



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

HMICFRS VALUES AND CULTURE SPOTLIGHT REPORT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 21 April 2023

Purpose of Report:

To inform Members of the recent publication by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services of a spotlight review of the values and culture in fire and rescue services, and outline the steps being taken by the Service to address the recommendations.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the content of the report from HMICFRS.
- Support the approach of the Chief Fire Officer in addressing the Service's continued cultural journey.
- Accept to receive updates against the specific HMICFRS recommendations.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following recent reports of misconduct, and the findings of the Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade, the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire commissioned a spotlight report into the values and culture of the fire and rescue service.
- 1.2 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) committed to returning a report by April 2023 and, in January 2023, began their assessment of the sector in this area.
- 1.3 HMICFRS considered the specific themes of values and culture (including bullying, harassment, and discrimination); training and skills; fairness and diversity; and leadership.
- 1.4 A focus on the evidence gathered during the second round of inspections of fire and rescue services was used by the Inspectorate, as well as a range of other sources of information, to form the basis of the findings and recommendations for the report.
- 1.5 The report was published by HMICFRS on Thursday 30 March 2023.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 HMICFRS highlight in the report that they have repeatedly expressed concern about values and culture in the fire and rescue service since they began inspections in 2018; reporting that they have found long-standing and apparently deep-rooted issues relating to values, culture, fairness, and diversity across the sector.
- 2.2 The Inspectorate reports that while some progress has been made, it is clear much more needs to be done to improve values and culture in Services and that they continue to find that:
 - Some Services need to get better at promoting positive professional cultures;
 - Most Services need to do more to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion; and
 - Progression opportunities for staff are not equal, which is hindering the potential for greater diversity of thought in Services' leadership teams
- 2.3 The Inspectorate also reflected that whilst around a quarter of Services had improved, they had issued 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' grades to just under half (17) of Services and that 'causes for concern' are currently in place in relation to culture and values in five Services.
- 2.4 The report highlights that a further two Services are currently under the 'engage' enhanced monitoring process, with culture and values findings being contributory to this.

- 2.5 The spotlight report cites examples of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour by some fire service staff and highlights that staff survey results provided examples of bullying, harassment and discrimination in all Services.
- 2.6 HMICFRS reports a culture where staff, including some managers, did not always feel comfortable to challenge poor behaviour and that some people chose not to speak out at fear of it being detrimental to their career. It is highlighted, however, that some Services handle concerns appropriately and have taken steps to addressing cultural issues.
- 2.7 The report presents 35 recommendations from HMICFRS to improve the sector. Of note, 19 are detailed as a requirement for Chief Fire Officers to deliver, whilst the other recommendations are directed to other national bodies such as the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs' Council, the Home Office, Government, the Fire Standards Board, and Chief Constables.
- 2.8 The recommendations are broken down into the areas of:
- Raising concerns;
 - Background checks;
 - Misconduct handling;
 - Leadership;
 - Management and leadership training and development;
 - Diversity data;
 - Improving diversity;
 - The Core Code of Ethics;
 - The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England.
- 2.9 Each recommendation has a timeframe allocated to it by which HMICFRS state that they expect to see implementation. Two of the recommendations are for immediate implementation, with the others spread over a timeframe of 12 months.

LOCAL CONTEXT

- 2.10 Members will recall that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) was graded as 'Good' for the 'People' pillar of inspection, and the areas of 'values and culture' and 'fairness and diversity' by HMICFRS in the most recent round of inspection.
- 2.11 Whilst the Service is rightfully proud of these gradings, there is no room for complacency and work continues to further improve workplace culture and ensure that everyone has a workplace where they are treated with dignity and respect and feel safe. It is highlighted by HMICFRS, and accepted, that even in a 'good' workplace, there are some staff who may behave inappropriately.

- 2.12 Members will be aware that the Service had an independent review of EDI undertaken in 2021 which presented recommendations, and a resulting 12-point action plan, that is being implemented.
- 2.13 This work has complemented and supported the Service's approach to embedding the Core Code of Ethics which has been progressed since their publication in 2021, alongside the Service's values which have been central to the Service's approach since 2015. The Service's own Behavioural Framework was updated in 2020 to incorporate the Core Code of Ethics.
- 2.14 Similarly, the Service has used the publication of the independent review of culture in London Fire Brigade as an opportunity to reflect on current focus and activity within the Service and learn lessons from the recommendations within that report. A report was presented to this Committee on 13 January 2023 setting out the findings and reflecting on the lessons that could be learned from the review.
- 2.15 In order to maintain the focus, resource and momentum on these improvements, and to address the required recommendations of the HMICFRS spotlight report, the Service's EDI strategic lead is drawing together a single approach under the Service's Year Two Annual Delivery Plan.
- 2.16 This approach will see assurance against the delivery of the HMICFRS recommendations, but also oversee the delivery of the Service's commitment to embed an inclusive culture and approach at NFRS which is set out in the Services' Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) (Goals 4 and 5).
- 2.17 Whilst progress of this workstream will be monitored by the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) through the CRMP Assurance Board, it is proposed that actions against the HMICFRS specific recommendation are reported through this Committee, at intervals aligned to the required deadlines, providing assurance to Members of required progress. Deadlines range from immediate assurance to March 2024.
- 2.18 In line with this proposal, it can be reported that the two recommendations requiring immediate assurance from the CFO have already been progressed. These are:
- Recommendation 17 - CFOs should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:
 - involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in Services;
 - are of a serious nature; or
 - relate to assistant CFOs or those at equivalent or higher grades
 - Recommendation 34 - CFOs should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their Services.

2.19 The full spotlight report from HMICFRS can be found [here](#). A summary of actions for Chief Fire Officers is attached as an appendix to this report for reference.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are human resources and learning and development implications arising from this report in terms of the delivering against the recommendations from the HMI review. These will be clarified and progressed as part of the work being undertaken by the Service's EDI strategic lead under the Service's Year Two Annual Delivery Plan.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken due to the nature of this report. However, there are clearly equality implications arising from the HMI recommendations which will become clearer as workstreams are defined and progressed.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Service's corporate risk register identifies the corporate risks which are impacted by this report. The matters covered by this report potentially impact on the risks of 'employee engagement', 'workforce sustainability', 'health, safety and welfare' and 'Service reputation'.

8.2 The approach of the Chief Fire Officer aims to mitigate these risks through continuing a focussed and resourced approach to both addressing the recommendations from HMICFRS and continuing the Service's cultural development journey.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the content of the report from HMICFRS.
- 10.2 Support the approach of the Chief Fire Officer in addressing the Service's continued cultural journey.
- 10.3 Accept to receive updates against the specific HMICFRS recommendations.

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

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

1 Raising Concerns	By 1 October 2023, CFOs should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes.	1 st October 2023
3 Raising Concerns	By 1 June 2023, CFOs should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.	1 st June 2023
4 Raising Concerns	<p>By 1 June 2023, CFOs should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them.</p> <p>The 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>	1 st June 2023
5 Raising Concerns	<p>By 1 June 2023, CFOs 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).</p> <p>CFOs 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>	1 st June 2023
9 Background Checks	<p>By 1 January 2024, CFOs 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. 	1 st January 2024

12 Misconduct	By 1 March 2024, CFOs should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling.	1 st March 2024
14 Misconduct	By 1 March 2024, CFOs should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.	1 st March 2024
17 Misconduct	With immediate effect, CFOs 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 CFOs or those at equivalent or higher grades 	Immediate
18 Misconduct	By 1 August 2023, CFOs should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	1 st August 2023
20 Leadership	By 1 June 2023, CFOs 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.	1 st June 2023
21 Leadership	By 1 June 2023, CFOs should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (ACFO equivalent and above) in service.	1 st June 2023
22 Leadership	By 1 September 2023, CFOs 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.	1 st September 2023
23 Leadership	By 1 June 2023, CFOs 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.	1 st June 2023
24 Leadership	By 1 October 2023, CFOs 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.	1 st October 2023

27 Diversity Data	By 1 June 2023, CFOs should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the NFCC equality impact assessment toolkit.	1 st June 2023
28 Diversity Data	By 1 June 2023, CFOs 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 NFCC equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit.	1 st June 2023
32 Improving Diversity	By 1 June 2023, CFOs 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.	1 st June 2023
33 Improving Diversity	By 1 August 2023, CFOs 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.	1 st August 2023
34 Core Code of Ethics	With immediate effect, CFOs should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their services.	Immediate