

HMICFRS Values and Culture Progress Report

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Executive Summary

This report presents the Service progress against the recommendations made to the sector in the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Values and Culture in the fire and rescue services report.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

3 Background

On 30 March 2023, the HMICFRS published a report entitled "Values and culture in fire and rescue services" (See the Appendix to the report).

Chief Fire Officers were requested to action 20 of the 35 recommendations, with the remaining recommendations responsible for action by other agencies and services.

The recommendations timelines varied from immediate to March 2024 for Chief Fire Officers and up to January 2025 for the other responsible organisations.

On receipt of the report the Service immediately carried out a gap analysis which formed the basis of the Service Action Plan.

4 Service Approach and Actions

The Service is committed to implementing the recommendations, prioritising those that are currently within its gift, and continues to work proactively to meet the HMICFRS recommendations.

This work is being driven by the Assistant Chief Fire officer (ACFO) Corporate Services and teams of staff who have taken responsibility for the recommendations as detailed in the action plan.

To support progress against the action plan the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) suite of supporting documents have been considered as a form of reference, alongside any relevant HMICFRS identified promising and innovative practice.

Full Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) are expected to be completed to support the completed actions from each of the appropriate recommendations.

Representative bodies will be engaged during informal meetings and consultations to ensure they are fully sighted on developments and can put forward any comments.

Communications to all staff will continue to engage and inform staff of any new provisions, policies, and opportunities for consultation.

5 Progress

All the recommendations to date have been fully met or are at an advanced stage of progression.

The team is working to further compliance towards the recommendations and recognises the importance of the work that is being undertaken to both staff and the community.

This means that a methodology of excellence has been adopted when demonstrating compliance towards the recommendations.

Whilst being mindful of the timelines this work will continue to progress through the appropriate scrutiny and approval processes to ensure effectiveness and value for money.

Recommendations to be completed immediately

17	With immediate effect, chief fire officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs; are of a serious nature; or relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades. 	Complete
34	With immediate effect, chief fire officers should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their services.	Complete

Two recommendations were due to be evidenced immediately. Recommendation 17 and 34 have been completed. Evidence of compliance includes an updated workplace charter following staff engagement sessions.

Recommendations to be completed by 1 June 2023

3	By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.	Complete
4	By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them. The updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the service response. Consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in service (or from an external service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved.	Complete
5	By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief fire officers should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.	Complete
20	By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the Fire Standards Board's leading the service standard and its leading and developing people standard.	Complete

21	By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (assistant chief fire officer equivalent and above) in service.	Current status: 360 feedback process procured System training completed Roll out in progress
23	By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should seek regular feedback from staff about values, culture, fairness and diversity, with due regard to the leading and developing people standard. They should show how they act on this feedback.	Complete
27	By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit.	Complete
28	By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review how they gather and use equality and diversity data to improve their understanding of their staff demographics, including applying and meeting the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit.	Complete
32	By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the service. This should include offering increased direct entry opportunities.	Complete

Nine of the recommendations were to be completed by 1 June 2023. These are recommendations 3, 4, 5, 20, 21, 23, 27, 28 and 32.

Progress towards recommendation 21 includes the procurement and training for the 360-feedback system. Roll out of the 360-feedback product is currently in progress.

The Transformation and Collaboration team will continue to monitor and support any ongoing work to facilitate further reporting and the continuous improvement of evidence towards the recommendations.

Recommendations to be completed by 1 August 2023

18	By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	Complete
33	By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity.	Complete

Two of the recommendations were to be completed by 1 August 2023. These are recommendations 18 and 33. Work towards these recommendations has been completed within the timeline.

Recommendations to be completed by 1 September 2023

22	By 1 September 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports.	<p>Current status:</p> <p>360 feedback process procured</p> <p>Training completed</p> <p>In progress:</p> <p>Roll out program</p>
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Recommendation 22 is to be completed by 1 September 2023. This recommendation is linked to recommendation 21. Progress towards both recommendation 21 and 22 includes the procurement and training for the 360-feedback system. Roll out of the 360-feedback product is currently in progress.

6 Conclusions

In summary, the Service is making substantial progress towards meeting the recommendations of the report and the remaining timelines are expected to be met.

The Service also recognises the challenges posed by the variety of timelines associated with the recommendations and the availability of key unpublished tools to facilitate the review.

With the progress made towards the action plan and the advanced plans that were previously in place the Service is in a strong position to further develop its values and culture.

7 Financial Implications

The cost of the SaySo confidential reporting tool is £6,300 per year.

Additional costings will be identified as contracts are negotiated to action recommendations that the Service will need to procure (e.g., the independent cultural review, external oversight of gross misconduct cases involving values and culture, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks).

Initial costings for the 360-feedback product include a £2100 setting up fee and a £900 charge for carrying out 360-feedback across SMT. These costings are plus vat.

The Service will then have a further option to purchase 360 feedback in bundles of 100 for an additional £6000 later in the year. The frequency of such feedback is yet to be established.

8 Legal Comment

Legal advice will be sought including elements of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and disclosure that might be impacted by HMICFRS data and information requests.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

Full Equality Impact Assessments to be completed to support the completed actions from each of the recommendations.

10 Appendix

HMICFRS report- Values and culture in fire and rescue services

<https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/values-and-culture-in-fire-and-rescue-services.pdf>

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.