



**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 UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 19 April 2024

**Purpose of Report:**

To provide Members with an update on the Service's progress against the recommendations made within the spotlight review of the values and culture in fire and rescue services published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services in March 2023.

**Recommendations:**

That Members note the progress made against the national recommendations and agree to receive future updates.

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Following reports of misconduct, and the findings of the Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade, the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire published a spotlight report into the values and culture of the fire and rescue service in March 2023. A paper outlining the report was then presented to Human Resources Committee the following month.
- 1.2 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) considered the specific themes of values and culture (including bullying, harassment, and discrimination); training and skills; fairness and diversity; and leadership.
- 1.3 A focus on the evidence gathered during the second round of inspections of fire and rescue services was used by HMICFRS, as well as a range of other sources of information, to form the basis of the findings and recommendations for the report.
- 1.4 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) recognises the impact that reports of this nature can have on the levels of trust within the workforce and in the community itself and is working hard to ensure that the Service's excellent reputation is maintained.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 The Service has taken the opportunity to use the spotlight report to further drive improvement in a range of areas relating to culture, values and workforce diversity. Strategic Goal 4 of the Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-25 outlines the commitment 'to continue to support and develop our workforce and promote an inclusive Service.'
- 2.2 Within the spotlight report, there are 35 recommendations, 20 of which are owned by Chief Fire Officers. Whilst some of the timescales have lapsed on these recommendations, 12 have been completed, with work well underway on the remaining eight recommendations. All recommendations made within the report can be found at Appendix A.
- 2.3 The Service has taken the following actions in response to the recommendations:
  - Supplemented existing reporting lines such as whistleblowing and complaints procedures with "Say So", a confidential reporting line, allowing anonymous reporting of issues.
  - Relunched the staff suggestion scheme 'Little Acorns' and provided strategic and financial support to staff networks which act as a key route for

peer support, identification and escalation of issues and amplifying employee voices outside of more traditional routes.

- Reviewed the policy framework covering this area, including replacing the Service's Harassment and Bullying Policy with a Dignity at Work Policy, which encompasses several policy recommendations from the report including enhancing welfare support for individuals raising concerns.
- NFRS has notified HMICFRS of relevant harassment and bullying cases and acted decisively to resolve these.
- 360-degree feedback has been in place in the Service for several years for middle managers and above. The Service is currently piloting the use of strengths based diagnostic tools for the next cohort of aspiring leaders (first line managers).
- Opportunities for staff feedback are in place via several routes, including the biennial staff survey, Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) visits, staff networks and staff conferences. Further work to develop a cultural dashboard is planned as part of Community Risk Management Plan 2025-28 performance reporting.
- The equality impact assessment (EIA) process has been in place for several years and the Service has adopted the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) template as part of a review. The process has been enhanced further to provide enhanced assurance around recommendations and embed EIA into project and policy development.
- Staff are actively engaged as part of recruitment and selection stakeholder panels for senior appointments in the Service. In addition, end user involvement in projects and procurements for new equipment effectively improves delivery.
- Implementation of fire standards, including leading and developing people, is monitored via SLT on a regular basis. A dedicated project to embed the Core Code of Ethics is in place.
- Consultation is currently underway to enhance DBS-check provision for certain staff groups beyond the basic check which all staff currently undergo at pre-employment.
- Talent pipelines in Fire Protection and other career-graded green book roles were already in place. The Service is enhancing progression pathways for green book staff as part of Futures 25 functional reviews.

2.4 The Service has made significant progress against the recommendations within the report whilst progressing a range of other workstreams relating to the Service's culture, diversity and inclusion aims and objectives.

- 2.5 Significant capital investment has enabled the Service to improve the accessibility and inclusion of the estate with work currently underway at Service Development Centre as well as at four fire stations. Investment has also been made to improve uniform provision for all staff through the uniform review project.
- 2.6 The Service continues to invest in the workforce, including rolling out inclusive leadership training to all middle and senior leaders. The prevention review will see enhanced dedicated resources being available for community engagement (including positive action activities) to support workforce diversity. This will be supported by the development of a 10 year workforce diversity plan which will set out ambitions over the longer-term.
- 2.7 The Service continues to invest in workforce and community engagement, via staff networks, the community advisory group and the community befriending scheme, which has seen all wholetime watches befriending a community group during the financial year 2023/24. This will be further expanded to on-call stations during the next financial years.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

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

- 4.1 There are a range of human resources implications associated with the recommendations within the spotlight report which aims to enhance employee experience and workplace culture, particularly for staff from under-represented groups.
- 4.2 Enhancement of DBS check arrangements will require a change to the terms and conditions for staff.

**5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An EIA has not been undertaken because this is not a new or changed policy, function, service or project.
- 5.2 The nature of this report and the work it has recommended has helped the Service to continue its journey to embed the National Core Code of Ethics and promote an inclusive workplace and Service.

**6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental and sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Negative reporting of culture and values presents a risk to the Service, both from public and staff perception, trust and confidence.
- 8.2 Implementation of the recommendations helps to build a positive workplace culture, mitigating the risk of negative behaviours impacting on communities and staff.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the progress made against the national recommendations and agree to receive future updates.

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

None.

Craig Parkin  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

EXTRACT FROM PAGES 9-16 OF  
HMICFRS VALUES AND CULTURE IN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES REPORT

[Values and culture in fire and rescue services - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/values-and-culture-in-fire-and-rescue-services-report/)

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## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

### Raising concerns

#### Recommendation 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.

#### Recommendation 2

By 1 October 2023, National Employers, the [Local Government Association](#) and the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) should review any current independent arrangements whereby staff can raise concerns outside their FRS. They should then ensure that all FRS staff have access to an independent reporting line that can be used as a confidential way to raise concerns outside their own FRS.

#### Recommendation 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.

#### Recommendation 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.

### **Recommendation 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.

## **Background checks**

### **Recommendation 6**

By 1 January 2024, the Home Office, working with the Ministry of Justice, should make sure that the Government incorporates fire and rescue authority employees within the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 \(Exceptions\) Order 1975](#) so that they are eligible for the appropriate DBS checks.

### **Recommendation 7**

By 1 May 2024, the Home Office, working with the fire and rescue sector, should make sure that the [Police Act 1997 \(Criminal Records\) Regulations 2002](#), or a similar appropriate legislatively enabled solution, makes detailed provisions for fire and rescue services.

### **Recommendation 8**

By 1 December 2023, the [Fire Standards Board](#), in liaison with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), should review the existing relevant standard(s) and underpinning guidance. It should:

- clearly state the requirements for background checks undertaken by services;
- clarify the minimum requirements (including levels of DBS checks) for all roles, particularly roles where staff have access to vulnerable members of the public;
- define the standards required to embed a culture across fire and rescue services that empowers all members of staff and local communities to report concerns; and
- be subject to review following any legislative change.

### **Recommendation 9**

By 1 January 2024, chief fire officers should:

- 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](#).

### **Recommendation 10**

By 1 September 2023, chief constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services.

## **Misconduct handling**

### **Recommendation 11**

By 1 December 2023, the [Fire Standards Board](#), in liaison with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle staff disclosures, complaints and grievances.

### **Recommendation 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.



### **Recommendation 13**

By 1 December 2023, the [Fire Standards Board](#), in liaison with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle misconduct and safeguarding-related allegations and outcomes. These should include requirements to:

- conduct and complete investigations, whether or not the staff member under investigation leaves;
- consider whether the incident requires immediate dismissal;
- provide training for staff who are carrying out investigations; and
- ensure the diversity/neutrality of the investigation panel/person.

### **Recommendation 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.

### **Recommendation 15**

By 1 October 2023, the Home Office should work with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) and fire and rescue service employers to make sure there is a process to handle misconduct allegations against chief fire officers. The Home Office should immediately notify HMICFRS of any allegations and outcomes that it is aware of.

### **Recommendation 16**

By 1 October 2023, the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) should develop and manage a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct (including staff who have already left services). It should ensure that this list is referred to in all appointment processes to prevent those who are barred from rejoining another service. After the College of Fire and Rescue has been established (see recommendation 25), it should take responsibility for managing the list.

### **Recommendation 17**

With immediate effect, chief fire officers 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 FRSs;
- are of a serious nature; or
- relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades.

### **Recommendation 18**

By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.

### **Recommendation 19**

By 1 July 2023, the Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue misconduct cases are appropriate.

## **Leadership**

### **Recommendation 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](#).

### **Recommendation 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.

### **Recommendation 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.

### **Recommendation 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.

### **Recommendation 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.

## **Management and leadership training and development**

### **Recommendation 25**

By 1 January 2025, the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, as proposed by the [White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service](#). There should be no further delay to its implementation.

### **Recommendation 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.

## **Diversity data**

### **Recommendation 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](#).

### **Recommendation 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](#).

### **Recommendation 29**

By 1 December 2023, the Home Office should publish greater detail on the protected characteristic data it collects about FRS staff, including joiners and leavers, by rank and role.

### **Recommendation 30**

By 30 December 2024, the Home Office should align the data it collects on protected characteristics with the [Office for National Statistics harmonised standard](#) and publish this data.

### **Recommendation 31**

By 1 December 2024, the Home Office should collect and publish experimental statistics on public complaints and conduct matters in relation to FRS staff, similar to that which it currently publishes on police forces in England and Wales.

## **Improving diversity**

### **Recommendation 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.

### **Recommendation 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.

## The Core Code of Ethics

### Recommendation 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.

## The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

### Recommendation 35

By the end of this Parliament, the Government should consider the findings and recommendations in this report when refreshing the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#).