

HMICFRS Values and Culture Progress Report

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Guy Williams Assistant Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260299 or Luke Grant Station Manager on 01743 260186

1 Executive Summary

This report presents the Service progress against the recommendations made to the sector in 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 the 30th of March 2023, the HMICFRS published a report entitled "Values and culture in fire and rescue services" (See Appendix).

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 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 has 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

HMICFRS have confirmed that the mechanism for reporting progress is via the Huddle system accessed by Service Liaison Leads. The Transformation and Collaboration team will continue to regularly communicate with the Service Liaison Officer and update the Huddle system with appropriate commentary to detail the Service's progression towards the recommendations.

Recommendations to be completed immediately

Immediate		
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 quarterly misconduct allegation updates to HMICFRS and an updated workplace charter following staff engagement sessions.

Recommendations to be completed by 1st June

June		
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.	Complete
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 the 1st of June 2023. These are recommendations 3,4,5,20,21,23,27,28 and 32.

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 1st August

August		
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 the 1st of August 2023. These are recommendations 18 and 33. Work towards these recommendations has been completed within the timeline.

Recommendations to be completed by 1st September

September		
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.	Current status: SMT Roll out now complete Wider integration plan in place

Recommendation 22 is to be completed by the 1st of 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. The 360-feedback process is live, SMT has adopted the product and a wider integration plan has been developed for all other leaders.

Recommendations to be completed by 1st October

October		
1	By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes.	Complete
24	By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should put plans in place to monitor, including through the gathering and analysis of staff feedback, watch and team cultures and provide prompt remedial action for any issues they identify.	Complete
26	By 1 October 2023, as a precursor to the development of the College of Fire and Rescue, chief fire officers and the National Fire Chiefs Council should work with the Home Office to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.	Complete

Three of the recommendations were to be completed by the 1st of October 2023. These are recommendations 1, 24 and 26. Progress towards recommendation 24 includes the existing Women's Safety Survey, Staff Survey and corresponding action plans. Following the completion of the independent cultural review the findings are to be assessed and an action plan developed to meet any concerns. The Service will continue to consult and engage staff during this review. Good progress has been made to

provide assurances for recommendation 26, the Service is currently supporting the development of the NFCC Middle Management Development Programme with the secondment of the Development Officer.

Recommendations to be completed by 1st January 2024

January		
9	By 1 January 2024, chief fire officers should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and communities they serve; and • make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standards Board. 	Complete

Recommendation 9 is to be completed by the 1st of January 2024. The background check arrangements have been fully reviewed against the NFCC and FSB guidance. All staff have been briefed of changes via The Pink and letters, prior to requests to submit DBS checks.

Recommendations to be completed by 1st March 2024

March		
12	By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling.	Complete Fire Standards Board (FSB) implementation tool updated. Relevant owners informed of action plan developments.
14	By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.	Complete FSB implementation tool updated. Relevant owners informed of action plan developments.

Recommendations 12 and 14 were to be completed by the 1st March 2024. In February 2024 the FSB released a version update to the Safeguarding, Leading the Service and Leading and Developing People Standards. The Service has reviewed and integrated the relevant standards within the implementation tools.

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.

6 Conclusions

In summary, the Service has made pleasing progress to meet the recommendations of the report within the challenging timelines set, collaborating with the neighbouring Services, NFCC, Home Office and Fire Standards Board.

Following the passing of the last timeline, a summary report has been provided to HMICFRS via the HUDDLE system, detailing the Service's progress towards meeting the recommendations made.

Special recognition should be given to the HR teams that have balanced competing workloads and prioritised this workstream to put the Service in this strong position to further develop its values and culture.

7 Capacity

Transformation and Collaboration are coordinating and leading the Service response this will impact on existing workloads.

8 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

All aspects and opportunities will be shared across the Alliance as the Service proceeds through implementing the recommendations.

9 Financial Implications

The cost of the SaySo confidential reporting tool is £4,725 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, DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks).

Initial costings for 360 feedback product include a £2,100 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.

10 Legal Comment

Legal advice will be sought including elements of GDPR and disclosure that might be impacted by HMICFRS data and information requests.

Executive Support have emailed a copy of this CFA report to the Service solicitor, to check the report and provide legal comment.

11 Community Safety

A lack of trust and confidence in the Service could reduce the willingness of the community to engage with the Service thus increasing community risk.

12 Equality Impact Assessment

Full EQIAs, where required, to be completed to support the completed actions from each of the recommendations.

13 Fire Standard Core Code of Ethics and Human Rights (including Data Protection)

This work involves both current and future fire standards.

14 Insurance

Failure to meet HMICFRS recommendations could increase corporate risk to the Service from civil action.

17 The On-call Service

There will be a communication requirement to mitigate the impact on all staff when independent investigations are carried out in the future. All aspects of change will need to be supported by appropriate change management.

18 Public Value / Service Delivery

Implementing these recommendations in full will support Service Delivery and provide public value.

19 Reputation

Failure to implement these recommendations will have an adverse effect on the Service reputation. The Service will drive the change by continuing to lead in a visible, accessible, honest, and transparent way.

20 Security

There are data security issues with how sensitive data is stored and shared with partners.

21 Training

All recommendations will have an element of training, this is being assessed as part of the delivery phase.

22 Appendix

Appendix: HMICFRS report- Values and culture in fire and rescue service

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

23 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.