



**Hampshire
& Isle of Wight**
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

HIWFRA Full Authority

Purpose: Noted

Date: **25 July 2023**

Title: **HMICFRS NATIONAL CULTURE AND VALUES REPORT**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. This report details progress against the recommendations in the HMICFRS spotlight report on culture and values within fire services, as well as describing further activity we intend to take in relation to the cultural health of our organisation.
2. This report asks the Fire Authority to note both the progress and the breadth of work being undertaken to improve the cultural health of our organisation and to ensure that we can continue to make HIWFRS a great place to work for all.

BACKGROUND

3. In March 2023, HMICFRS published their report into culture and values within fire and rescue services. The report concluded that Services have not made enough progress to improve their organisational culture and that in some Services bullying, harassment and discrimination continues to exist. HIWFRS was not exempt from this criticism and during our 2022 inspection our staff reported that they had experienced bullying and discrimination within our Service.

4. HMICFRS' report makes 35 recommendations for services, the NFCC and Home Office, 19 of which are for individual fire and rescue services to progress. We have reviewed these 19 recommendations and this report provides a summary of our position and progress at paragraphs 6-8. For ease of reading, we have grouped these into complete, partially complete, and not yet started, with a supporting summary description.
5. We have also considered findings and recommendations from the London Fire Brigade (LFB) Culture Review and our own 2022 Inspection report. We have used this insight to develop further actions that go beyond the requirements of HMICFRS. These are outlined in paragraph 11.

COMPLETED RECOMMENDATIONS

6. These recommendations are complete, and this has been shared with HMICFRS.

Recommendation	Summary
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.	Since the introduction of the Core Code of Ethics, we have further developed our values and behaviours to ensure these aligned with, and incorporated, the Code. We have tracked our progress against the Fire Standard and this was reviewed by the Chief and Executive Group on 4 May 2023 where all 10 elements of the standard were noted as reasonably or substantially assured.
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.	We have recently reviewed our performance reporting which includes staff demographic data. We have improved how we capture, present and share this information as was highlighted in the Annual Performance Report noted at Fire Authority in June 2023. We provide returns to the Home Office and HMICFRS in line with their requirements, and in line with guidance provided in the NFCC EDI data toolkit.

<p>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 the Service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports.</p>	<p>Our Learning and Development department have developed a comprehensive 360-degree feedback tool which is accessible for all leaders and managers within the Service. The tool specifically asks about their demonstration of the Service values and behaviours, along with the code of ethics.</p> <p>Over the past 12 months, 30 middle to senior managers have undertaken 360-degree feedback and are being supported by the Learning and Development department to incorporate the feedback into their leadership development programmes.</p> <p>We have also participated in the NFCC survey into 360-degree tools.</p>
<p>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 the Service.</p>	<p>As above.</p> <p>During 2021/22 senior leaders participated in a programme of development with an organisational development consultant. This involved individual and directorate team discussions about how the senior leadership team operated. This feedback was then incorporated into a development programme which covered challenge and conflict, critical feedback and suggestions for improved ways of working, alongside use of action learning sets to improve coaching skills.</p> <p>In addition, the Executive Group members have completed the Certificate in Company Direction via the Institute of Directors (IOD), and have recently undertaken an Independent Board Evaluation Review by the IOD, the feedback of which will be incorporated into development plans for 23/24.</p>

<p>With immediate effect, chief fire officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:</p> <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. 	<p>HMICFRS formally wrote to all Services requesting this information on 7 February 2023. We responded providing the requested information on 15 February and since then we have continued to send updates (either of new cases or closure of previously notified cases) via our Service Liaison Lead (SLL).</p>
<p>By 1 January 2024, chief fire officers should:</p> <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. 	<p>Our DBS arrangements were subject to scrutiny via internal audit in 2018/19 and again in 2021/22 which concluded that there had been a significant improvement. Both reports were also subject to scrutiny via the Fire Authority's Standards and Governance Committee.</p> <p>We have a comprehensive Criminal History (DBS) Procedure which outlines the expectations and processes surrounding DBS checks. We have a role mapping document which outlines the level of DBS check and recheck required, in line with the DBS Code of Practice, for each role across the Service, and have undertaken a complete review of all employees against this. In order to ensure continued compliance, we monitor any changes which might require further checks to be undertaken on a quarterly basis. We also have a process in place to be followed, which includes the completion of a risk assessment, for any positive disclosures received.</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>We introduced an anonymous reporting line in April 2022 which is provided via an external agency. There are full details of how to make a report on our portal and the agency has also visited many of our teams across Hampshire and Isle of Wight to discuss their service and provide assurance of their independence from the Service. In the first 12 months, the line received 21 reports from our staff. These are only shared with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Director of People and Organisational Development, who ensure each report is responded to and appropriate action taken.</p> <p>On our website, we have an online form for members of the public who wish to raise a concern or make a complaint about our service or our employees.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Where serious concerns are raised, the Service appoints a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) at minimum of Head of Service/Area Manager/Assistant Director level. The SRO has overall accountability for ensuring required standards are met, the case is progressed within agreed timelines and that at all times there is due regard to the wellbeing of all involved. Importantly, the SRO acts as a point of escalation for all parties and can be contacted independently by the individual, investigating officer, HR advisor, or trade union representative if they have concerns regarding how the case is being handled or believe additional support is required. The SRO can instigate additional wellbeing support such as providing a welfare officer or accessing enhanced confidential counselling services. Where appropriate, the SRO will also ensure organisational learning and debrief/feedback is considered.</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>As previously mentioned, we introduced an anonymous reporting line in April 2022 which is provided via an external agency.</p> <p>We also have a whistleblowing procedure which is available on our portal and which details the process for raising a concern. It also provides contact information for the Monitoring Officer, Auditors and other external agencies in the event the employee does not wish to report their concerns internally.</p>
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PARTIALLY COMPLETE RECOMMENDATIONS

7. These recommendations are in progress but are not yet complete. We recognise that some of the recommendations are likely to take far longer to materialise, such as improving the diversity of our workforce. However, the plans are in place to support achievement of these aims. These updates have been shared with HMICFRS.

Recommendation	Summary
<p>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.</p>	<p>We utilise operational roles where there is a requirement to do so, either from a role descriptor perspective or to ensure sufficient numbers for an operational rota. Where there is no requirement for a role to be operational, we routinely advertise roles for all staff to apply. A very recent example was the Head of Community Safety, which has previously always been undertaken by an operational manager (Group Manager) and is now being delivered by a non-operational manager. We also changed our Assistant Director (Area Manager) Policy and Risk to a non-operational role.</p> <p>We are committed to developing our staff and regularly provide development roles, secondments and temporary opportunities</p>

	<p>for non-operational staff. We have recently increased the size of our health and safety team, and this has provided an opportunity for existing staff to gain a new professional skillset. We have seen individuals transition from admin and event support roles to qualified H&S Advisors.</p> <p>We will continue to work with our network groups to identify and tackle any inequalities of opportunity.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>We seek to be representative of the communities we serve and where appropriate take positive action to improve diversity in our Service. We have worked with our staff network groups to identify and tackle barriers to entry for under represented groups.</p> <p>We benefit from a diverse leadership team both within Executive Group and at Heads of Service level, and are committed to mirroring this diversity at all levels of the Service. However, we recognise this is an ongoing priority that will require long-term commitment.</p> <p>We are closely connected to the current direct-entry pilots delivered by the Fire Service College and hope to be part of a future cohort. However, we already have experience of enabling direct entry as our current Deputy Chief Fire Officer transitioned from non-operational to operational when she became Assistant Chief Fire Officer.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>We have a range of leadership and management development programmes available for all our staff, complemented by access to coaching, mentoring and 360-degree feedback. We also facilitate team development days and use</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>psychometric analysis tools to help team members know each other better and improve overall team performance.</p> <p>We also encourage staff to undertake external programmes such as the Executive Leadership Programme (ELP), Windsor Leadership courses, as well as MBAs.</p> <p>Our Fire Authority members have induction and development days throughout the year.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>We currently monitor through HR cases and our anonymous reporting line. However, as part of internal culture review we will develop further tools and plans to regularly monitor and address cultural issues within our teams.</p>
<p>By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the Fire Standards Board leading the service standard and its leading and developing people standard.</p>	<p>We have an agreed framework for assuring our organisational alignment with Fire Standards as they are published. In respect of the leading the service standard and leading and developing people standard, we are following our assurance framework. This involves completion of a gap analysis and development of an action plan for areas of limited assurance.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>We have all staffing groups represented on our values and behaviours group (recently renamed to Culture, Ethics and Behaviours Group) who have worked to develop and embed our Service values and behaviours.</p> <p>We regularly seek feedback from staff on a range of topics. We utilise our various manager engagement forums and network</p>

	<p>groups as well as intelligence from station visits or anonymous reports to identify ‘hot topics’ within the organisation. We then ensure we provide updates and feedback on these issues and/or that they are covered in Chief’s briefings.</p> <p>Most of our staff told HMIC that they have development discussions with their managers (although some of these are not subsequently recorded on the PDR app). During these reviews of their performance, they discuss whether they demonstrated our values in undertaking their role and achieving their objectives.</p> <p>As part of our internal culture review, we will improve our understanding of the current cultural challenges within HIWFRS and develop a plan to address issues raised by our employees.</p>
<p>By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.</p>	<p>Where serious concerns are raised, the Service appoints a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) at Head of Service/Area Manager/Assistant Director level. The SRO has overall accountability for ensuring required standards are met, the case is progressed within agreed timelines and that at all times there is due regard to the wellbeing of all involved. Importantly, the SRO acts as a point of escalation for all parties and can be contacted independently by the individual, investigating officer, HR advisor, or trade union representative if they have concerns regarding how the case is being handled or believe additional support is required. The SRO can instigate additional wellbeing support such as providing a welfare officer or accessing enhanced confidential counselling services. Where appropriate, the SRO will also ensure</p>

	<p>organisational learning and debrief/feedback is considered.</p> <p>Following consideration of this report by Fire Authority, the Chief Fire Officer will respond to HMICFRS as requested.</p>
<p>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 the 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.</p>	<p>The role of the SRO is to have oversight of cases to ensure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way for all staff involved.</p> <p>Where cases are particularly complex or sensitive, we have a specialist investigation team who manage the investigation. We also utilise external independent services where this would be most appropriate.</p> <p>If an employee makes an anonymous report via our confidential reporting line, they are provided a reference number and can then use this to access the response. This means that even those who wish to remain anonymous can be kept updated.</p> <p>At this time, based on casework and numbers of concerns raised, there is limited requirement for a 'professional standards' function. However, this situation will remain under review by the Director of People and Organisational Development.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS NOT YET STARTED

8. These recommendations are not yet started. An explanation is provided in the summary column.

Recommendation	Summary
By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.	HMICFRS are currently working with the Fire Standards Board to develop the standard. Once published, we will undertake a gap analysis and develop a plan to ensure compliance with the standard.
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.	As above.

FURTHER WORK

9. Although we know our staff told the inspectorate they had experienced bullying and discrimination, we do not know any further information about how, where and for whom this behaviour manifests. Without this information, it is difficult to know where best to apply our efforts to have the biggest impact and as such we need to start with a shared understanding of the current cultural challenges within HIWFRS.
10. Therefore, we are going to undertake an independent review of our current culture to provide meaningful and insightful information about the experience of working within HIWFRS, and more importantly what changes our teams would like to see. We will appoint external expertise to undertake this review, to include a survey and workshop/forums, as we believe our staff will share more openly with an independent agency.
11. This review will take several months to complete. However, based on insights from our own inspection report, the culture review in LFB and hearing from other Services at an NFCC culture and values seminar, we have developed a plan for current activity that goes beyond the

requirements of HMICFRS and will address concerns already identified. The actions are listed below.

Action	Outcome	Target date
Develop a dashboard of measures/indicators that provides an ongoing assessment of our culture. Use these dashboards to proactively address problems and identify and learn from good practice.	The Service can periodically assess the health of its culture, track patterns, and take swift action to address emerging issues.	December 2023
Develop and refresh EDI training to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying, harassment and discrimination • Recognising and tackling inappropriate behaviour • Protected characteristics and positive action 	<p>All employees feeling empowered to challenge inappropriate behaviour.</p> <p>Training relevant to role and responsibilities and embedded within leadership development training/ promotional pathways.</p> <p>Managers adopting zero-tolerance for bullying, harassment and discrimination.</p>	April 2024
Development of management charter in line with our values and behaviours.	Commitment from leaders and managers of how they will fulfil their managerial role.	April 2024
Enhance training provision for all on mental health prevention, healthy cultures and the link between inclusion and wellbeing.	Leaders and manager can build and maintain inclusive, healthy and high performing teams.	January 2024
Develop wellbeing PDR toolkit to enable discussions to spot red flags that indicate deteriorating mental health.	Managers are able to spot the red flags that signal deteriorating mental health and know how to access support.	April 2024

Create an HR Analytics Data Strategy and develop HR data analytic skills.	Development of strategy and underpinning policies and decisions will be evidence based. We will use data to create insights that support a process of continuous improvement across people management practices.	December 2024
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12. In addition to the above activity, we have been reviewing the support to our managers, particularly in relation to HR services, which are currently provided via our shared services partnership with Hampshire County Council and Hampshire Constabulary.
13. We have surveyed our managers on their experience of using these HR services and they have told us that they would like greater access to HR support including being able to communicate via telephone or face-to-face rather than only via email. They would also appreciate HR advisors being more embedded within the organisation and able to give professional advice nuanced to the fire service context. There is also demand for working outside of normal office hours to support on-call colleagues and an ability to travel to fire stations to attend meetings. Moving forward, managers would like to be upskilled and more confident in dealing with HR cases and believe training from HR could assist with this.
14. The shared services delivery model for HR is based on being as efficient as possible which requires managers to self-serve and HR advisors to provide advice across all partners which means it cannot easily be adapted for different contexts. In discussion with shared services colleagues there is limited scope to change the delivery model to meet the needs of our managers. Therefore, we are having discussions about how best to deliver HR services in the future and whether continuing to use this aspect of the shared services partnership is right for our organisation.

SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

15. ***Our People:*** *We look after each other by creating great places to work and promoting the health, wellbeing, and safety of our people.*
16. ***High Performance:*** *Our diverse teams are trusted, skilled and feel equipped to deliver a leading fire and rescue service today and into the future.*

17. The activity described within this report seeks to improve the cultural health of HIWFRS and ensures we are making progress against the recommendations published by HMICFRS.

CONSULTATION

18. There is no public consultation required by the proposals outlined within this paper. The representative bodies are aware of our intentions to undertake a cultural review using an independent consultancy and are supportive of this.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

19. For the independent review to be well-received by our workforce and provide insights for future change, there is work to do to prepare the organisation for the review. There will also need to be regular liaison with procurement to select the consultancy, followed by working with the consultants to oversee the work, and subsequently to produce reports and recommendations for future activity.
20. There is insufficient capacity within the People and Organisational Development Directorate to lead this work on cultural change. Therefore, Executive Group have approved funding from transformations reserve for temporary resources to support this activity and to fund the independent review.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

21. No adverse impact have been identified in the development of these proposals. However, further impact assessments will be required for the cultural review to mitigate any potential barriers to participation.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

22. No direct legal implications as a result of this paper.

OPTIONS – CULTURAL REVIEW

23. HIWFRA note the progress and breadth of work being undertaken to improve the cultural health of our organisation [RECOMMENDED].
24. Alternatively, HIWFRA may choose to request further information before noting progress.

RISK ANALYSIS

25. There is a national spotlight on Fire and Rescue Services to demonstrate how they are addressing the issues identified by HMICFRS within their organisational cultures and the behaviours of their workforces. Failure to tackle these issues within HIWFRS may damage our reputation, impact on the motivation and morale of our workforce, result in legal costs associated with employment tribunal claims, and lead to future poor inspection results.
26. The proposals in this report seek to address the cultural challenges identified by HMICFRS at a national level and local issues we have identified through our own employee engagement and performance reporting. The associated costs are considered to be proportionate when weighed up against the potential risk factors that could arise from failing to do anything.

EVALUATION

27. The success of the proposals in this paper will be evaluated in 12 months' time against several anticipated benefits such as participation and engagement in cultural review.

CONCLUSION

28. This report details progress against the recommendations in the HMICFRS spotlight report on culture and values within fire services, as well as describing further activity we intend to take in relation to the cultural health of our organisation.
29. The overarching aim of this activity is to improve the cultural health of our organisation and to ensure that managers and staff have access to training and support so they can play their part in making HIWFRS a great place to work for all.
30. This report asks the Fire Authority to note both the progress and the breadth of work being undertaken to improve the cultural health of our organisation and to ensure that we can continue to make HIWFRS a great place to work for all.

RECOMMENDATION

31. That Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority note the progress and breadth of work to improve the cultural health of our organisation.

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