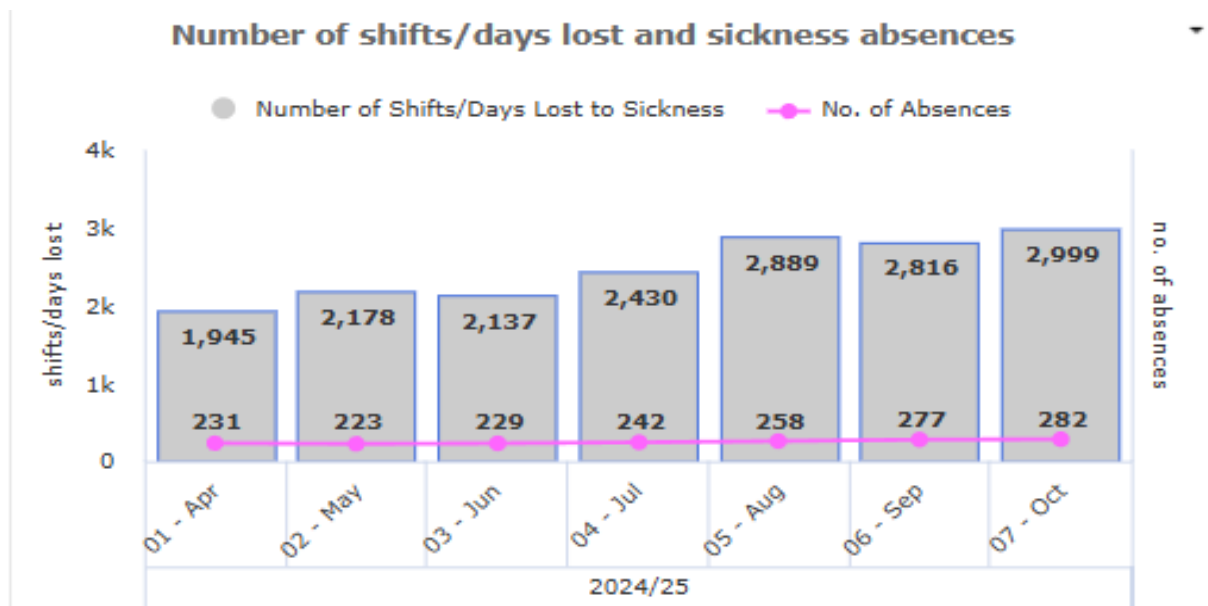
**Figure 1.**



**Figure 2.**
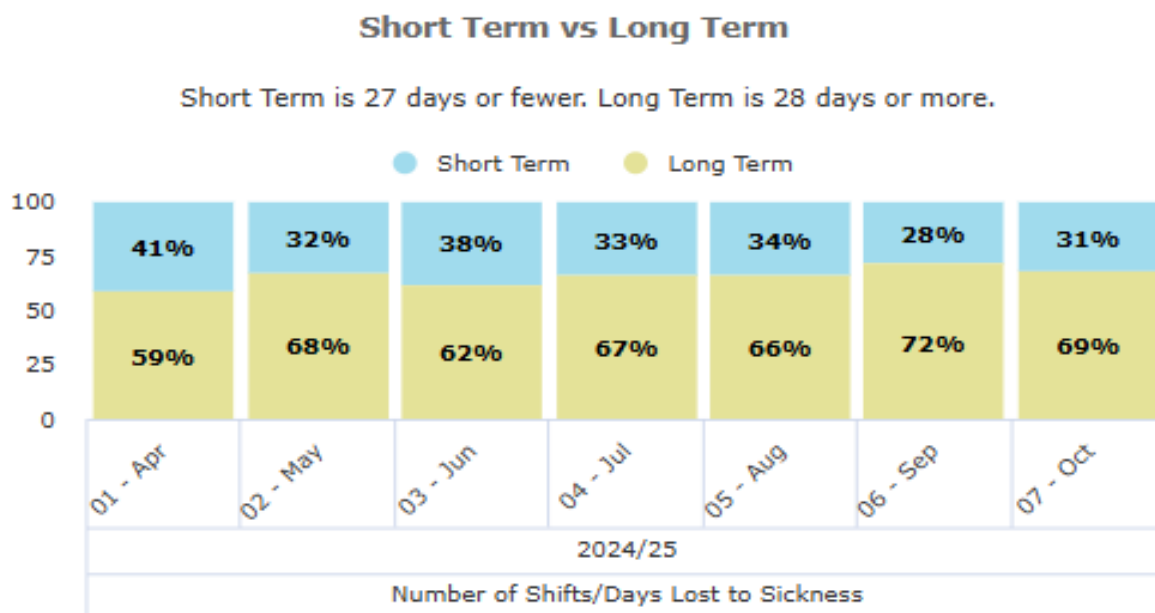
**Figure 3.**
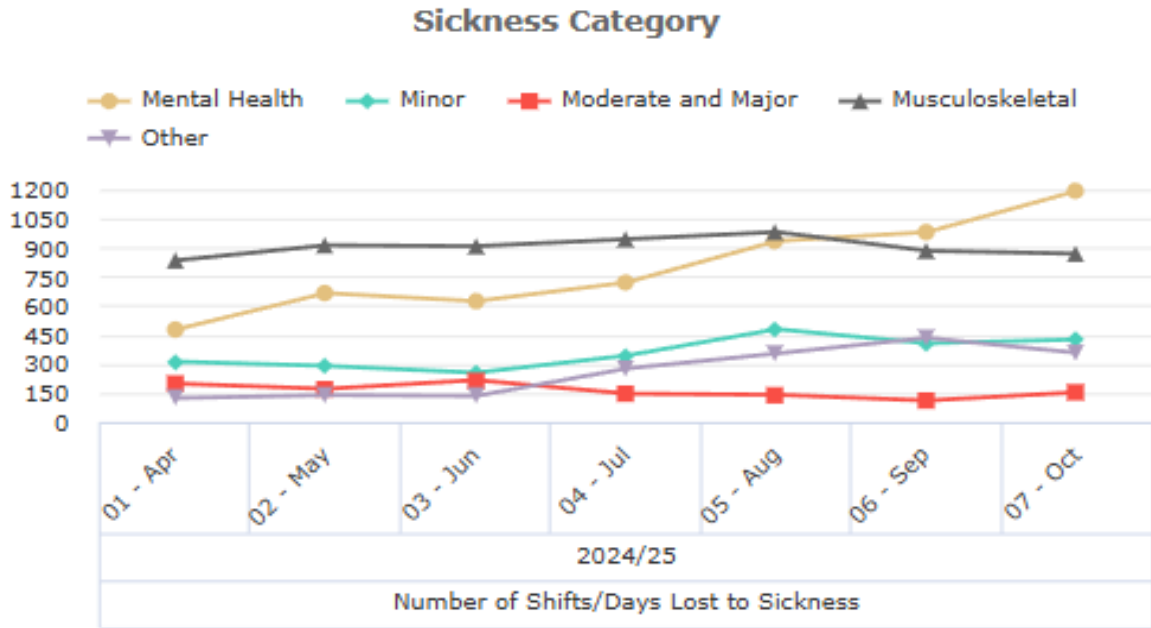


Sickness Category

**Figure 4.**



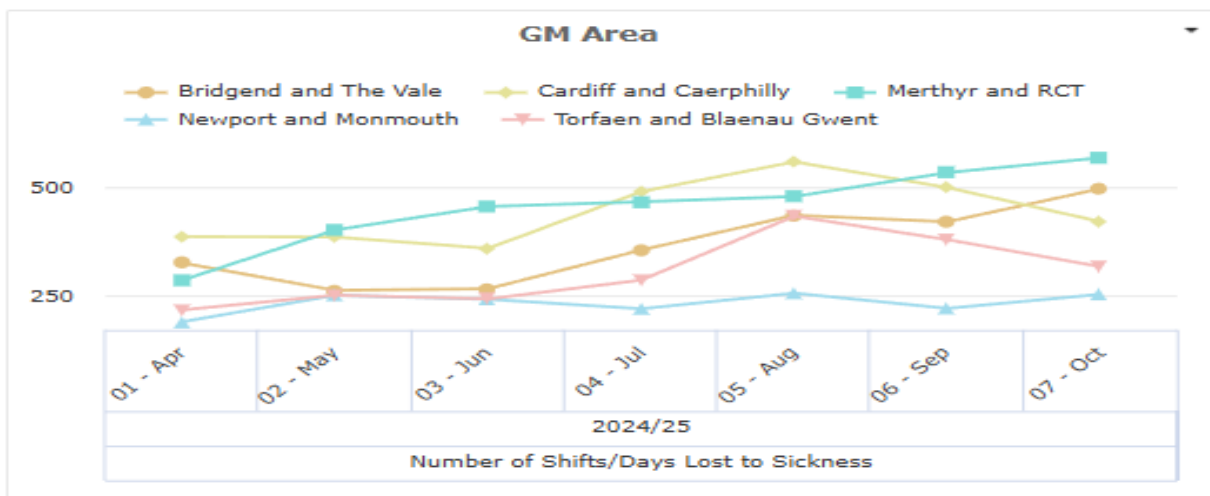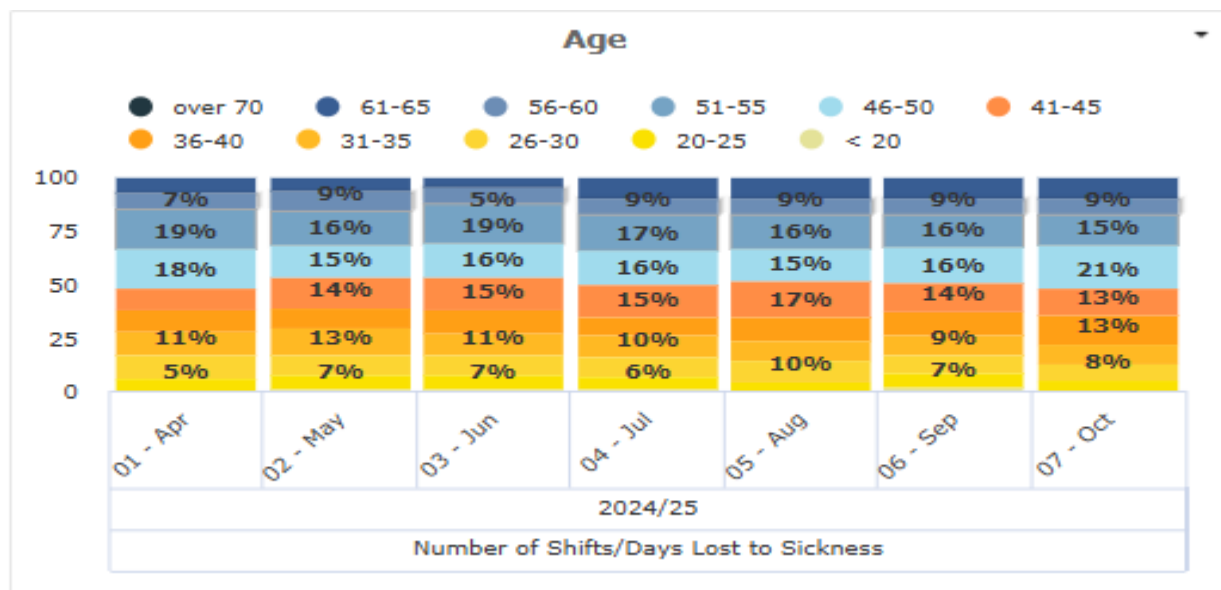| % shifts/days lost by sickness category | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mental Health | Minor | Moderate and Major | Musculoskeletal | Other |
| 1,193 | 426 | 154 | 869 | 357 |
| 40% | 14% | 5% | 29% | 12% |

**Figure 5.**



GM Area

**Figure 6.**

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**Appendix 3: Comparison of Shifts/Days Lost to Sickness by Financial and Fire Service Area**

**Figure 1 Wholetime Staff**

| | | | FTE strength | Shift / days lost | Shifts / days lost per employee |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2021-22** | **Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services** | | **1474** | **21117** | **14.32** |
| | Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services | North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 278 | 2986 | 10.74 |
| | | Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 390 | 5377 | 13.78 |
| | | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 806 | 12754 | 15.82 |
| **2022-23** | **Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services** | | **1506** | **19156** | **12.71** |
| | Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services | North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 279 | 2539 | 9.1 |
| | | Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 404 | 4372 | 10.82 |
| | | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 823 | 12245 | 14.87 |
| **2023-24** | **Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services** | | **1492** | **17333** | **11.62** |
| | Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services | North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 269 | 2428 | 9.02 |
| | | Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 413 | 3941 | 9.54 |
| | | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 810 | 10964 | 13.54 |

**Figure 2 Fire Control Staff**

| | | | FTE strength | Shift / days lost | Shifts / days lost per employee |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2021-22** | **Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services** | | **91** | **2724** | **29.85** |
| | Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services | North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 29 | 305 | 10.42 |
| | | Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 24 | 736 | 30.66 |
| | | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 38 | 1683 | 44.28 |
| **2022-23** | **Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services** | | **90** | **2287** | **25.35** |
| | Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services | North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 31 | 248 | 8.07 |
| | | Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 24 | 330 | 13.75 |
| | | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 36 | 1709 | 48.14 |
| **2023-24** | **Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services** | | **92** | **1622** | **17.72** |
| | Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services | North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 31 | 378 | 12.19 |
| | | Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 27 | 450 | 16.66 |
| | | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 34 | 794 | 23.7 |

**Figure 3 Corporate Staff**

| | | | FTE strength | Shift / days lost | Shifts / days lost per employee |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2021-22** | **Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services** | | **618** | **7598** | **12.3** |
| | Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services | North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 130 | 1245 | 9.6 |
| | | Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 219 | 2833 | 12.93 |
| | | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 269 | 3520 | 13.09 |
| **2022-23** | **Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services** | | **618** | **7745** | **12.52** |
| | Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services | North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 136 | 1513 | 11.15 |
| | | Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 219 | 2204 | 10.07 |
| | | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 264 | 4028 | 15.25 |
| **2023-24** | **Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services** | | **628** | **9265** | **14.76** |
| | Total Welsh Fire and Rescue Services | North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 137 | 1387 | 10.09 |
| | | Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 234 | 2435 | 10.4 |
| | | South Wales Fire and Rescue Service | 256 | 5443 | 21.24 |

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**SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**          AGENDA ITEM NO 8
                                               7 FEBRUARY 2025

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

**FORMALISATION OF A TALENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

**THIS REPORT IS FOR DECISION**

REPORT APPROVED BY: ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER ALISON REED
PRESENTING OFFICER: HEAD OF PEOPLE SERVICES LISA SHROLL

**SUMMARY**
A Talent Management programme is critical to ensure that South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) attracts, develops, and retains skilled personnel to deliver its core mission: protecting lives, property, and the environment. A strategy is being developed as part of the Service Change and Transformation 'Step Forward – Talent Management' project. The Executive Sponsor is ACO People Services - Alison Reed and the Project Executive is Head of People Services – Lisa Shroll.
The project purpose is to develop a strategic approach to managing talent (ref appendix 09), ensuring that the workforce stays aligned with our vision, mission and objectives via healthy culture and employee engagement, building a resilient, diverse, and high-performing workforce capable of meeting current and future challenges.

Talent management means implementing processes to attract, identify, develop, engage, and retain valuable talented individuals. To be effective, these processes need to align with the Service strategic objectives.

This report highlights some of the Service gaps relative to these areas, some for information and awareness, and some recommended 'initiatives' to facilitate diversity, strategic succession planning, talent management, and structured employee development to further progress SWFRS in achieving its ambition to become a leading Fire and Rescue Service in the UK, recognised as an employer of choice, fostering high performing workplaces.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
Commissioners, please note the content of the report for information and awareness whilst acknowledging that some initiatives are in their infancy and require further consideration and wider consultation.
Commissioners agree to the recommendations in the report

## 1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Service has identified the following Strategic Risk: "IF we do not effectively review our promotion and recruitment processes to ensure fair processes at all points THEN we will not be recognised as an employer of choice and will fail to attract a diverse workforce that is reflective of our communities". (A full review of the current recruitment and promotions process is underway).

1.2 Talent Management and the Talent Loop (Ref Appendix 01) interacts with many Service processes to include Attraction and our Employee Value Proposition (EVP), which is important as the Service communicates the values and culture of the organisation, deflecting from remuneration as the sole reason for working in the Service.

1.3 The Service has identified a gap in strategic succession planning and personal development opportunities (Ref Challenges - Appendix 02).

1.4 The Service is at risk of not fulfilling its duty under the Equality Act when evaluating redeployment.

1.5 The Service is making marginal gains with diversification strategies.

1.6 The Service has a well-established apprenticeship programme for uniformed (grey book) roles, less so for corporate (green book) employees (Ref Appendix 03)

1.7 The Service is experiencing an increase in the erosion of skills, experience and corporate knowledge that it has already heavily invested in developing.

1.8 The Service does not offer:

1.8.1 a work experience programme,
1.8.2 provision for 16-18 year olds
1.8.3 a formal approach to graduate placements or internships
1.8.4 direct entry, or
1.8.5 fast track career progression

## 2. ISSUE / PROPOSAL

2.1 Background Research
CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) research reports that organisations which offer work experience, apprenticeship and

internship programmes typically report significant benefits to their organisation. (Please refer to Appendix 04).

2.2 Work Experience

SWFRS does not currently have a formal Work Experience (WE) programme. Appendix 05 outlines the historical approach to Work Experience and associated considerations including how other organisations are being innovative in their approach to Virtual Work Experience (VWE).

This paper recommends the development of a VWE - Virtual Work Experience programme, which would also address some of the Health & Safety concerns regarding Operational Fire Fighting Work Experience reported by many other FRS across the UK; as well as engaging with underrepresented groups to improve our community engagement, diversity of applicants and successful recruit training, and showcase the myriad of careers that actually exists in SWFRS.

2.3 Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship programme provides an organisation with the ability to nurture its own talent and SWFRS has a well-established and respected apprenticeship programme for (grey book) operational employees via the Skills for Justice programme; however, there is an opportunity for corporate or (green book) apprenticeship development. (Ref Appendix 05).

This paper recommends:
- the development of a Cadet Apprenticeship Programme (CAP) to prevent the erosion of engaged young people once they complete the cadet programme, and
- a formal Corporate Apprenticeship programme.

According to research by Reed (2024), the decision to hire interns is not merely a trend, but a strategic must. Opportunities associated with internships can be used to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application, while also playing a pivotal role in shaping the careers of aspiring professionals (ref Appendix 06)

For information and awareness, the Service is actively in discussions with Cardiff University developing partnership working and student placements.

2.4 Talent Development – Personal Reviews (PRs)

The PR is an essential process, not only from a wellbeing perspective but also to identify latent talent, potential successors for key roles and high performing employees, the Service is committed to ensuring that every employee has an annual PR.

There are operational employees who do not necessarily aspire to be leaders, (and would otherwise engage in the Service Leadership Programme); however, they have potential to be high performing and thus the Service can help all individuals to reach their full potential if the PR is undertaken.

To support the organisation in developing talent, it is recommended that all Line Managers are mandated to complete Masterclasses in Conducting PRs and Handling Difficult Conversations, thus ensuring quality personal reviews and credible data capture that the Service can utilise to maximise talent.

Discussion is invited regarding inclusion of the requirement for the applicant to have completed their team PRs as part of the eligibility for promotion.

2.5     Talent Retention – Medical Redeployment
The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal for the Service to discriminate against a disabled employee by dismissing them, or subjecting them to any other detriment, and must consider whether reasonable adjustments can be made to overcome the problem, such as redeployment.  (ref Appendix 07)

For information and awareness, if an employee is in a role that is deemed no longer suitable due to ill health/capability reasons, they will be placed in a "Medical Redeployment Pool" (MRP) and a redeployment skills assessment undertaken.

It is recommended that the Service conducts an evaluation of any vacancies that arise to identify if the Service has potential talent in the MRP, (prior to proceeding with a recruitment campaign), thus valuing the employee, retaining talent, skills and expertise as an alternative to costly Ill Health Retirements.

2.6     Key Roles – Preparing the Pipeline
There are specific specialist roles that have a significant impact on business continuity and/or our statutory or regulatory obligations if they are left vacant. Examples of such roles include Treasurer, Finance, Payroll, ICT and Safeguarding.

The Talent Management project will identify such roles and ensure succession planning is in place to ensure business continuity by early recruitment and development of a successor.

A recommendation would be to cease the practice of advertising externally where a successor for specialist key role has already been recruited (following a competitive internal and external campaign) as part of a succession planning process.

2.7    Recruitment and Promotions – Future Considerations

2.7.1 Specific to Talent Retention
This paper recommends a slight modification of the existing recruitment procedure, which currently requires all roles to be advertised internally and externally, often at the expense of an apprentice that the Service has invested time in and nurtured as part of a succession plan, and prohibiting the Service from realising a return on investment. This is a particular challenge in Fleet/Engineering and ICT.

It is proposed as referenced in 2.5 above, that the Medical Redeployment Pool is evaluated prior to proceeding with any recruitment, thus valuing the employee, retaining talent, skills and expertise as an alternative to costly Ill Health Retirements, improving employee engagement, the employer brand and discharging our duty under the Equality Act.

It is proposed as referenced in 2.6 above, that there is no need to adopt a recruitment process where an individual has already been competitively recruited as part of a succession planning initiative, apprenticeship, or if an employee has been identified and nurtured as a successor in a key role e.g. Payroll, Treasurer, Safeguarding, ICT.

2.7.2 Direct Entry
The primary aim of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Direct Entry scheme is to provide a different route to entry into the role of Station Manager, alongside the more traditional firefighter route, that can play a valuable part in diversifying senior management in fire and rescue services.

According to the NFCC, direct entry could be one of many valuable tools in ensuring the Fire and Rescue sector can meet the complex challenges with which it's faced and provide diversity in thought, skills and experience.

Please refer to Appendix 8 for further detail.

More consideration and consultation is necessary in relation to this initiative which has been included in this paper for information and awareness purposes.

### 2.7.3 Fast Track Career progression

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) found that some fire and rescue services are falling short on creating an inclusive culture that values diversity and that there are weaknesses in leadership development.

Research identified that schemes directly aimed at accelerating the progress of staff into leadership positions, such as fast tracking, were less common.

More consideration and consultation is necessary in relation to such initiatives, Fast Tracking has been included in this paper for information and consideration purposes.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pathways-and-barriers-to-leadership-in-fire-and-rescue-services/pathways-and-barriers-to-leadership-in-fire-and-rescue-services

## 3     IMPLICATIONS

3.1    Community and Environment

There is a positive implication for the community as we diversify the workforce to represent the communities that we serve and protect and enhance social mobility and benefit the wellbeing of future generations.

3.2    Regulatory, Strategy and Policy

### 3.2.1 Legal/Insurance
·    There will be insurance considerations that need to be factored into the programme.
·    Considerations to the legal risks of offering virtual work experience and vetting of candidates will need robust evaluation.
·    Consideration of the Service approach for DBS checks for graduates and internships.

### 3.2.2. Financial
·    An investment into resources will need to be considered.

### 3.2.3 ICT
·    Evaluation of funding for ICT as part of the Service – Digital Transformation Programme, e.g. to facilitate the virtual work experience programme.

### 3.2.4 Governance & Audit
· Programme updates and performance metrics will be communicated through the existing governance structure.

### 3.2.5 Data Protection/Privacy
· Handling data of non-employees is a consideration, however the parameters of managing such data is anticipated to fall within the same governance as our volunteers.

### 3.2.6 Service Policy
· The Service 'Recruitment Policy' to be considered as per section 2.8 Recruitment and Promotions - Future Considerations

### 3.2.7 Morris Report

This project links to the following Culture Review recommendations:

**Recommendation 30/33:** Ensure consultation with members of the Service at an early stage before change.
Note: It is intended that the proposal will be tabled for consultation with stakeholders and trade unions in February 2025.

**Recommendation 39:** Ensure all vacancies are advertised swiftly, both internally and externally, including senior non-operational roles being advertised to both uniformed and non-uniformed members of staff.

**Recommendation 54:** Reach out to religious and other leaders within the community and build stronger connections in order to better understand whether any barriers to diversity exist and how they can be removed.

## 3.3 Resources, Assets and Delivery

3.3.1 The Services is at risk of not meeting its statutory obligations if it is unable to recruit into and retain skills and experience in key roles.

3.3.2 The Service is at risk of skills erosion, increasing retention issues, disengaged and demotivated employees leading to poor operational delivery.

3.3.3 The Service will take longer to improve the Gender Pay Gap.

3.3.4 The Service risks not discharging its duty under the Equality Act.

3.3.5 The Service will not be recognised as an employer of choice and will fail to attract a diverse workforce that is reflective of our communities.

## 4  EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS

4.1  The Service has identified a gap in strategic succession planning, personal development opportunities, skills and talent erosion, and attraction and engagement within the organisation.

4.2  These impacts on recruitment, retention and employee engagement, motivation, and satisfaction, as well as operational effectiveness, resilience, and adaptability.

4.3  The benefits of developing a Talent Programme include:

4.3.1 **Wellbeing of future generations** – improving future employability

4.3.2 **Talent development** – a proactive approach to identifying and nurturing talent, overcoming the skills shortages affecting a large number of UK sectors.

4.3.3 **Innovation and fresh perspectives** – enhancing creativity and adaptability.

4.3.4 **Social responsibility and diversity** – removing barriers to entry to the workforce and the benefits that come with having a diverse workforce.

4.3.5 **Brand image** – becoming a leading "employer of choice".

4.3.6 Outreach and engagement with underrepresented groups delivers on **Morris Report** recommendation 54.

4.5  This report outlines the benefits of formalising the Service approach to Talent Management. Following implementation, a review mechanism, including a report to People Committee will be implemented to ensure oversight and delivery of the academy's objectives.

Examples of performance metrics to be developed include:

4.5.1 Improved diversity during attraction, engagement and recruitment and increased diversity - at all operational levels

4.5.2 Lower staff turnover, higher skills and corporate knowledge retention, with latent skills and experience utilisation

4.5.3  Increased return on investment – length of Service

4.5.4  Increased pool for promotions

4.5.5  Employee engagement, development and satisfaction

4.5.6  Lower sickness absence

4.5.7  Lower grievances

4.5.8  High performing workplace

4.5.9  Increased engagement statistics PR's (Personal Reviews)

## 5  RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1  Commissioners, please note the content of the report for information and awareness whilst acknowledging that some initiatives are in their infancy and require further consideration and wider consultation.

5.2  Commissioners agree to the recommendations in the report

| **Contact Officer:** | Lisa Shroll<br>Head of People Services |
|---|---|
| **Appendices** | |
| Appendix 1 | Talent Management/ The Talent Loop (inc EVP) |
| Appendix 2 | Current Challenges |
| Appendix 3 | Apprenticeships |
| Appendix 4 | A view from the CIPD |
| Appendix 5 | Work Experience (Inc Virtual Work Experience) |
| Appendix 6 | Internship |
| Appendix 7 | Retention of Talent – Medical Redeployment |
| Appendix 8 | NFCC Direct Entry Scheme |
| Appendix 9 | Talent Management Policy (Draft) |

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**Appendix 1: TALENT MANAGEMENT / THE TALENT LOOP**

Talent management means implementing processes to attract, identify, develop, engage, and retain valuable talented individuals.

To be effective, these processes need to align with strategic business objectives.

Strategic talent management has several benefits. It:

- creates a high-performing workplace.
- it fosters a learning climate.
- it adds value to the employer brand, and
- it improves diversity.

For these reasons, the Service considers talent management to be a key priority.

Talent Loop

There are six main areas of the talent management loop:

1 **Attraction**, - An attractive employer brand/employee value proposition

    Employee Value Proposition (EVP) - communicate the values and culture of the organization, as well as take the focus off remuneration as the sole reason for working there.

2 **Identification**, - succession planning and performance management

3 **Development**, - Learning and Development

4 **Engagement**, - employee engagement

5 **Retention** – employee turnover, and

6 **Deployment**. - through job rotations, skill enhancement opportunities, formal learning, project work and secondments.

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**Appendix 2: Challenges**

The HMI publication of 9th May 2024 entitled "State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2023" found evidence of some FRS' facing challenges in getting the right people with the right skills, and in recruiting and retaining some staff, such as "…on-call firefighters, fully trained protection staff, fire engineers, and IT professionals".

Whilst their report is based on English FRS, there is evidence of the same challenges being faced in Wales.

The public image of the Fire and Rescue Service is limited to 'uniformed' roles that are traditionally recognised, however there are many non-uniformed careers that exist in the Service, which are not typically recognised and should be promoted to improve recruitment activities.

This is further evidenced in the number of applicants for uniformed roles when compared to non-uniformed roles, with fifteen applicants for each wholetime firefighter role, compared to the typical six applicants for non-uniformed roles.

The number of applicants for green book 'non-uniformed' roles is disproportionate and in marked contrast to the volume of applications for grey book or uniformed roles as indicated above.

The recruitment challenges SWFRS has experienced for non-uniformed roles over the last 6-12 months are shown below:

Using finance as an example, three professional finance positions have been advertised five times overall since August, on one occasion we were able to sift one candidate for interview although appointment was not viable.

**Data from recent recruitment campaigns:**

| Recruitment Campaign | Grade | Advertising Date | Applications | Shortlisted | Interviewed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senior Accountant - 1st attempt | 17 | 05-Aug | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| Senior Accountant - 2nd attempt | 17 | 30-Aug | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| Financial Accountant | 14 | 03-Oct | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Management Accountant | 14 | 14-Oct | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager - 1st attempt | 16 | 24-May | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager - 2nd attempt | 16 | 21-Jun | 8 | 5 | 4 |
| Info Gov Manager - 1st attempt | 13 | 04-Jun | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| Info Gov Manager - 2nd attempt | 13 | 15-Aug | 2 | 1 | 0 |

The Service has a well-established apprenticeship programme for uniformed roles; whilst there is evidence of apprenticeships for non-uniform roles, with a few excellent success stories of apprentices developing a career within the

Service; these are few and far between and typically occur in Finance, People Services, ICT and Fleet with a 40% turnover.

Implementation of true succession planning for corporate (green book) roles, with the early identification of apprenticeship or successor opportunities, will facilitate retention of apprentices and high performing employees, which typically presents as an issue for the Service.

This approach leaves the Service vulnerable in failing to retain apprentices that have had significant investment and nurturing.

Since 2015, a total of twenty apprentices have been recruited to the Service, twelve secured employment post qualification whilst eight left the service without securing employment. Service, performance and communications apprenticeships had the highest turnover rate at 75% (three out of four leavers).

A recommendation would be to cease this practice of advertising externally where an apprentice or successor has already been recruited (following a competitive internal and external campaign) as part of a succession planning process.

**Appendix 3: Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are a great way for employers to nurture their own talent. They also provide an excellent route for young people to enter the labour market, allowing individuals to train on the job and gain a qualification at the same time.

Since 2015, apprenticeships in SWFRS have improved the diversity with a 60% to 40% female to male ratio.

Apprenticeships have become a key government policy in the UK. Since April 2017, large employers in the UK have been required to pay an apprenticeship levy and other employers are required to contribute some of the costs.

The Service has an excellent reputation for its Skills for Justice programme; however, this currently excludes non uniform roles.

Eligibility for entry as an On-Call (OCDS) Firefighter is 18 years of age, an erosion gap as the Service does not offer anything for interested and engaged candidates between completing the Fire Cadet programme (13 – 16-year-olds) and being eligible (17 years and 6 months) to apply to be an On-Call firefighter.

The Talent Management programme will seek to develop an apprenticeship programme for exiting fire cadets that have an interest in progressing their career onto the OCDS and/or Wholetime Service.

Virtual work experience would allow the Service to showcase the variety of different careers in the Fire and Rescue Service, whilst overcoming some of the risks and Health & Safety concerns associated with offering work experience for front line operational uniformed roles.

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**Appendix 4: A VIEW FROM THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL AND DEVELOPMENT (CIPD)**

This report draws on research undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) on current unprecedented pressures being faced by the labour market; "Inspiring the next generation" research by REED Specialist recruitment company, and Prospects Luminate's "Early Careers Survey."

(Prospects Luminate produces data, trends, best practice and thought leadership on careers guidance, early careers recruitment, and student and graduate experience. Launched in 2018, it is aimed at universities, careers professionals, graduate recruiters, and anyone else interested in employability and labour market information. They provide regular updates on the state of the UK labour market, in-depth reports on graduate destinations, surveys of student and graduate views of their early careers).

According to the CIPD, "Resourcing and talent planning report 2024", persistent skills shortages and the increasing number of individuals leaving the workforce have created unprecedented pressures on the labour market. The report predicts that the longer-term labour supply will deteriorate significantly in the next ten years and organisations must plan now.

It also states that forward-thinking organisations are developing talent strategies to build workforce resilience and to attract and retain talent. These organisations recognise the importance of investing wisely in people, partnerships, and technology.

The report identifies that to thrive, organisations must plan strategically to retain and upskill their workforce. Those who do will succeed in setting new standards and will outperform their competitors.

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**Appendix 5: WORK EXPERIENCE (inc VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE)**

Work experience is an important way for young people to gain insight into the working world. Time spent with an employer can be invaluable and can broaden young people's knowledge of industries and sectors. It can help inform and shape their career decisions and offer a way to explore the workplace in a risk-free environment.

Offering work experience opportunities to young people enables employers to access the range of talents and unique skills and insights young people bring. It also provides opportunities for existing staff to supervise and mentor young people, helping to develop their management and other professional and personal skills.

A number of Fire and Rescue Services offer experience or taster days; however, they appear to be centred around the firefighter role; similar to our 'Work out with the watch' offering.

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service offers young people the opportunity to enrol on one of its short-term work experience placements. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service offers a work experience programme that purports to provide an experience of working within a modern fire and rescue service and will give an insight in to many key areas to include: corporate services, ICT, community and business engagement to prevent and protect, along with an insight into operations and risk.

Due to Health and Safety and insurance reasons, Shropshire do not offer work experience placements at Operational Fire Stations. Historically, risk appears to have been the barrier to offering a credible work experience programme at SWFRS, however the well-established Fire Cadet programme provides an avenue for 13–16-year-olds to enrol on a 2-year programme offering young people a unique insight into working within an emergency service.

CIPD research has found that, when recruiting, an increasing majority of employers prefer candidates with 'employability' skills and a broad understanding of their sector, rather than specialist skills and knowledge required for specific vacancies.

It is critical that young people can demonstrate these essential skills – such as teamwork, presenting and problem solving - when entering the workplace and that individuals are supported to develop these skills throughout their working lives.

Key to gaining these skills is practical insight into the world of work through work experience. Time spent with employers also broadens young people's

knowledge of industries, helping to shape their career decisions and offering them ways to explore the workplace.

Encouragingly, employers have continued to engage young people following the pandemic, transitioning from face-to-face encounters to virtual activities. In doing so, employers are playing an essential role in helping young people learn about work, gain skills that are valued and take on real-life tasks.

A Virtual Work Experience (VWE) programme can assist in preparing potential applicants for the reality of modern-day firefighting, typically they may not have considered the full reach of our Statutory duties to include for example water rescue, that our Service area has many water risks; and thus ensuring applicants are fully prepared for the role.

The NHS, John Lewis, Vodafone, Barclays, and Airbus are among the growing number of organisations that offer virtual workplace opportunities. Such programmes offer insight into working life, and often include interactive elements such as quizzes, games, and assessments.

The Talent Management programme will collaborate and work cohesively with the Services established Community Fire Safety Youth Engagement strategies.

Historically, SWFRS work experience arrangements have been somewhat informal, relying upon ad-hoc contact from students wishing to undertake a placement at SWFRS, or short-lived initiatives such as a short-term arrangement with local Universities to allow students to gain experience with SWFRS Health and Fitness Advisors undertaking Health and Fitness Assessments.

Focus was placed more upon Health and Safety obligations toward any young people attending SWFRS than the process of offering or securing the placements themselves. Upon examination this was found to provide opportunities to relatives of SWFRS employees over other applicants. The published procedure at this time (HSGN 07) was created prior to 2009 and was formally withdrawn in 2022.

During 2019, the existing ad-hoc processes were temporarily halted to allow a formal review of the Service's approach to work experience. A new procedure was drafted and consulted on, and discussions began with Careers Wales to work in partnership to provide local schools with the opportunity to undertake a one-week placement within the Service with a maximum of twenty placements per year.

There was an additional option for adults wishing to undertake work experience to be awarded a two-week placement, of which there were to be a maximum of five placements per year. Unfortunately, early in 2020, these plans were halted by the Covid Pandemic.

**Appendix 6: INTERNSHIPS**

According to research by Reed (2024), the decision to hire interns is not merely a trend, but a strategic must. Opportunities associated with internships can be used to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application, while also playing a pivotal role in shaping the careers of aspiring professionals.

In a challenging labour market, organisations may look to internship programmes to gain new and motivated members of staff, who bring new skills and perspectives. Additionally, internships provide young people with a meaningful experience that enhances employability.

Internships can play a crucial role in enhancing workforce diversity by bringing varied perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences to the organisation, expanding the talent pool, and creating opportunities for underrepresented groups, contributing to a more inclusive workplace culture, valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Whilst two thirds of work placements and internships still take place in person, 15% are conducted online, 17% in a hybrid format and 2% through virtual reality technology (Prospects Luminate's Early Careers Survey), improving social mobility and allowing a greater diversity of students to connect with top employers.

Towards the end of 2023, Google searches for 'internships' increased by 22% to 6,000 searches per month, while the social media platform, TikTok, saw four million views for the hashtag #internships, as more students look for opportunities to increase their work experience.

For organisations, making an investment in offering paid internships is a strategic move that as well as fulfilling corporate social responsibility, is an investment in the future workforce, creating a talent pool that may later become full-time employees.

According to the 2022 Student Recruitment Survey by the Institute of Student Employers, 82% of respondents reported that they recruit interns – showing that internships shouldn't just be viewed as a gesture of goodwill, but play a pivotal role in recognising talent, promoting diversity, and contributing to overall organisational success.

Internships offer shorter engagements that typically last for 3 - 6 months, providing a snapshot of the professional world. The Service may also wish to consider offering Graduate Trainee Programs, although it is noted that these demand a more extended commitment with an average duration of 18 – 24 months.

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**Appendix 7: RETENTION OF TALENT – MEDICAL REDEPLOYMENT**

The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal for the Service to discriminate against a disabled employee by dismissing them, or subjecting them to any other detriment, and must consider whether reasonable adjustments can be made to overcome the problem, such as redeployment.

If an employee is in a role that is deemed no longer suitable due to ill health/capability reasons, they will be placed in a "Medical Redeployment Pool" and a redeployment skills assessment will be undertaken.

To be suitable for a redeployment role, the employee must meet most of the essential criteria for the role and be a broad skills match. It may not be necessary to meet all the essential criteria, providing they are able to fulfil all the requirements of the role by participating in a reasonable amount of learning and development for the role with consideration also to be given to appropriate training, mentoring and support.

This initiative assists with:

- managing the current levels of redeployment (anticipated to increase as the workforce ages following pension changes),
- reducing sickness absence levels,
- employee engagement and motivation,
- operational performance and service delivery,
- ill health retirement costs,
- employee brand and reputation,
- discharging our duty under the Equality Act.

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**Appendix 8: DIRECT ENTRY SCHEME**

In March 2023, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) announced an intention to launch a Direct Entry scheme in April 2023.

The scheme would enable those with proven leadership skills, from a variety of sectors, to apply for Station Manager roles without needing to have fire service experience or without needing to have taken the traditional firefighter promotional route.

The recruitment campaign began on 03 April 2023 through the appointed recruitment experts at Reed Specialist Recruitment Ltd.

Those recruited to the roles were expected to acquire, develop, and demonstrate skills and expertise in management and command functions, as set out for their role in the nationally agreed applicable role maps. This development would be enhanced through a nationally designed, coordinated, and quality-assured process.

The primary aim of the scheme is to provide a different route to entry into the role of Station Manager, alongside the more traditional firefighter route, which can play a valuable part in diversifying senior management in fire and rescue services.

https://nfcc.org.uk/nfcc-to-launch-pioneering-direct-entry-scheme/

https://nfcc.org.uk/nfcc-direct-entry-scheme-successful-appointment-of-station-managers/

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**Appendix 9: Talent Management Policy (Draft)**

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Talent Management Policy is to establish a consistent approach to identifying, developing, and retaining talent within South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS). This policy aims to ensure that the Service has the right people in the right roles, equipped with the skills and expertise to deliver excellent service to our communities, now and in the future.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, both operational and non-operational, across the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. It aligns with the Services values, commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and strategic priorities, including workforce resilience and community safety.

## 3. Objectives

The key objectives of the Talent Management Policy are to:

3.1.  Attract, recruit, and retain diverse and high-calibre individuals.
3.2.  Identify and develop employees with potential for leadership and specialist roles.
3.3.  Foster an inclusive and supportive environment where all employees can thrive.
3.4.  Ensure succession planning to maintain continuity in critical roles.
3.5.  Align talent management with the Service strategic and operational priorities.

## 4. Principles

The following principles underpin this policy:

4.1.  Fairness and Transparency:
·   All talent management decisions will be based on clear criteria, free from bias and discrimination.

4.2.  Diversity and Inclusion:
·   Talent management practices will actively promote diversity and provide equal opportunities for all.

4.3.  Employee Engagement:
·   Employees will be actively involved in their personal and professional development.

4.4.  Continuous Improvement:
· Talent management processes will be regularly reviewed and refined to meet evolving needs.

## 5. Key Talent Management Processes

5.1.  Recruitment and Attraction
· Develop targeted recruitment campaigns to attract diverse talent pools.
· Use inclusive recruitment practices, including anonymised applications and diverse interview panels.
· Promote SWFRS as an employer of choice through outreach programmes, community engagement, and partnerships with educational institutions.

5.2.  Learning and Development
· Provide comprehensive induction programmes for all new employees.
· Deliver ongoing training for operational and non-operational staff, covering technical, leadership, and interpersonal skills.
· Offer Continued Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, including access to professional qualifications and certifications.
· Implement structured leadership development programmes to prepare staff for management and senior leadership roles.

5.3.  Talent Identification and Succession Planning
· Use Personal Reviews (PRs) and talent review meetings to identify high-potential employees.
· Develop personal development plans (PDPs) for employees with leadership or specialist potential.
· Identify critical roles and create succession plans to ensure continuity of knowledge and skills.

5.4.  Retention and Engagement
· Foster a positive workplace culture through employee wellbeing initiatives and recognition programmes.
· Offer flexible working arrangements where operationally feasible to support work-life balance.
· Ensure clear career pathways and transparent promotion criteria for all staff.

5.5.  Diversity and Inclusion
· Actively address barriers to progression for underrepresented groups.
· Establish mentoring schemes to support the development of minority groups within the workforce.

· Monitor and report on workforce diversity metrics and use data to inform talent management decisions.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1. Senior Leadership Team: Provide strategic oversight and ensure alignment of talent management with organisational goals.

6.2. Line Managers: Identify talent within their teams, support staff development, and provide regular feedback.

6.3. People Services (PS): Develop and deliver talent management programmes, monitor policy implementation, and ensure compliance with equality legislation.

6.4. Employees: Take ownership of their personal and professional development, engaging with training and development opportunities.

## 7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed annually. Metrics such as employee engagement scores, retention rates, promotion rates, and diversity statistics will be used to assess the impact of talent management practices. Feedback from employees and managers will also inform future improvements.

## 8. Performance Dashboard Example (Draft):

Introduction

This Talent Management KPI Performance Dashboard provides key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the effectiveness of workforce planning, recruitment, retention, leadership development, and succession planning. It ensures that South Wales Fire and Rescue Service attracts, develops, and retains a skilled and diverse workforce.

2. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

2.1 Workforce Planning and Talent Acquisition

Employee Retention and Engagement

· Time to fill vacancies (days)
· % of roles filled internally -v- externally
· New hire retention rate (12 months)
· 'Job offer' acceptance rate
· Diversity of new hires
· Overall employee turnover rate
· Voluntary turnover rate
· % Exit interviews completed

- · Employee engagement score
- · % PRs (Personal Reviews) completed
- · % employees satisfied with their career development

### Leadership Development & Succession Planning

- · % Leadership roles with identified successors
- · % Managers completing leadership development
- · % Leadership positions filled internally -v- externally
- · % Employees engaged in coaching or mentoring
- · Leadership effectiveness rating e.g. 360 feedback

### Learning and Development

- · % Employees completing mandatory training
- · % Employees engaging in CPD
- · % Employees satisfied with training quality
- · % of training budget utilised
- · % Employees achieving professional qualifications

### Inclusion and Diversity in Talent Management

- · % Diverse candidates applying for roles
- · % of underrepresented groups in leadership roles
- · % of employees feeling included in the workplace e.g. Pulse survey
- · % of employees completing EDI training
- · % of employees completing EDI data
- · % of employees adopting DICE Pledge
- · Number of DICE Champions
- · Number of workplace discrimination complaints

KPIs will be reviewed quarterly and annually to assess progress.

## 9. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislative or organisational changes require. Updates will be communicated to all employees through the appropriate channels.

## 10. Associated Policies and Procedures

This Talent Management Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- · Recruitment and Selection
- · Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
- · Learning and Development

**THIS REPORT IS NOT EXEMPT AND IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN**


**SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**         AGENDA ITEM NO 9
                                                    7 FEBRUARY 2025


PEOPLE COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

**RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION OVERVIEW 2024-2025**

**THIS REPORT IS FOR INFORMATION**

REPORT APPROVED BY ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER ALISON REED
PRESENTING OFFICER PEOPLE SERVICES MANAGER HANNAH
GOODCHILD

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**SUMMARY**
This report provides an overview of the Service's:

- Operational recruitment campaigns for 2024
- Operational recruitment plans for 2025 (inc Promotions)
- Current Corporate and pipeline campaigns

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
That Commissioners note the content of this report and take assurance that continuous improvement is being undertaken to:

- ensure fair and transparent recruitment and promotions processes;
- ensure efficiency opportunities are maximised;
- whilst prioritising actions to ensure the Service recruits the right people and supports their long-term career progression.

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## 1. BACKGROUND

1.1   The purpose of this report is to provide Commissioner's with an overview of last year's Operational recruitment campaigns for 2023/24 (Ref Appendix 01), as well as providing a high-level overview of general recruitment along with the Services entry and progression processes.

1.2   The Report contains a draft Recrutiment and Retention Strategy, Policy and proposed Recruitment and Retention KPIs (key performance indicators).

**2. ISSUES/PROPOSAL**

2.1 During the past 12 months, Operational need has dictated that recruitment is undertaken in a challenging environment and existing processes and systems have proved complex to navigate, with depleted resources, often resulting in delays.

2.2 To better support the Service and ensure provision of effective and efficient support to recruiting line managers, structure has been introduced around processes that support Organisational Resourcing and Talent Management strategy development (please refer to Talent Management report presented to the People Committee for February 2025).

2.3 As the Service attempts to effectively manage workflow, resources and provide timely recruitment and promotions processes, the Service has introduced initiatives in the past six months to improve the logistics of coordinating effective and efficient recruitment campaigns.

These initiatives include:

- The restructure of People Services which is now enabling focus on delivering operational excellence; along with the creation of a draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy, Policy, and Proposed KPI Performance dashboard (please refer to appendix 03, 04 and 05 respectively).

- Job Evaluation Boards (JEB) for corporate roles. Job evaluations can take up to three hours per role as the evaluation software is complex to navigate. JEBs have been diarised monthly in an effort to speed up vacancy creation.

- Recruitment Planning Boards (RPBs), to evaluate all recruitment campaigns – operational and corporate, that are in progress and planned for the future; and

- Operational Promotions Boards (OPBs) planned in consultation with the Head of Operations following data driven workforce planning evaluations, taking into account retirement profiling, particularly for WDS (wholetime duty system) campaigns.

2.4 A WDS (Wholetime Duty System) recruitment campaign can take up to 6 months to plan and coordinate due to the attraction and engagement activities, the volume of applicants, training for those involved in the process to ensure consistency, unconscious bias training, logistical arrangements and so forth, advance planning is essential.

2.5 It is anticipated that JEBs and RPBs will help to give us advanced warning of new posts; the Service recognises that employee resignations are a little less easy to foresee – however there is more visibility of intended retirements, which can help feed the Services succession planning and reduce the 'time to recruit'.

2.6 As part of the Services' Step Forward – Talent Management' project, there are imminent plans to undertake a wholesale review of the operational recruitment and promotions processes, to identify continuous improvement opportunities, ensure consistency in approach, transparency and fairness. This review will involve our operational and corporate staff joint consultation forums and explore best practice from other FRS' along with new and innovative methods of recruitment.

2.7 On-Call Duty System (OCDS) recruitment remains ongoing, as referenced in 2.6 above, the review will also encompass OCDS recruitment.

2.8 Consideration is being given to 'rolling' recruitment for Joint Fire Control, similar to that of OCDS, to ensure continuity of trained resource. Further consultation between the service and Mid and West FRS will take place to ascertain requirements and future plans.

2.9 Proposed operational campaigns are referenced in appendix 01.

2.10 Current and pipeline recruitment campaigns include:

| Active Vacancies | Prospective Campaigns |
|---|---|
| Treasurer<br>ICT Engineer<br>H&S Manager<br>Chief of Staff<br>Arson Reduction Practitioner<br>ICT Trainer<br>Information Governance Officer<br>Ops – WDS Crew Manager<br>Ops – OCDS (Various) | Currently there are circa 20 roles under consideration or Job Evaluation |

## 3 AREAS FOR DISCUSSION BY PEOPLE COMMITTEE

The recruitment authorisation process

3.1     Effective resourcing is not just about filling an immediate vacancy but about impacting the long-term success of the business, using workforce planning data to understand the skills needed for organisational performance moving forward.  This includes decisions in relation to whether the post is required or not.

3.2     The People Services Directorate would like to propose a change to the front end of the recruitment process, as above with the intention to speed up recruitment.   This would, in future see initial conversations being held between the recruiting line manager and the Recrutiment and Retention Business Partner.

3.3     The change in the process is set out below:

a. When a post becomes vacant, the recruiting manager identifies the need by responding to the following questions:

- Is there a requirement to fill the post?
- Are the duties of the post still relevant?
- Is a Job Evaluation required?
- Has the vacancy been recorded with the Recruitment Planning Board?
- Could the duties of the post be undertaken as part of another role or by someone in the Medical Redeployment Pool (see 3.3 below)?

b. If there is a requirement to proceed with a recruitment campaign, the recruiting manager will proceed to initiate the request to recruit, and this will be approved by the Heads of Service (People Services and Finance), with final sign off at Principal Officer level.

3.4     There may be occasions where an employee is in a role that is deemed no longer suitable due to ill health/capability reasons, and they are placed in a Medical Redeployment Pool (MRP).  It is recommended there is an evaluation of any vacancies that arise, to identify if the Service has potential talent in the Medical Redeployment Pool, prior to proceeding with a recruitment campaign, thus valuing the employee, retaining talent, skills and expertise as an alternative to Ill Health Retirements (IHRs).

## 4  CHALLENGES

4.1  Capacity of Recruitment Team
Recruitment campaigns absorb a lot of resource, and it is therefore important that planning and forecasting is undertaken. The requirements to recruit have grown considerably year on year e.g. some processes only used to be run every two years, and WDS often 4-5 years, however we have recently been undertaking recruitment campaigns on an annual basis.

It would be worth reviewing capacity for these activities and assess whether additional resource is required as whilst there is increased need in this area there is also increased requirements for all other types of recruitment e.g. Corporate etc.

Any review will be conducted considering process mapping and evaluation to identify efficiency gains utilising technology.

4.2  Continuous Change
Continuous improvement is essential to keep the organisation current, however recent recruitment decisions made quickly have been confusing for staff to understand and employees to facilitate. For these types of selection processes candidates like to know what is expected of them, so the Service would benefit from a constructive, stable, eligibility and assessment criteria to support all individuals to compete effectively.

This will ensure more focus on fairness and transparency and will likely reduce grievances around continuously changing processes. As noted in 2.6 above – the wholesale review of the Recrutiment and Promotions process is underway as part of the Step Forward – Talent Management Project.

## 5  IMPLICATIONS

There are no contra implications for this report

5.1  Community and Environment
There are no implications in this arena as there is a planning and resourcing process in place for all operational recruitment. There is a need to reduce operational risk of staffing therefore these plans are put in advance of any requirement becoming critical. All recruitment is consulted on a regular basis therefore there are no immediate concerns under this category for the community or environment.

5.2 Regulatory, Strategy and Policy
There are no impacts of implications for regulatory strategic or policy initiatives as this paper is solely an update on progress and a suggestion for the future year 2025/26. All future changes that have impacts will be submitted though a separate paper with an accompanying business case.

5.3 Resources, Assets and Delivery
There are no additional resources being requested as a result of this report, however a review of operational capacity of the recruitment team with the increasing requirements of recruitment year on year should be assessed. No further assets are required at present as this report is for information only.

## 6 EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS

6.1 This report has outlined recruitment campaigns and processes held for operational recruitment in 2024/25 and has outlined all temporary and permanent.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That Commissioners note the content of this report and take assurance that continuous improvement is being undertaken to:

· ensure fair and transparent recruitment and promotions processes;
· ensure efficiency opportunities are maximised;
· whilst prioritising actions to ensure the Service recruits the right people and supports their long-term career progression.

| **Contact Officer:** | Alison Reed<br>Director of People Services |
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| **Appendices** | |
|---|---|
| Appendix 1 | 2024 Operational Recruitment Campaign Overview |
| Appendix 2 | Current Operational Resourcing Timetable |
| Appendix 3 | Recruitment and Retention Strategy (Draft) |
| Appendix 4 | Recruitment and Retention Policy (Draft) |
| Appendix 5 | Recruitment and Retention KPI Dashboard (Draft) |

**Appendix 1: 2024 Operational Recruitment Campaign Overview**

**Operational Recruitment Campaigns**

The year 2024/25 has been a busy year for recruitment campaigns with 16 large scale Operational Recruitment Processes being conducted including:

| |
|---|
| Permanent CFO/CEO |
| Temporary ACFO (Spring) |
| Temporary ACFO (Autumn) |
| Permanent ACFO |
| Temporary AM |
| Temporary GMA |
| Temporary GMB |
| Permanent GMA |
| Permanent GMB |
| Temporary SM |
| Permanent SM |
| Permanent WM |
| Permanent CM |
| Control Process |
| Ongoing On-Call Recruitment |
| Wholetime Duty System Recruitment |

It is now expected that a more formalised pattern of recruitment should take place with a schedule for all campaigns which meets operational need and recruitment capacity for 2025/2026.

**Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive Officer (CFO/CEO)**

This process was run in the Summer of 2024 and to aid principles of transparency and fairness an external recruitment agency Gatenby-Sanderson was employed.

This agency facilitated the recruitment campaign and was instrumental in the arrangement of applications, shortlisting, stakeholder panels, meet and greet and final interview. On completion of the process Air Vice Marshal Fin Monahan was successfully appointed, taking up position in November 2024.

There are no further recruitment requirements at this level at present.

**Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO)**

This process was first run in the Spring of 2024 seeking two temporary appointments as the Commissioners came into post. Two successful candidates were appointed into the posts of Director of Service Delivery and Director of Technical Services.

Following the appointment of the Service's CFO, first an additional temporary ACFO post was advertised internally and externally and resulted in the appointment of a third ACFO on a temporary basis for 12 months to support

operational cover. Secondly, two permanent ACFO processes were conducted at the end of 2024. Also advertised internally and externally and following a selection process of stakeholder panels and final interviews, two permanent appointments were made which further stabilises the Executive Leadership Team.

There are no further recruitment requirements at this level at present.

### Area Manager (AM)
Due to changes in the Senior Leadership Team early in 2024, a temporary AM process ran which saw 2 individuals being appointed into temporary roles.

There have been no permanent vacancies from which to recruit in 2023/24, this recruitment is expected to run early 2025 following on from the ACFO appointments made in December 2024 (see point 2.1.3) it is expected that there will be 3 vacancies to recruit. Planning is currently underway for this process.

### Group Manager (GMA & B)
Advertised as temporary processes in the Spring of 2024 as backfill for the temporary AM roles, successful candidates were held on a list for any potential GMA or B roles to support the Service prior to permanent recruitment taking place.

In June 2024, the permanent processes for GMA and GMB were advertised and selection processes held, which included a presentation and interview. The results allocated 8 successful candidates for the GMB pool and 7 successful candidates for the GMA pool. These pools remain live until the next recruitment campaign for these levels.

It is expected that following any AM process running early 2025 then the GMA and B process will need to be conducted to support any backfills for these posts.

### Station Manager (SM)
The Station Manager process ran in August/September 2024 and following a selection process consisting of presentation and interview 20 candidates were successful. Following this process individuals remain in a "promotional pool" until the next SM selection process.

Prior to this process the requirement to complete ICL 2 and leadership pathways were removed as eligibility criteria. The result of this decision sees leadership training engagement decreasing by approx. 91% for this level. It would be worth re-assessing this decision considering this figure and the findings of the Morris Review.

It is expected that this process will need to run again prior to August 2024 to accommodate operational need and as a knock-on effect of the appointments made permanently at GM to CFO level. Eligibility will be key to this process therefore a review of the criteria is key prior to the next process being run.

**Watch Manager (WM)**

The Watch Manager process ran in Autumn of 2024 and following a selection process consisting of interview 28 candidates were successful.  Following this process individuals remain in a "promotional pool" until the next WM selection process.

It is expected that this process will need to run again prior to August 2024 to accommodate operational need and as a knock-on effect of the appointments made permanently at SM to CFO level.

**Crew Manager (CM)**

The permanent CM process ran internally only in April of 2024 and resulted in 31 successful candidates for the CM list.  During this recruitment individuals were required to pass their leadership pathways along with their ICL1 assessment prior to being interviewed.

There is now a requirement to run the next CM process early in 2025, however the requirement for pathways was removed in May 2024 which has resulted in a drop in engagement in leadership training of 73%.

It is suggested that the eligibility principles (including pathways) for the next process are reviewed prior to this recruitment taking place in early 2025.

**Wholetime Duty System**

The Service's Wholetime Recruitment campaign ran in 2023/2024.   A collaborative effort between departments and led by the Service's Recruitment team the process was supported by engagement campaigns in a variety of communities, a new initiative named "Work out with the Watch", encouraging candidates to trial some of the recruitment activities and a major media campaign with the Service's media and engagement team.

Results of the WDS campaign provided the Service with 82 successful candidates from 1,276 applicants (please see diagram below).  Many of these have now been employed with another training course starting on 13th January 2025 and the potential for a further conversion course to be run this summer when the candidate list will then be exhausted.

Team and specifically the Service's Operations team to ensure that this will provide the operational resource required along with the stability that the Service needs, balanced with the capacity of the Service's recruitment team.

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**Appendix 2: Operational Resourcing Timetable**

**PROPOSED RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN SCHEDULER FOR 2025/26**

**Resourcing needs**

The following section provides a general overview of what this timetable could look like for 2025/26, however it should be noted that this needs to be consulted upon with the Senior Leadership.

Below shows a potential timetable for future recruitment in 2025/2026

| Campaign | Requirement | Advert Month | Interview Month |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive Officer | No requirement at present | | |
| ACFO | No requirement at present | | |
| AM | Vacancies available following permanent ACFO process | Mid January 2025 | End of February 2025 |
| GMB | Backfill process for knock on of permanent processes above | Early March 2025 | End April 2025 |
| GMA | Backfill process for knock on of permanent processes above | Early March 2025 | End April 2025 |
| SM | Backfill process for knock on of permanent processes above | April 2025 | June 2025 |
| WM | List exhausted as of January 2025 | May 2025 | July 2025 |
| CM | Two processes required in 2025/2026 **Process 1** **Process 2** | Mid January 2025 September 2025 | March 2025 November 2025 |
| WDS FF | Requirement likely to be needed late 2025. Planning of courses and process to begin in March/April 2025, however this is to be confirmed by Head of Operations following the next workforce planning meeting | June 2025 | November 2025 |
| On-Call | Ongoing recruitment taking place across the year | All Year | All Year |
| Control | Consultation in progress with MAWW FRS to discuss next service to run process | TBC | TBC |

## 2024 Wholetime Duty System figures

| | |
|---|---|
| Applicants | 1,276 |
| Completed applications | 1,071 |
| Successful at Sift | 463 |
| Successful at Ability | 183 |
| Successful at P&P | 149 |
| SUCCESSFUL | 82 |
| Withdrawn | 30 |

Reason not provided – 14
Family commitments – 5
New job – 2
Other commitments – 2
Change of circumstances – 7
(these have been removed from the counts in all stages above)

The above process takes 7 months from conception to "final candidate offered" due to the integral parts and complexity of the process, much of this is discrete    and needs to be factored in for strategic planning.

The schedule is outlined here:

| Actions | Detail | Timings | Cumulative total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Operational Discussions** | To agree timeframes, process and selection criteria including data analysis of numbers, budgeting etc. | 3 weeks | 3 weeks |
| **Discussion with external and internal partners** | Campaign plan put in place with media, operations, Occupational Health and Recruitment teams, discussions with external test providers and locations booked for selection events.  Application and all campaign material created | 6 weeks | 9 weeks |
| **Media Teaser campaign** | To encourage exposure and interest through media and engagement | 3 weeks | 12 weeks |
| **Application Live** | Advert out live and media campaign live | 3 weeks | 15 weeks |
| **Shortlisting** | High intensity of shortlisting carried out with a large number of operational and corporate personnel. Invites sent to candidates for ability test. | 3 weeks | 18 weeks |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Ability Test** | Online with external provider | 3 weeks | 21 weeks |
| **Practical & Physical** | Bleep test and general P&P selection test. | 2 Weeks | 23 weeks |
| **Interviews** | HQ with Uniform and HR leads | 3 weeks | 26 weeks |
| **Medicals, References & DBS** | Medicals at OHU, References & DBS (respondent dependent) | 2-6 weeks (DBS dependent) | 28 – 34 weeks |

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**Appendix 3: Recruitment and Retention Strategy (Draft)**

## 1. Introduction

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is committed to attracting, developing, and retaining a highly skilled, diverse, and motivated workforce to serve our communities effectively.

This Recruitment and Retention Strategy outlines key priorities and actions to ensure the service recruits the right people and supports their long-term career progression.

## 2. Strategic Objectives

2.1. Attract a diverse and talented workforce to reflect the communities we serve.
2.2. Improve recruitment processes to ensure efficiency, fairness, and accessibility.
2.3. Enhance employee experience and job satisfaction to support retention.
2.4. Further develop career pathways and progression opportunities to retain skilled staff.
2.5. Support employee wellbeing and work-life balance to maintain a motivated workforce.

## 3. Recruitment Strategy

3.1. Workforce Planning
· Conduct regular workforce assessments to identify staffing needs.
· Develop succession planning frameworks for key roles identified as essential for Service operational continuity.
· Use data-driven forecasting to predict future recruitment needs.

3.2. Inclusive and Targeted Recruitment
· Implement positive action initiatives to attract underrepresented groups.
· Strengthen community engagement to promote careers in fire and rescue services.
· Ensure job adverts are accessible, inclusive, and free from bias.
· Promote career opportunities through schools, colleges, universities, and local communities.

3.3. Efficient and Fair Selection Processes
· Simplify and streamline recruitment processes to reduce time-to-hire.
· Provide unconscious bias training for recruitment panels.
· Ensure anonymous shortlisting wherever possible.
· Offer realistic job previews to ensure candidates understand the role.

## 4. Retention Strategy

4.1. Employee Engagement and Satisfaction
- Conduct regular staff surveys to measure job satisfaction.
- Establish staff networks and forums to improve communication.
- Develop a culture of recognition and reward for outstanding performance.

4.2. Career Development and Progression
- Implement clear career progression pathways for all employees.
- Expand mentoring and coaching programmes.
- Increase access to leadership development opportunities.
- Support professional qualifications and continuous learning.

4.3. Wellbeing and Work-Life Balance
- Promote flexible working arrangements where possible without adversely affecting operational service delivery.
- Provide mental health support services and peer support networks.
- Reduce workplace stress through proactive occupational health interventions.
- Offer support for family-friendly policies, including parental leave and carer support.

## 5. Measuring Success Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Please see appendix 05 of this paper

## 6. Other Documents

- Recruitment and Retention Policy
- Recruitment and Retention KPI Dashboard

**Appendix 4: Recruitment and Retention Policy (Draft)**

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a fair, transparent, and effective approach to the recruitment and retention of employees within [Name of Welsh Fire and Rescue Service]. This policy supports our commitment to workforce planning, diversity, inclusion, and employee wellbeing, ensuring we attract, develop, and retain a highly skilled and motivated workforce to serve our communities.

This policy aligns with:

· The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
· The Equality Act 2010
· The Welsh Language Standards
· The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) People Strategy

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### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and prospective candidates of [Name of Welsh Fire and Rescue Service], including operational, control, and support staff. It covers recruitment, selection, onboarding, career development, retention strategies, and exit processes.

### 3. Policy Principles

3.1. Fair and Inclusive Recruitment: Recruitment processes will be open, transparent, and based on merit while ensuring equal opportunities for all candidates.
3.2. Retention through Engagement: Employees will be supported through career development, wellbeing initiatives, and recognition programmes.
3.3. Diversity and Inclusion: The workforce should reflect the communities we serve, with a commitment to eliminating discrimination and promoting positive action.
3.4. Employee Development: Staff will have access to training, mentoring, and progression opportunities to enhance their careers.
3.5. Work-Life Balance: Flexible working and wellbeing support will be prioritised to maintain high levels of job satisfaction and retention.

### 4. Recruitment Policy

4.1. Workforce Planning
· Regular workforce assessments will identify staffing needs.
· Succession planning will be embedded to develop internal talent for key roles.
· Recruitment strategies will be data-driven to address skills gaps.

4.2. Advertising and Attraction
- Job advertisements will be bilingual (Welsh and English) and accessible to all.
- Positive action initiatives will be used to encourage applications from underrepresented groups.
- Engagement with schools, colleges, universities, and community groups will promote careers in the fire and rescue service.
- Social media, job boards, and targeted campaigns will be used to reach a diverse talent pool.

4.3. Selection and Appointment
- Selection criteria will be clear, objective, and competency based.
- Shortlisting will be conducted fairly and consistently, with unconscious bias training provided to recruitment panels.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made for candidates requiring additional support.
- Appointment decisions will be based on merit and organisational needs.

## 5. Retention Policy

5.1. Employee Engagement and Satisfaction
- Regular staff surveys and focus groups will assess engagement levels.
- Employees will have opportunities to contribute ideas and feedback to improve workplace culture.
- Recognition and reward programmes will celebrate employee contributions and achievements.

5.2. Career Development and Progression
- Clear career pathways and progression routes will be available for all employees.
- Staff will have access to mentoring, coaching, and leadership development programmes.
- Opportunities for secondments, apprenticeships, and specialist training will be promoted.
- Internal promotions will be prioritised where possible to support staff retention and morale.

5.3. Wellbeing and Work-Life Balance
A proactive approach to employee wellbeing will be taken, including access to:

- Mental health support services
- Flexible working arrangements

- Occupational health programmes
- Policies will support family-friendly working, parental leave, and carer responsibilities.

5.4. Exit and Retention Monitoring

- Exit interviews will be conducted to understand reasons for leaving and improve retention strategies.
- Data on turnover rates and employee retention will be monitored and reviewed regularly.
- Action plans will be developed for areas of concern identified through turnover analysis.

## 6. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and aligned with best practices and legislative requirements. Updates will be made in response to workforce trends, employee feedback, and organisational priorities.

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## Appendix 5: Recruitment and Retention KPI Dashboard (Draft)

### 1. Introduction
This Recruitment and Retention Performance Dashboard provides a comprehensive overview of key performance indicators (KPIs) related to workforce recruitment, retention, and progression within South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

It supports strategic workforce planning by tracking progress, identifying challenges, and ensuring that our service remains an employer of choice.

### 2. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

2.1 Recruitment Performance

| KPI | Target |
| --- | --- |
| Number of new hires (total) | [XX] per year |
| % of diverse applicants (gender, ethnicity, disability, LGBTQ+) | Reflect community demographics |
| % of diverse candidates shortlisted | Increase year-on-year |
| % of diverse candidates appointed | Increase year-on-year |
| Time-to-hire (average days from application to job offer) | [XX] days |
| Cost-per-hire | £[XX] per hire |
| % of vacancies filled within target timeframe | 90%+ |
| Candidate satisfaction with recruitment process (survey) | 85%+ |

2.2 Retention Performance

| KPI | Target |
| --- | --- |
| Employee turnover rate | [XX]% |
| % of voluntary resignations | [XX]% |
| % of leavers with <2 years of service | Reduce year-on-year |
| % of exit interviews completed | 90%+ |
| % of leavers citing dissatisfaction as reason for leaving | Reduce year-on-year |
| % of employees satisfied with job security (staff survey) | 85%+ |
| % of employees returning from maternity/paternity/adoption /shared parental leave | 95%+ |

2.3 Progression and Development

| KPI | Target |
| --- | --- |
| % of employees completing induction training within 6 months | 100% |
| % WDS recruits passing Recruit Training | 100% |
| % of employees participating in professional development | 90%+ |
| % of internal promotions | Increase year-on-year |
| % of underrepresented groups promoted | Increase year-on-year |

% of employees with a personalised development plan                 85%+
Leadership programme participation rate                              [XX]% of managers

2.4 Employee Engagement and Well-being

**KPI**                                                             **Target**
% of employees satisfied with workplace culture (staff survey)      85%+
% of employees confident in leadership (staff survey)               80%+
% of employees accessing well-being support (WFOHS)                 Increase year-on-year
% of workplace grievances related to recruitment or retention       Reduce year-on-year
% of employees reporting work-life balance satisfaction             85%+

## 3. Interpretation of the Dashboard

**RAG Status Key:**

🔴 (Red): Urgent action required; significant concerns in meeting targets.
🟠 (Amber): Progress being made, but improvement needed.
🟢 (Green): Target achieved or exceeded.

## 4. Key Insights and Actions

Summary of Performance:

· Successes: Areas where recruitment, retention, and workforce engagement
  targets are met/exceeded.

· Challenges: Areas requiring improvement, such as high turnover or recruitment
  difficulties.

· Actions Taken: Initiatives implemented to address recruitment and retention
  challenges.

· Next Steps: Future plans for continuous improvement, including targeted
  recruitment strategies, leadership development, and enhanced employee
  support.

## 5. Conclusion and Next Review Date

This Recruitment and Retention KPI Dashboard provides critical insights into the
effectiveness of workforce management within South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
Regular monitoring and strategic interventions will ensure we attract, retain, and
develop a diverse, engaged, and skilled workforce to meet the needs of the service
and the communities we serve.

**THIS REPORT IS NOT EXEMPT AND IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN**

**SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**      AGENDA ITEM NO 10
                                                          7 FEBRUARY 2025

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

**DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, COHESION AND EQUITY OVERVIEW**

**THIS REPORT IS FOR INFORMATION**

REPORT APPROVED BY DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES, ALISON REED
PRESENTING OFFICER - PEOPLE SERVICES MANAGER, HANNAH GOODCHILD

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**SUMMARY**
This report provides an overview of all Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity (DICE) advancements that South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) have made. Specific reference will be made to the Inclusive Action Plan and the Morris review recommendations following mapping of such in June 2024.

**RECCOMMENDATIONS**
That Commissioners note the content of the report.

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**1. ISSUE / PROPOSAL**

1.1 People Committee members are asked to note the following activity which is either in progress or has been delivered:

1.1.1 Introduction of the upskilling model for People Services Advisors to provide general DICE advice to all employees when required.

1.1.2 Manager training created and delivered to all new/ newly promoted managers within the service via reviewed induction programme. This covers crew manager to station manager inductions at present.

1.1.3 Implementation of staff network "DICE Champions" with representation across the service, both green and grey book.

1.1.4 Inclusive Workforce Group reinstated following campaign and new membership to drive forward employee voice.

1.1.5 Additional licenses purchased and training provided to Neurodiversity Partners to help drive neurodiverse passports and support efficiently and effectively.

1.1.6 Joined the Public Sector Stakeholder Board, collaborating with other bodies for best practise and alignment within the equality employment field.

**Statistics**

**EqIA Training**
Equality Impact Session Delivery – 138 employees attended

**EDI Data Demographics**
*Blank responses* (which represents a colleague with no information recorded in the system for that characteristic).

| Demographic | September 2024 | January 2025 |
|---|---|---|
| Sexual Orientation | 658 | 617 |
| Gender Identity | 665 | 639 |
| Religion or Belief | 698 | 645 |
| Disability | 807 | 760 |
| Ethnic Origin | 1421 | 1322 |

This table demonstrates a decrease in the level of missing information which consequently represents an increase in colleagues declaring this information.

*Prefer Not to Say*

| Demographic | September 2024 | January 2025 |
|---|---|---|
| Sexual Orientation | 460 | 450 |
| Gender Identity | 7 | 8 |
| Religion or Belief | 517 | 502 |
| Disability | 9 | 11 |
| Ethnic Origin | 37 | 38 |

This table demonstrates a decrease, on the whole, in the number of 'Prefer Not to Say' responses for various characteristics.

*N.B Statistics are all now aligned with census details for reporting basis, DICE champions driving completion within departments and People Service Advisors within new model will be given KPI for data fulfilment*

1.2    Mapping of Inclusive Action Plan / Morris Review Recommendations

1.2.1  "Our Services and Infrastructure"

- Positive inroads made with completion of equality statistics as referenced above.
- EqIA training delivered to a range of personnel as highlighted above. Notable improvement of EqIAs which are published for transparency.
- Reviews undertaken of accessibility at all stations and service premises.
- Creation and delivery of training package encompassing awareness of protected characteristics and language use within the workplace.
- DICE involvement within the recently implemented governance framework, DICE voice heard at Culture and Connections group as well as DICE considerations made in all papers submitted to SLT.

1.2.2  "Our Culture"
- Taking Care of Behaviours roadshow in final draft ready to instigate delivery from January 2025. Highlighting zero tolerance to bullying, sexual harassment and non-inclusive behaviours.
- The Service is in the process of completing a business case to implement a Professional Standards Unit – reviewing the processing of complaints and disclosures, promoting reporting mechanisms.
- The embedding of the Core Code of Ethics into policies and procedures is underway.
- The drafting of the Culture Statement and middle leaders feeding into the discussion around SWFRS values. These discussions have occurred within individual teams and feedback has been captured.

1.2.3  "Our People"
- Service review launched into review of promotional process', ensuring equal and equitable for all applicants.
- Introduction of "Unconscious Bias" training within application sifting to interview, alongside E hub learning.
- DICE questions have been introduced to ensure we attract people who share our values.

- Anonymous sifting implemented to all shortlisting process' via People XD system.
- Introduction of question release for large campaigns prior to interview to support candidates with neurodiverse traits.
- The boosting of the capacity of the Neurodiversity Network alongside the creation of training on reasonable adjustments should improve the provision of reasonable adjustments.

1.3     Future Work and Challenges

1.3.1 Efforts to be focused on a long term and Engagement Strategy to feed and navigate workstreams and direction of the service. Specific weighting to be made of DICE being everyone's responsibility in daily practice.

1.3.2 Review of internal literature being created including presentation templates for all internal and external communication, aligning with recommendations from bodies such as British Dyslexia Association.

1.3.3 Training to be created and delivered to all managers up to and including Executive Leadership team on reasonable adjustments in the workplace from a wellbeing and legal basis.

## 2. IMPLICATIONS

2.1     Community and Environment

2.1.1. The Service ensures use of inclusive language within all documentation both internally and externally.

2.1.2. The Service understands the importance of equality impact assessments within all projects as business as usual, as such additional EqIA training is being created for roll out.

2.1.3. The Service understand importance of consultation and as such has launched new Staff Networks to gain employee feedback and voice in reference to all decision making and policy/ procedures

2.2     Regulatory, Strategy and Policy

2.2.1. The Service understands the legal obligations it holds to adhere to all relevant Acts and Legislation. Including The Equality Act 2010 in specific relation to DICE.

2.2.2 The Service is striving to complete as many Morris Review recommendations as possible in a timely and consistent manner. As

such these recommendations make up the skeleton of the DICE agenda moving forward.

2.3　Resources, Assets and Delivery

2.3.1　The Service recognises the strain on the People Services department to deliver consistent high-end services in relation to the ongoing and ever evolving DICE agenda.

## 3　EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS

3.1　The Service has made progress under its objectives as outlined in the Strategic Equality Plan 2023-2036 and in further detail in the Inclusive Action Plan 2023-2026. The Service will report on and publish this progress at the end of the 2024-2025 financial year.

3.2　The Service has aligned these objectives to the Morris Report recommendations to ensure there is consistency and accuracy on reporting.

## 4　RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1　That Commissioners note the content of the report.

| **Contact Officer:** | Hannah Goodchild People Services Manager Culture and Engagement OR Matthew Collins DICE Business Partner | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | | |
| **Background Papers** | **Date** | **Source / Contact** |
| None | | |

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**PEOPLE COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/2025**

| Expected Date of Report | Report Name | Purpose of Piece of Work | Information or Decision | Lead Director/ Contact Officer | Progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Feb 2025 | Introduction of a Talent Academy at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. | To provide Commissioners with a new work experience programme for consideration | D | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | On Agenda |
| Feb 2025 | Gender Pay Gap | To update on the analysis of the gender pay gap across the Service. | D | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | On Agenda |
| Feb 2025 | Upcoming recruitment campaigns | To provide Commissioners with an overview of upcoming recruitment campaigns | I | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | On Agenda |
| Feb 2025 | Sickness absence statistics and management. | Purpose is to update Commissioners sickness absences across the Service and work undertaken to manage these | D | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | On Agenda |

| Feb 2025 | Update on the collection of Equality Date and inclusion initiatives across the Service | To provide Commissioners with an update on the collection of equality data and inclusion initiatives | I | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | On Agenda |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mar 2025 | Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 | To consider the Service's Pay Policy Statement in compliance with the Localism Act 2011 and associated guidance. | D | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | |
| Feb 2025 | Sickness absence statistics and management. | Purpose is to update Commissioners sickness absences across the Service and work undertaken to manage these | D | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | |
| Mar 2025 | Hybrid Working | To provide Commissioners with an update on the Service's plan to introduce a hybrid working policy | I | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | |
| Mar 2025 | "Alignment of Services Inclusive Action Plan to the Morris Report Cultural recommendations" | To provide Commissioners with an update on the work undertaken in respect of the Service's Inclusive Action Plan | I | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | |
| July 2024 | "Alignment of Services Inclusive Action Plan to the Morris Report Cultural recommendations" | To provide Commissioners with an update on the work undertaken in respect of the Service's Inclusive Action Plan | I | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | Completed |

| July 2024 | Occupational Health Activity / Sickness Report | Purpose is to update Commissioners on Occupational Health Activity and sickness absence | I | ACO PS | Completed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| July 2024 | Grievance / Discipline Cases Overview | Purpose is to update Commissioners on disciplinary and grievance cases that have occurred through the Service | I | ACO PS | Completed |
| July 2024 | Whistleblowing / Complaints / Compliments Report | To update Commissioners on whistleblowing, complaints and compliments received by the Service | I | ACO PS | Completed |
| Nov 2024 | Training Activity Annual Report | To update Commissioners on training activity during 2023/24 | I | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Alison Reed | Completed |
| Nov 2024 | Recruitment & Attraction Annual Report | To update Commissioners on recruitment and attraction activity during 2023/24 | I | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Head of HR | Completed |
| Nov 2024 | Job Evaluation | To update Commissioners on the Job Evaluation Process | I | ACO PS<br><br>Contact Officer: Lisa Shroll | Completed |

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**To consider any items of business that the Chairperson deems urgent
(Part 1 or 2)**

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**Any items to report back to the Board of Commissioners Committee**

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