

# **South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority**



## **Member Learning and Development Strategy**

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## **Foreword from the Chair**

As a Fire and Rescue Authority Member our role is primarily about governance, scrutiny and challenge; it is to set the strategy and to monitor that the Service is being delivered efficiently and effectively. Our decisions impact on the public of South Yorkshire and it is important that we are as informed as we can be to ensure those decisions are the right ones.

In order to perform our role successfully we need to build on the skills we already have as elected Members and as community leaders. We then need to enhance those skills by expanding our knowledge about the Service – the technical terminology, the acronyms and the wider partnership arrangements; I believe there is much for us to learn.

However, we do not need to 'train' Members to become like officers. What we do need is targeted knowledge, support, learning and development to enable us to become more effective Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The **Learning and Development Strategy** provides a framework for identifying that learning and support via development discussions and tailored delivery to suit Member needs and capacity.

I hope you will embrace the knowledge, support and learning provided to help the Authority to deliver a better fire and rescue service across South Yorkshire.

With thanks for your continued support.



**Councillor Tony Damms**  
**Chair, Fire & Rescue Authority**



## 1. Introduction

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) are committed to continuous improvement, innovation and value-for-money in the services it provides. The Governance Unit of Barnsley MBC provides independent support, advice and guidance to elected Members of the FRA to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to fulfil their role.

The purpose of the Learning and Development Strategy is to lay the foundations upon which the Authority can build in order to develop and support its elected Members. Learning and development is provided for a 'social purpose'. It benefits the communities the Authority serves in ensuring Members are fully equipped to fulfil their role.

## 2. Reviewing the Strategy

The Authority introduced a Member Training and Development Strategy in 2004. However, the Fire Reform agenda, and legislation such as the Policing and Crime Act (31 Jan 2017), has seen a tremendous change in the way the Fire and Rescue Authority manages its resources and delivers services to the public. It has also meant an increase in workload and responsibilities for those Members elected to serve on the Authority.

The Strategy is re-drafted annually to keep pace with national, regional and sub-regional change, and to better reflect the approach to Member learning and development which focuses on providing knowledge and support rather than formal training.

## 3. Our Vision and Aspirations

The Authority has a Vision – 'Making South Yorkshire Safer and Stronger' and this is underpinned by three aspirations:

- ✦ **Be a great place to work** – we will create the right culture, values and behaviours to make this a brilliant place to work that is inclusive for all.
- ✦ **Put people first** – we will spend money carefully, use our resources wisely and collaborate with others to provide the best deal to the communities we serve.
- ✦ **Strive to be the best**– we will work with others, make the most of technology and develop leaders to help us to become the very best.

These Aspirations are underpinned by a series of behaviours.

**More details can be found [here](#)**

#### **4. Aims and Objectives**

The overall **aim** of the Strategy is to provide clear direction and purpose in respect of learning and development in order to achieve:

- ✦ Members who are equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence to carry out their roles effectively.
- ✦ A consistent approach to Member learning and development;
- ✦ Equality of opportunity;

The **objectives** of the Strategy are given below. These will be delivered through a range of activities including the Member Induction process, awareness sessions, workshops, briefings, bulletins, mentoring etc.

- ✦ To establish an environment where Member learning and development is seen as vital to the success of the FRA;
- ✦ To equip Members with the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver a high quality service that meets the Service's Aspirations detailed above.
- ✦ To ensure all Members are provided with a level of knowledge and support appropriate to their roles and responsibilities within the FRA;
- ✦ To ensure learning and development is available to all Members of the FRA irrespective of seniority, length of service and political affiliation (including Independent members);
- ✦ To enable Members to have a clearer understanding of their personal responsibility for continuous development and to facilitate this process.
- ✦ To provide learning and development in line with the FRA's commitment to equal opportunities.
- ✦ To ensure Members reflect on how their acquired knowledge and skills impact on the communities they serve.

## 5. Learning and Development

### **Member Induction**

All new Members – including Independent Members - will be given a structured – and mandatory – induction programme to support them in developing their role and become an effective Member of the FRA. In the first six weeks following appointment Members will be provided with an Induction session delivered by the Joint Authorities Governance Unit, followed by a session with the Fire and Rescue Service which will cover the following topics:

- ✦ FRA Roles and Responsibilities.
- ✦ Governance, e.g. Standards and Ethics.
- ✦ The Authority's Constitution.
- ✦ Finance.
- ✦ Performance.
- ✦ Audit and Risk.
- ✦ Scrutiny and Challenge.
- ✦ Consultation and Engagement.
- ✦ Partnerships.
- ✦ Equality and Inclusion.
- ✦ Governance Unit – roles, responsibilities and support for Members.
- ✦ South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service – key roles and responsibilities.

As well as a tour of the Fire Station and the Control room at HQ (where possible).

### **Development Discussions / 360 Degree Appraisal**

Annual development discussions are offered as soon after the Annual Meeting as possible, and involve both new and existing Members on a one-to-one basis. These discussions follow the G.R.O.W. model which covers:

- ✦ **Goals and Gaps** – What the FRA, and the individual Member want and expect to achieve, and any gaps that knowledge and support can fill.
- ✦ **Reality and Capacity** – The timescales for delivering knowledge and support, given the time available to Members, and the budget available.
- ✦ **Options** - How learning and development will be delivered to accommodate the needs of the individual Member, and whether this is delivered externally or internally, regionally or sub-regionally etc.

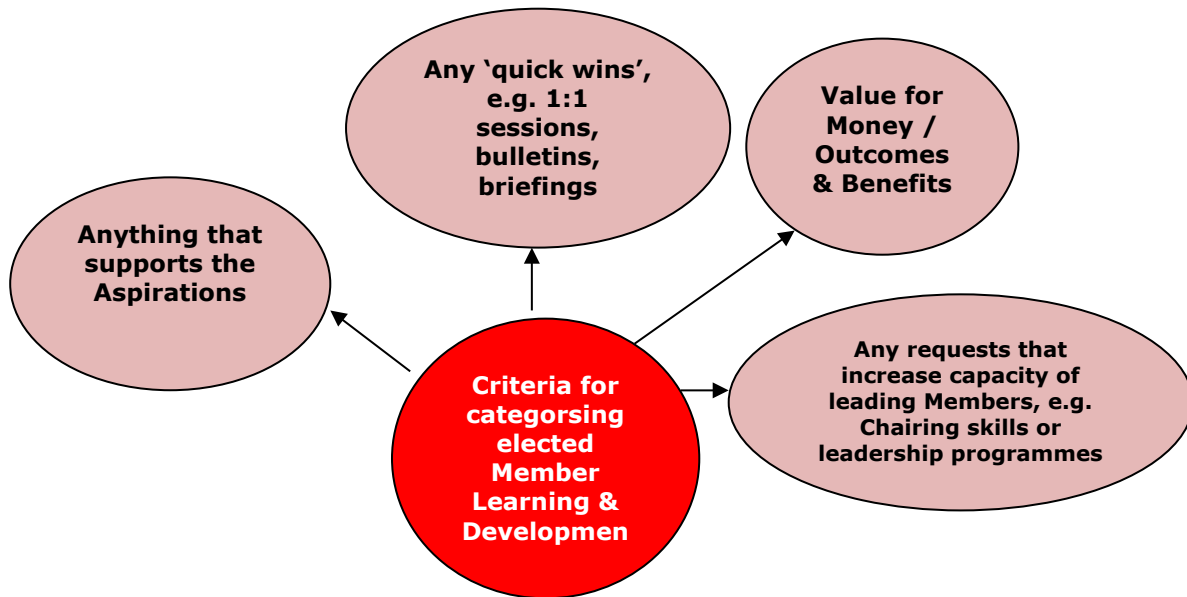
✦ **Will of Member** – to embrace additional learning to fulfil the role of an FRA Member.

The outcome of both the Development Discussions will help to inform the annual Learning and Development Schedule. The Schedule is flexible enough to allow knowledge and support that might be required to meet new legislative requirements or changes in policy, strategy or service delivery.

All learning and development undertaken will be documented on Members' personal records which detail all courses, conferences etc. undertaken.

Learning and development will fall into two categories – **Authority needs** (where more than one Member has identified the same requirement or where legislation or new initiatives necessitate a workshop session) and **individual needs**, e.g. role specific, personal or 'one-off' requirements.

## Criteria for categorising learning and development



### 6. Delivery

Members' commitments and personal circumstances will be taken into account to provide equality of opportunity where possible.

A range of approaches will be deployed to deliver knowledge and support as listed below. Any external requirements will be commissioned – or facilitated - by the Governance Unit.

- ✦ **Traditional** – sessions delivered by internal / external providers (including the Fire and Rescue Service).
- ✦ **Workshops** - held after FRA meetings.
- ✦ **Briefings**
- ✦ On-line [Library](#)
- ✦ **External conferences** – through the normal process of selection.
- ✦ **Informal mentoring / 'coaching'** via an established Member of FRA.

In recent years, the use of MS Teams and other virtual platforms to run learning and development has proved beneficial, not just in terms of reducing travel time, but also in terms of greater attendance. When arranging learning and development sessions, consideration will be given – in consultation with Members – as to whether a virtual or physical event would be most beneficial.

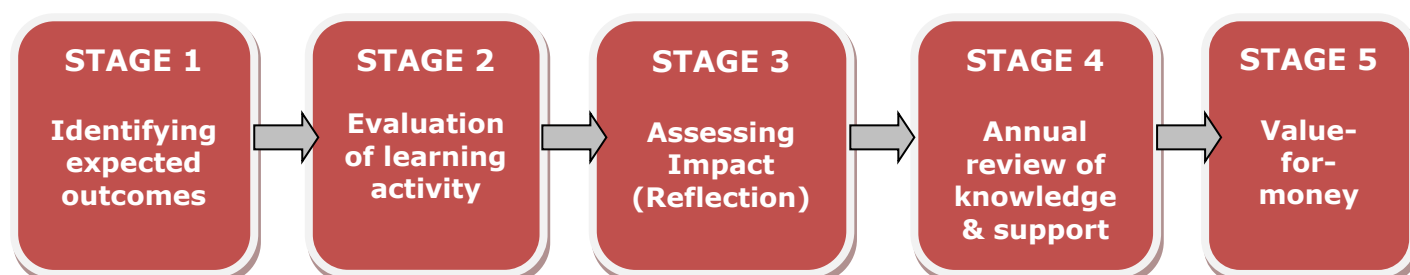
Wherever possible, and appropriate, FRA will work in partnership with the other South Yorkshire Districts and regional fire and rescue authorities to share learning and development and any associated costs.

### 7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reflection



A five-stage evaluation process is proposed to monitor the success of the Member Learning and Development Strategy. This process is intended to measure the benefits to:

- ✦ The elected Member.
- ✦ The FRA in meeting its Vision and Aspirations.
- ✦ The public of South Yorkshire in ensuring we meet our Vision – 'Making South Yorkshire safer and stronger'.



### **Stage 1 – Identifying expected outcomes**

- ✦ Establish expected outcomes – what do Members want to achieve from taking part in learning and development sessions, seminars, workshops etc.? e.g. gain a new skill, improve knowledge on a particular subject.

### **Stage 2 – Evaluation of learning activity**

- ✦ Immediate response to learning activity.
- ✦ How relevant was the learning activity to agreed outcomes?

### **Stage 3 – Assessing Impact (Reflection)**

- ✦ Check whether outcomes have been met via the annual Development Discussion process.
- ✦ Feedback from others – trainers, other participants.
- ✦ Reflect on how their own attitude, knowledge or skill has improved and how this will be used / applied in the context of the FRA to improve service delivery.

### **Stage 4 – Annual review of Learning and Development**

- ✦ Review learning and development activity and identify new requirements, e.g. Member requests, new legislation, new expectations, roles etc.

### **Stage 5 – Value-for-money**

- ✦ Assess money spent against learning outcomes and performance measures to demonstrate value-for-money.

## **8. Resourcing the Strategy**

We realise that funding is extremely limited, as is Members' time. The Learning and Development Strategy is not about spending additional money; it's about improving the effectiveness of what we do. Any additional costs over and above that budgeted for will need to be justified. Our aim is to find ways of informing Members and providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills for minimal cost without compromising quality.

We will, therefore, ensure that all learning and development provided is targeted and carefully managed to maximise the benefits to both the Members and to the Authority.

In recent years, learning and development has become cheaper through commissioning staff internally to run event and holding sessions virtually.

## **9. Further information**

Further information on the Member Learning and Development Strategy can be obtained from:

Daisy Thorpe, Council Governance Officer

Tel: 01226 787327

E-mail: [daisythorpe@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:daisythorpe@barnsley.gov.uk)

or via the [Fire and Rescue Authority website](#)