



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Human Resources Committee

# **INDEPENDENT CULTURE REVIEW OF LONDON FIRE BRIGADE (LFB)**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 13 January 2023

**Purpose of Report:**

To provide Members with an update on the London Fire Brigade's Independent Culture Review.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the content of the report.
- Support the Service's commitment and approach to developing an inclusive culture at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 An independent review of the culture of London Fire Brigade (LFB) was recommended as part of the internal investigation into the death of development firefighter Jaden Matthew Francois-Espirit, who tragically took his own life in August 2020.
- 1.2 The Review is a thorough examination of the culture at London Fire Brigade, chaired by Nazir Afzal OBE. Over a period of twelve months, he and his team heard from more than 2,000 current and former members of staff and community groups who shared their experiences of the Brigade. At the end of this period Nazir, and his team wrote a report explaining their findings, which can be found on the [LFB website](#).
- 1.3 It is suggested that Members of the HR Committee should be made aware of this report, given the potential impact on the rest of the Fire sector and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, more locally.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 The LFB report paints a picture of poor behaviour and painful experiences over many years. It highlights that women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic, LGBTQ+ and neurodiverse staff experience poor treatment and do less well in their careers at LFB.
- 2.2 Issues were also identified with leadership, and with staff fearing to speak out about abuse. Additionally, the report includes examples of very poor behaviour towards members of the public.
- 2.3 LFB have said they are taking immediate steps to end discrimination, harassment and bullying at London Fire Brigade. These steps include:
  - Establishing a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and bullying. Anyone accused of this behaviour is to be immediately suspended and dismissed if the accusation is upheld.
  - Introducing a new external complaints investigation service so that staff can feel safe to speak up and cases can be handled objectively and confidentially.
  - Reviewing all of their people-related processes to eliminate discrimination, including involving independent people to make immediate improvements where practical.
  - Making it much easier and quicker for staff to access help and support. LFB Staff provide an essential emergency response service and are frequently exposed to traumatic incidents, which requires improved support.
  - They're making a permanent shift in their approach to leadership ensuring leaders are setting and uphold high standards, so those

leaders who do not value transparency, accountability and fairness will no longer have a place at LFB. There will also be an expectation that leaders own their past mistakes.

### Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Context

- 2.4 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has been committed to, and investing in, the development of its workforce and culture for a significant period of time. Whilst acknowledging the evident challenges the sector has and understanding that some of these are shared in Nottinghamshire, the Service has made some significant progress in becoming a more inclusive and welcoming organisation and service provider.
- 2.5 Whilst changes to the diversity of the workforce are incremental, the Service continues to make improvements in this area. In particular, the work the Service has done with Stonewall and more locally to become a more LGBTQ+ friendly employer is impacting on attraction rates for jobs.
- 2.6 Internally, the Service's proactive employee networks are providing a platform for staff to ensure that diverse voices are heard and that this influences decision-making. This will be further developed early in 2023 with the inclusion of an 'open-seat' at Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) meetings, facilitating greater inclusion and diversity at these internal governance meetings.
- 2.7 Training has been reviewed and the Service is starting to ensure that the needs of diverse communities are woven into operational training and command scenarios. The introduction of a communication guide for firefighters to interact with Deaf service users more confidently is another positive step.
- 2.8 Staff Survey data from 2022 demonstrates that employees are trusted to get on with their jobs and that they feel a real sense of belonging to the organisation. Teams look after one another and line managers are managing their employees' health and wellbeing at work. This data does not demonstrate differential experiences for minority groups but it does show that the SLT need to do more to engage with staff to build trust and communicate a vision. The survey also showed that systems and processes are not always making it easy for employees to do their jobs.

### Next Steps

- 2.9 The Service understands, however, that it still has work to do to ensure that all staff can bring their best, most authentic selves to work. The Service commissioned its own Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Review at the end of 2021 and started work on its 12-point plan in April 2022. This review highlighted a range of workstreams for the organisation to focus on and the LFB Report will strengthen the organisation's resolve to make long-lasting changes to improve culture, services and workplaces at NFRS.
- 2.10 The first part of this work will be to release a Joint Statement from the Chief Fire Officer, Chair of the Fire Authority, employee networks and other key stakeholders respond to the LFB report and some of the other stories which have been emerging from Fire and Rescue Services in recent months.

2.11 During 2023, the Service will be:

- Acting on the EDI training review to improve awareness and understanding for staff.
- Further embedding EDI considerations into strategy development, business planning and policy development.
- Working harder to understand new and emerging communities via Census 2021 data.
- Enhancing the Service's built environment to ensure dignity for all.
- Improving openness and transparency in decision-making via use of internal and external advisory groups and networks.
- Working to further embed the National Core Code of Ethics.

2.12 It is essential that the Service maintains the trust of its communities to ensure that it can deliver its services effectively, whilst enhancing its reputation as an employer of choice across the City and County. This will be a key focus for the Chief Fire Officer and his Strategic Leadership Team over the next 12 months and beyond.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The human resource or learning and development implications are noted in the report and will be met by existing budgets.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this is not a policy, function or service. However, it should be noted that the contents of the LFB report may influence the way in which NFRS delivers its EDI aims and objectives.

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The advancement of equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it is a key element of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010).

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

A failure to represent the community being served or to provide an inclusive workplace can impact upon trust and confidence in public services. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is cognisant of this as a risk to its reputation and ability to engage with its communities and service users.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

There are no collaboration implications arising from this work. However, NFRS works closely with partners locally and nationally to share, develop and implement best practice.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the content of the report.
- 10.2 Support the Service's commitment and approach to developing an inclusive culture at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

Craig Parkin  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**