

# **SYFR Suggestion Scheme - Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

As part of its continual drive to achieve excellence, promote knowledge-sharing and innovation, and encourage staff involvement, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) has reviewed and revised its Staff Suggestion Scheme.

The Suggestion Scheme provides every employee within SYFR with the opportunity to improve our organisation.

The scheme provides a recognised channel for personnel to submit their own ideas for which they may receive personal recognition and an award.

This policy replaces the following Fire Service Order:

- Fire Service Order, General Procedure Section 8 Sub-Section (11) Suggestion Scheme  
(The above document should now be destroyed).

## **2. Aims of the Scheme**

The aims of the scheme are to contribute to the Service's vision of Working for a Safer South Yorkshire by:

- improving efficiency
- improving performance
- improving the quality of service we provide
- encouraging innovation
- improving morale and encouraging staff participation

## **3. Scope of Suggestions**

### **Within scope:**

Well thought-out and original ideas covering the full range of SYFR activities are encouraged, with particular emphasis on quality of service and efficiency issues. Suggestions should support at least one commitment or objective in SYFR's current Corporate Plan. Suggestions do not have to result in cashable savings, but must show some efficiencies or greater effectiveness.

Some examples are:

- Life-saving enhancement
- Other Health & Safety
- Reduces other risks or liabilities
- Promotes safer communities
- Enhances partnership work
- Improves customer relations
- Improves image of SYFR
- Improves use of resources
- Improves quality of work/service/performance

- Improves efficiency (procedures or equipment)
- Improves communication within the organisation
- Contributes to environmental/Green improvements
- Improves Equality/Diversity within SYFR
- Boosts staff morale or motivation
- Generates direct or indirect savings
- Generates income

**N.B. Suggestions involving health and safety: the suggestion scheme should not be used as a substitute for the existing procedure for reporting unsafe conditions and hazards. Once an unsafe condition/hazard has been properly reported, a suggestion on this topic may be submitted.**

**The submission of a suggestion must not preclude the use of any existing reporting procedures e.g. FS 551's etc.**

Suggestions that have already been adopted by the suggestor which could be of benefit to other areas of SYFR are valid.

Group suggestions are valid, provided that the group is an informal one. (The Representative Bodies provide formal staff/management discussion). An award for a suggestion submitted jointly or submitted by a group of people will be divided equally amongst them.

Full feedback and reasons will be provided to the suggestor by the Scheme Manager where suggestions either fall outside the scope of the Scheme, or having been considered in scope, cannot be approved for implementation.

#### **Outside scope:**

The following are excluded from consideration:

- The suggestion is within the scope of the individual's duty i.e. part of their normal duties and responsibilities to improve an aspect of Fire Service work (as per [HMRC regulation SE06600](#) covering financial emoluments for rewards). This means the individual suggestor does not have to obtain authorisation to implement the idea.
- Frivolous suggestions or those without supporting evidence. Suggestions are only valid within the scheme where a solution is proposed.
- Anonymous suggestions.
- The suggestion is the subject of: another suggestion; current work, design or development; or project work. In the case of the submission of identical ideas/suggestions, the first submission received will be deemed eligible for award consideration.
- The suggestion is already identified as an action from an Audit or other assessment process or is covered in a SYFR Business Plan.
- Simple errors e.g. correcting typos or updating phone numbers.
- Routine maintenance or repairs.
- Matters served by contracts with others.
- Ideas patented or intended to be patented by the suggestor.

**NB** Where a suggestion is ruled out of scope because it is already existing good practice in SYFR, the suggestion will be forwarded for consideration to the relevant Head of Function.

#### 4. Eligibility

The scheme is open to all staff within SYFR on an equal basis. In submitting a suggestion, it is assumed that staff have read, understood and agree to abide by this Suggestion Scheme Policy.

An award for a suggestion submitted jointly or submitted by a group of people will be divided equally amongst them.

#### 5. Administration and Review

The scheme will be administered by the Suggestion Scheme Manager, Corporate Administration, Command Headquarters.

Please note that all suggestions, whether award winners or not, will become the property of SYFR and can be implemented as it sees fit without further payment.

The Scheme Manager will review the scheme annually at the end of each financial year to ensure its effectiveness. Response to the scheme will be analysed to assess whether any changes are required to improve it.

An annual report analysing the volume and status of suggestions, together with any necessary amendments to the scheme, will then be provided to the Corporate Management Board.

Details of suggestions will be retained under the SYFR Retention Schedule Section 3.1.1 "Comments" for the current year plus 2 years.

#### 6. Submission of Suggestions

Please see flowchart at Appendix A.

- Suggestions should be submitted in electronic format using Form FS182 (Appendix B) available on the SYFR intranet under Admin & Information/Forms. Suggestions will only be accepted on this form where part 2 (a considered outline of the suggestion) has been completed as fully as possible.
- The suggestor should submit the form to the email address **Suggestions**.
- Staff without access to email or the intranet can request a copy of Form FS182 from the Suggestion Scheme Manager, Corporate Admin on extension 2276 and submit it in hard copy.
- The Scheme Manager registers the suggestion and acknowledges within 10 working days
- The Scheme Manager checks the validity of the submission in accordance with paragraph 3 above.
- If the suggestion is found to be outside the scope of the Scheme the Scheme Manager will contact the suggestor with a formal memo of thanks suitable for inclusion in the suggestor's Professional Development Review evidence.
- If the suggestion is within the scope of the Scheme, the Scheme Manager contacts the Head of Function to whose area of responsibility the suggestion relates, asking them to appoint an Expert Assessor to assess the suggestion within an agreed timescale (maximum 2 months).

- The Head of Function appoints an Expert Assessor and notifies the Scheme Manager.
- The Scheme Manager notifies the suggestor that they will shortly be contacted by the named Expert Assessor who will complete an assessment within the agreed timescale.
- The Scheme Manager forwards Form FS182 to the Expert Assessor asking them to liaise and discuss with the suggestor and then assess the suggestion within the agreed timescale (maximum 2 months, but if the suggestion has significant potential e.g. to save lives, the deadline should be 1 month to progress it more quickly).
- At this stage the suggestor should provide the Assessor with any supporting documentation or research material so that a thorough assessment can be made of the suggestion. Reasonable time should be allowed by line managers for this work to be completed.
- Using the Guidance Notes provided (see Appendix C) to assist with identifying possible benefits and/or savings for SYFR, the Expert Assessor makes an assessment as to whether the suggestion should be accepted in principle or not, completes part 3 of Form FS182, and forwards it to the Head of Function for approval or not.
- If there is any unavoidable delay with the process, the Scheme Administrator will contact the suggestor.
- Head of Function decides whether it is feasible or not to implement the suggestion, completes part 4 of Form FS182, and returns form to the email address **Suggestions**.
- For well-evidenced suggestions which for whatever reason cannot be implemented and are therefore not approved, the Scheme Manager sends the suggestor a formal memo of thanks for inclusion in their Professional Development Review evidence, with notification they will receive a £10 High Street voucher as an Encouragement Award.
- For suggestions which are approved, the Scheme Manager notifies the suggestor of this and that the level of Award will be determined at the next meeting of the Evaluation Group.
- As soon as practicable the Scheme Manager convenes a meeting of the Evaluation Group which decides the level of Award (see paragraph 7 below).
- The Scheme Manager sends the suggestor a formal memo of thanks for inclusion in their Professional Development Review evidence, with notification of the amount of Award to be paid, and advises Payroll.
- All approved suggestions will be considered annually for Best Suggestion of the Year as part of the Annual Awards Ceremony.

## 7. Roles and responsibilities

### Suggestors

Suggestors should:

- Submit sufficient information to the Scheme Manager for an initial validation check to be made.
- Work with the Expert Assessor to provide robust evidence for a business case on which an evaluation of the suggestion can be made.

## Scheme Manager

The role of the Scheme Manager is to:

- Maintain a register of suggestions on a spreadsheet.
- Check that submissions are within the scope of the scheme (paragraph 3 of this policy), liaising with colleagues (e.g. the Policy, Performance & Programmes function) as necessary.
- Liaise with Heads of Function and Expert Assessors to ensure assessments are provided within timescales.
- Notify suggestors of outcomes within the designated timescales.
- Convene and minute meetings of the Evaluation Group.
- Provide meaningful feedback to suggestors where suggestions are outside scope or cannot be implemented.
- Maintain stock of vouchers for Encouragement Awards.
- Advise Finance of award winners for payments through the payroll.
- Liaise with Corporate Communications to ensure publicity for the Suggestion Scheme.
- Review the Scheme annually in January and prepare a report for the Corporate Management Board.

## Heads of Function

The relevant Head of Function for each suggestion will be determined by the content of the proposal. The role of the relevant Head of Function is to:

- Designate an Expert Assessor, set a time limit for the production of an assessment, and notify the Scheme Manager.
- Take a decision based on the Expert Assessor's report whether or not to implement the suggestion.
- Notify the Scheme Manager of the outcome.
- Attend the meeting of the Evaluation Group which will evaluate the level of award merited.
- Wherever possible, implement suggestions given an award at level 1 or above.
- Ensure the delivery of the suggestion's projected savings/efficiencies and record them in the appropriate business plan.
- Consider out of scope suggestions which spread existing good practice.

## Expert Assessor

The role of the Expert Assessor is to:

- Liaise with the suggestor to produce evidence and a business case for the suggestion.
- Liaise with other colleagues as necessary to assess the merit of the suggestion.
- Within the agreed timescale produce an assessment of the viability of the suggestion and submit the report to the relevant Head of Function.

## Evaluation Group

The role of the Evaluation Group is to:

- Determine the level of award to be made for suggestions approved by Heads of Function.
- At the appropriate time, nominate one suggestion for Best Suggestion of the Year at the SYFR Annual Awards Ceremony.

### **8. Evaluation of Award Level**

As soon as reasonably practicable after the approval of a suggestion, the Scheme Manager will convene a meeting of the Evaluation Group who will decide the appropriate level of Award. Wherever possible, several suggestions will be dealt with together.

The Evaluation Group will consist of the following: Suggestion Scheme Manager; Head of Technical Services; Head of Function who approved the suggestion(s); Equipment Officer; Head of Corporate Communications; Head of Finance; Expert Assessor(s).

### **Levels of Award**

The Evaluation Group will allocate all approved suggestions a level of award based on the following criteria:

- Level 1: Award of £50 for implemented suggestions resulting in minor improvement – defined as ‘having a positive, if limited effect on activity’ – and/or minor savings of up to £5000 in first year.
- Level 2: Award of £200 for implemented suggestions resulting in significant improvement – defined as ‘an important or noticeable effect on activity’ - and/or savings of £5000 - £25,000 in first year.
- Level 3: Award of £1000 for implemented suggestions resulting in substantial improvement – defined as ‘a considerable change in the extent or degree of activity’ – and/or savings of over £25,000 in first year.

Please note that Awards are tax-free subject to meeting the requirements of [HMRC regulation SE06600](#) – *Emoluments of employees and office holders: suggestion scheme awards – Extra Statutory Concession A57* i.e. the amount of an award does not exceed 50% of the net financial benefit during the first year of implementation or 10% of the expected net financial benefit over a period of up to 5 years subject to an overriding maximum of £5,000.

All monetary Awards will be payable through the payroll.

### **9. Re-submission of Suggestions**

Suggestions may only be re-submitted if they are accompanied by substantial additional evidence for re-consideration.

## **10. Publicity**

The scheme may be publicised throughout SYFR using posters, the intranet, the Weekly Bulletin, *Fireflash*, or any other means at the discretion of the Scheme Manager and/or the Head of Corporate Communications.

Details of specific suggestions under consideration may be made available to staff (for example via an intranet Suggestions page). In this case, the names of the suggestors will not be published.

Personal details or photographs of Award winners will only be published with the consent of those individuals.

## **11. Review and monitoring of Scheme**

The policy will be reviewed after the end of each financial year.

A report analysing the Scheme together with any recommendations for change will be made by the Scheme Manager at the end of each financial year. The following performance measurements will be included:

- Number of suggestions received per employee each year.
- Annual % increase in suggestions submitted.
- % suggestions processed within timescales.
- Number and % of suggestions implemented.
- Number and % of suggestions not implemented.
- Total financial savings for the year.
- Amount of awards paid.
- Breakdown by division/department.

# Appendix A

## Suggestion Scheme Flow Chart

Suggestor submits outline of Suggestion to Scheme Manager using Form FS182

Scheme Manager acknowledges within 10 working days

Scheme Manager checks validity of Suggestion

Is Suggestion in scope?

N

Y

Scheme Manager sends Suggestor a formal memo of thanks for inclusion in PDR

Scheme Manager notifies Suggestor that Suggestion is to be assessed

Scheme Manager copies Suggestion to relevant Head of Function asking them to appoint an Expert Assessor to assess Suggestion within agreed timescale (maximum 2 months).

Head of Function appoints Expert Assessor and notifies Scheme Manager

Scheme Manager forwards Suggestion to Assessor asking them to liaise with Suggestor and assess Suggestion within the agreed timescale.

Assessor makes assessment using Guidance Notes and forwards Form FS182 containing assessment to Head of Function for approval or not.

Head of Function returns Form FS182 to Scheme Manager

Is Suggestion approved?

N

Y

Scheme Manager sends Suggestor a formal memo of thanks for inclusion in PDR and arranges for £10 Voucher Encouragement Award

Scheme Manager notifies Suggestor that Suggestion approved and level of Award will be notified after next meeting of Evaluation Group

Scheme Manager convenes Evaluation Group which decides level of Award (£50, £200 or £1000). Scheme Manager then notifies Suggestor and arranges for payment of Award

END

Nomination of Best Suggestion of Year for Annual Awards Ceremony