



HMICFRS report: Values and cultures in fire and rescue services

Recommendations

Raising Concerns

	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap – further actions
1	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>The service has multiple ways to raise concerns. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A confidential and independent whistleblowing helpline, 'Protect'.A newly launched (16th January 2023) helpline, 'Safe Share'. <p>Since January 2023, awareness of how to share concerns has been highlighted to staff on several occasions, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Desktop 'wallpaper' since January 202316 January 2023 – presentation at Managers Briefing for cascade to all staff	1 October 2023	<p>Obtain data from 'Protect' to establish usage which might help to demonstrate staff awareness (by 31 May 2023).</p> <p>Undertake pulse survey to check in that staff are aware of how to share concerns (by 30 June 2023).</p> <p>Work with Staff Network leads to check in that staff are aware of how to share concerns (by 30 June 2023).</p>

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	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap – further actions
		<p>27 April 2023 – e-letter from CFO to all staff</p> <p>27 March 2023 – included in Leaders Conference</p> <p>31 March 2023 – e-letter from CFO to all staff</p> <p>Various dates – CFO included in ‘Ask me Anything’ sessions</p>		
3	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>In December 2022, an independent review of all grievance cases and allegations made in the last 12 months was commissioned. The aim of this was to ensure that concerns have been managed appropriately and, if this is not the case, that lessons can be learned. The cases that were reviewed included those which referenced bullying, harassment, criminal allegations, racism, misogyny, prejudicial and improper behaviour and misconduct.</p>	1 June 2023	<p>Going forward, all employees that raise a concern will have a single point of contact from the HR team. Throughout the lifespan of a case, there will be qualitative ‘check in’ points to ensure that updates are being given and support is suitable. On conclusion of a case, a series of quantitative questions will be asked of the person who raised concerns. Questions will include satisfaction about the support provided.</p> <p>A report will be provided to the CFO and SLT in December 2023 which reflects the qualitative and quantitative feedback from this approach.</p>

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		<p>This review was received and considered by the CFO in April 2023. Whilst there were recommendations which have been adopted, the review concluded that concerns had been managed appropriately and outcomes of the cases were considered to be broadly reasonable.</p> <p>Separate to this, counselling support is available to all staff and is well utilised. In 2022/23, 117 colleagues used our counselling services.</p> <p>Coaching is also available to all staff and is well utilised. 244 people have utilised this in the last 12 months.</p>		
4	Chief fire officers should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them. The	In relation to how concerns are being handled, see progress detailed in recommendation 3. A review was commissioned and	1 June 2023	<p>Please see action point 3.</p> <p>Recommendations from ‘Safer Together’ will be incorporated into the People Strategy Action Plan 2022/23 and 2023/24 as appropriate.</p>

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	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap – further actions
	<p>updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the service response.</p> <p>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</p>	<p>received. This has provided the necessary assurance.</p> <p>In relation to a professional standards function, consideration is being given to this.</p>		<p>Finalise draft role profile for a temporary Head of Professionalism who will be tasked with exploring options for creating a professional standards function (by 31 May 2023).</p>
5	<p>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</p>	<p>Information is available for all staff about how they raise concerns and access confidential support (see evidence referred to for recommendation 1).</p> <p>Information is available for the public on how they can raise concerns. This information is accessible and ‘two clicks’ from the</p>	1 June 2023	<p>The PFCC’s website does not currently detail how Fire and Rescue related complaints will be responded to (to be discussed by 31 May 2023).</p> <p>Public perception survey to include a question about whether members of the public know how to raise concerns (by 31 December 2023).</p>

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	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.	main ECFRS webpage. This includes a statement about confidentiality. Our annual report also details how concerns can be raised.		

Background checks

	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap
9	<p>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 	<p>In relation to background checks, a full Safer Recruitment audit was carried out with feedback provided on 1 March 2023. This resulted in some recommendations which have been implemented.</p> <p>On 9 August 2022, the CFO and SLT approved an approach to requesting basic DBS checks for all FRA staff and representatives of the service.</p>	1 January 2024	<p>Continue with implementation of additional DBS checks (CFO and SLT to be provided with an update on 12 July 2023).</p> <p>By 31 March 2024, all members of staff will have a DBS check.</p>

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	requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standards Board	On 15 November 2022, an implementation plan was approved by the CFO and SLT. This began with a consultation period which concluded on 28 April 2023. Implementation is proceeding as planned.		
10	Chief constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services.	In January 2022, the CFO and the Chief Constable agreed use of common law police disclosure powers. These have been used appropriately since then for cases where there is substantial public interest. A presumption to disclose convictions and other information to relevant parties, unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so, is considered lawful. We are notified in relation to all recordable convictions, cautions, reprimands, and final warnings unless there are exceptional, reasons which make it inappropriate to do so.	1 September 2023	No further actions required.

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Misconduct Handling

	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap
12	Chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling.	This standard has not yet been developed or published. We will implement the standard as soon as it is available.	1 March 2024	N/a
14	Chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.	This standard has not yet been developed or published. We will implement the standard as soon as it is available.	1 March 2024	N/a
17	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 	As requested by HMICFRS, an initial notification was made on 14 February 2023. Since that date, further notifications have been made as allegations which meet the stated criteria have arisen.	Immediately	No further action required.

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	the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are of a serious nature; or • relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades. 			
18	Chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	Existing support is in place as detailed in response to recommendation 3.	1 August 2023	As with recommendation 3. In addition, work will be undertaken with staff networks to understand whether any different or further support would be welcomed (by 30 June 2023). Safer Together recommendations to be included in People Strategy Action Plan 2022/23 and 2023/24 as required.

Leadership

	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap
20	Chief fire officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the Fire Standards Board's leading	Actions relating to both Fire Standards to be provided to Continuous Improvement Board by 1 September 2023.	1 June 2023	Actions relating to both Fire Standards to be provided to Continuous Improvement Board by 1 September 2023.

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	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap
	the service standard and its leading and developing people standard.			
21	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.	<p>360-degree feedback is regularly used as a development and feedback tool throughout the organisation. We utilise a tool called TLQ-360 and support delivery of feedback with coaching sessions to support the transformation of feedback to action.</p> <p>360-degree feedback has been used 62 times in the last 12 months. The Service Leadership Team last had formalised 360 feedback in 2020.</p>	1 June 2023	<p>360-feedback, using the existing TLQ 360 tool, will be utilised by all members of SLT within the organisation by 1 October 2023 (mid-year appraisal time). Feedback will be supported by both group and individual coaching (by 1 December 2023).</p> <p>Next level to be complete by 31 March 2024.</p>
22	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	As above, TLQ-360 is in place and regularly utilised.	1 September 2023	<p>360-feedback, using the existing TLQ 360 tool will be utilised by 1 October 2023 (mid-year appraisal time). Feedback will be supported by both group and individual coaching (by 31 March 2024).</p> <p>The rest of the organisation will continue to have access to TLQ-360 feedback as they currently do.</p>

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	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap
23	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>Extensive feedback received through 2022 staff survey.</p> <p>Feedback from staff survey acted upon through action plans and activity woven into annual planning and People Strategy Action Plan.</p> <p>Appraisals for April / May 2023 included a prompt to discuss wellbeing, values and behaviours.</p> <p>A continuous schedule of SLT visits to all stations and departments enables opportunities for feedback.</p> <p>Feedback is also encouraged from a variety of other sources including 'Ask Me Anything'. Recent letters received anonymously have provided an opportunity to seek further feedback.</p>	1 June 2023	<p>Additional pulse surveys to be run through June 2023 to further seek feedback.</p> <p>A cultural dashboard is being developed to be produced six-weekly for the SLT. The dashboard will include themes from Safe Share (by 1 October 2023).</p>
24	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	Monthly reporting is in place which reports on a number of metrics which are cultural indicators e.g. absence levels and employee relations cases.	1 October 2023	Cultural dashboard to be created by 1 October 2023.

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	prompt remedial action for any issues they identify.	<p>A number of actions are in place to enable two-way communication. These include:</p> <p>Six weekly meetings take place between the CFO and approximately 100 leaders of the service.</p> <p>Monthly 'ask me anything' sessions with the CFO which are open to all.</p> <p>A rolling schedule of SLT visits to all stations and departments.</p> <p>These communication opportunities provide opportunity for issues to be raised and responded to.</p>		

Diversity data

	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap
27	Chief fire officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the	An independent external review was commissioned in April 2022 with feedback and recommendations from the independent reviewer provided on	1 June 2023	Commission a follow up review to assess maturity level with enhanced PIA approach in place. PIA app to go live (pending user testing). Create a PIA quarterly review board for

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	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap										
	National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit	<p>3 July 2022. At that point the ECFRS PIA maturity level was assessed as ‘embracing’.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">ECFRS & PIA Maturity level (Now)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Compliant</td> <td>PIAs completed to avoid legal risks</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Embracing</td> <td>PIAs are completed has some influence but largely seen as separate from the policy/strategy or project</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integrated</td> <td>The PIA is seen as core & governs the policy/strategy or project</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inclusive</td> <td>The PIA consistently governs the policy/strategy or project and regularly challenges and enhances the policy/strategy or project</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Since then, our PIA approach has been enhanced with a PIA hub launched to support colleagues’ use of PIAs.</p>	ECFRS & PIA Maturity level (Now)		Compliant	PIAs completed to avoid legal risks	Embracing	PIAs are completed has some influence but largely seen as separate from the policy/strategy or project	Integrated	The PIA is seen as core & governs the policy/strategy or project	Inclusive	The PIA consistently governs the policy/strategy or project and regularly challenges and enhances the policy/strategy or project		assurance and learning (by 1 October 2023).
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28	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	Equality and diversity data are reported on a monthly basis to the Performance and Resources Board. This is utilised more broadly to demonstrate ‘due regard’ through People Impact Assessments (PIAs). Our PIA approach has been enhanced with a PIA hub launched to support colleagues’ use of PIAs.	1 June 2023	No further action required; continue with existing action.										

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	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap
		Whilst the NFCC EDI data toolkit is focussed on ethnicity data, the principles of data collection outlined within the toolkit have been applied more broadly.		

Improving Diversity

	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap
32	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>The CFO and SLT re-considered use of Direct Entry on 1 November 2022 and agreed to continue engaging with the self-funded NFCC direct entry project and the pilot sites, taking on board their learning over the next 12 months and diarised to consider participation in the next phase in September 2023</p> <p>The CFO and SLT also committed to continuing use of the strategic workforce plan to ensure that we have planned internal development to address</p>	1 June 2023	<p>Continue with existing actions.</p> <p>Next positive action plan due 1 September 2023. Succession plans to include direct link to diversity (by 1 September 2023).</p>

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		<p>recruitment challenges in specific areas and to ensure that our staff have the right operational skills and competencies. We continue to create development plans, focussed on those identified through LRS and succession plans which see development at an appropriate speed for the individual.</p> <p>Positive action plans are in place and a pre-mortem relating to this work was carried out on 4 May 2023.</p> <p>We are currently exploring a research project with the University of Essex regarding positive action and improving diversity.</p> <p>Use of Practice to Progress will further target development of individuals who are currently under-represented.</p>		
33	Chief fire officers should develop plans to promote	The Leadership, Resourcing and Succession (LRS) pool is in place	1 August 2023	We will develop a series of case studies from existing non-operational

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	<p>progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity</p>	<p>for all roles. The LRS is essential in meeting current and future demand for skills and capacity.</p> <p>We have multiple examples of progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles but could do more to highlight these.</p> <p>We are engaging with Practice to Progress to support development of all employees that are under-represented within our service.</p> <p>We are using the NFCC Supervisory Development package.</p> <p>Coaching, appraisal and development conversations are available for all and are well utilised.</p>		<p>colleagues who have accessed promotion and which highlight the progression paths available (by 31 July 2023).</p> <p>We will launch 'Practice to Progress' to support development of all employees that are under-represented within our service (by 31 July 2023).</p>

The Core Code of Ethics

	Recommendation	Progress	By When	Gap
34	<p>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.</p>	<p>Implementation of the Core Code of Ethics was reviewed by SLT in November 2022 and by the Performance and Resources Board in December 2022. The next review is due in June 2023.</p> <p>Discussion around the Core Code is continual. The April 2023 Managers Briefing included the review of Ethics and Values.</p> <p>All appraisal conversations in April / May 2023 included a discussion point regarding the Core Code of Ethics.</p> <p>An independent audit into culture and behaviours (including the Core Code of Ethics) is taking place in May and June 2023.</p>	Immediately	<p>Provide review of implementation and audit feedback to CFO and SLT in July 2023.</p>