



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

HMICFRS STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR PROGRESS UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 24 January 2025

Purpose of Report:

To provide an update on the progress made by the Service against the recommendations set out in His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services Standard of Behavior report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the progress made against the recommendations.
- Agree to receive further updates on progress.

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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 commissioned His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to publish a spotlight report into the values and culture of fire and rescue services (FRSs). This report, containing 35 recommendations for improvement, was published in March 2023.
- 1.2 Building on some of the findings of the spotlight report, between October 2023 and January 2024, HMICFRS carried out further research into the handling of misconduct in FRSs. Data and staff surveys from 44 FRSs were analysed, along with ten thematic onsite inspections. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) was not one of the ten FRSs inspected.
- 1.3 On 1 August 2024, HMICFRS released a further report titled, "Standards of Behaviour – The Handling of Misconduct in the Fire and Rescue Service". A summary of the main findings was presented to the Fire Authority in September 2024, with Members agreeing to receive further updates via the Human Resources Committee.
- 1.4 This report provides the first of these updates on progress to date against the recommendations set out in the Standards of Behaviour report.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The report makes 15 recommendations to reduce the levels and improve the handling of misconduct cases in the sector. The recommendations are broken down into four areas:
 - The culture in FRSs;
 - The extent to which Services are identifying misconduct;
 - The effectiveness of misconduct processes;
 - Understanding misconduct and sharing lessons learned.
- 2.2 A full summary of the recommendations is included in Appendix A to this report.
- 2.3 In summary, of the 15 recommendations in the report, six have been closed, two recommendations require national work to progress, work to complete the remaining seven is underway.

CULTURE IN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

- 2.4 There are three recommendations in this section relating to the following areas:
- Ensuring all staff understand the Core Code of Ethics (complete).
 - Ensuring the Service has the ability to dismiss staff during their probationary period who fail to meet necessary standards of behaviour (complete).
 - Ensuring that workforce plans allow for staff to be moved to a different watch or station within their contractual requirements, and that where staff are promoted, they are posted to a different watch of station (complete).
- 2.5 The Service has been well placed to close all of these actions quickly, having prioritised a project to ensure the Core Code of Ethics was embedded as part of the Year 2 Annual Delivery Plan (2023-24). This project saw all staff complete mandatory learning and development, in addition to ensuring the Core Code of Ethics was built into relevant policies, procedures, job descriptions and contracts of employment. Assurance of understanding has been undertaken as part of annual personal development reviews and the most recent staff survey.
- 2.6 The Service's probationary policy already reflected the requirements of the recommendation and long-standing arrangements are in place as part of workforce planning to enable wholetime staff to be moved as necessary, or as part of a promotion process.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH SERVICES ARE IDENTIFYING MISCONDUCT

- 2.7 Of the three recommendations in this section, two are now complete. The recommendations included in this section are:
- Services should create or have access to a dedicated professional standards function to oversee the investigation of concerns and manage complex cases directly (ongoing).
 - Chief Fire Officers should make sure all staff understand how to raise concerns and use grievance and whistleblowing arrangements (complete).
 - Ensure a training programme is in place for all supervisors and managers on how to manage staff performance and welfare and how to raise issues (complete).
- 2.8 The Service is currently considering a range of options to implement the recommendation relating to the professional standards function. Traditionally, the overseeing of investigations and management of misconduct cases has been undertaken by the People and Organisational Development (POD) function.
- 2.9 Budget provision has been made in the financial year 2025/26 to implement a professional standards function, the Service is currently working to

understand the implications of moving away from the current delivery model and how this can best be achieved.

- 2.10 A review of the POD function is underway, supported by external human resources consultants. The delivery of a professional standards function is included within the scope of this work which will report by Spring 2025.
- 2.11 Additional ongoing internal communications has been carried out to ensure staff are aware of how to raise issues, alongside the ongoing promotion of SaySo, the Service's independent anonymous reporting line.
- 2.12 With regards to staff training, a range of HR essentials modules are in place to ensure all managers are aware of how to address performance and have courageous conversations in the workplace. This programme has been in place for a number of years and an evaluation will be carried out in 2025-26 to ensure it remains fit for purpose and is achieving the required objectives.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MISCONDUCT PROCESSES

- 2.13 There are seven recommendations relating to the effectiveness of misconduct processes. The recommendations are designed to ensure a full review of policy, system, process, resourcing and capabilities relating to the management of misconduct is conducted.
- 2.14 Of the seven recommendations in this section, one is complete relating to the provision of welfare support for all parties involved in investigations.
- 2.15 The recommendation for national negotiations required to ensure consistency of misconduct processes for all staff irrespective of the terms of conditions of employment adds complexity. This is not due for completion until August 2025.
- 2.16 The Service has commissioned independent support to review the current POD function from a skills and capabilities perspective, in addition to commissioning support to align policy and process for misconduct investigations. Discussions with representative bodies have started as part of pre-consultation processes in this area.
- 2.17 The Service has procured a case management system to support the monitoring and performance management of misconduct processes. This is due for implementation in advance of the August 2025 deadline.
- 2.18 The requirements relating to training for investigators has been included as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26. This will support the delivery of supplementary training and continual professional development for investigators as well as those tasked with chairing hearing and appeals panels.

UNDERSTANDING MISCONDUCT AND SHARING LESSONS LEARNED

- 2.19 The final two recommendations require processes to review outcomes, trends and identify and share learning from misconduct cases with staff.
- 2.20 The Service already has in place routine reporting of the number, type and outcome of misconduct investigations both to the Strategic Leadership Team and to the Human Resources Committee as part of the quarterly human resources update report.
- 2.21 The Service is currently exploring ways to share anonymised learning outcomes with all staff to prevent repeat behaviours. This work will complete in advance of the November 2025 deadline.
- 2.22 The second recommendation requires the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to establish a national system for sharing anonymised learning from misconduct cases. The Service is awaiting an update on the national system from the NFCC.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are a range of financial implications associated with implementation of the recommendations, including the establishment of a professional services function. These have been incorporated as part of 2025/26 financial planning where necessary.
- 3.2 Budget provision has been made in year to support the review of the POD function and to pay for external support to implement the recommendations relating to the effectiveness of misconduct processes.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The human resources and learning and development implications are set out within the report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment will be required as part of misconduct policy and process reviews.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Any changes to misconduct arrangements will need to be done in compliance with employment law.

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

The recommendations are relevant to the fire sector. There may be opportunities to collaborate both regionally and nationally to support the delivery of the recommendations.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the progress made against the recommendations.
- 10.2 Agree to receive further updates on progress.

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

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

The Culture in Fire and Rescue Services			
Recommendation	Action Required	Timescale	Status
1	By 1 February 2025, CFOs should, as a priority, make sure their staff are aware of, and follow the CCoE. Services should build the code into all relevant policies and practices.	01-Feb-25	Closed
2	By 1 February 2025, CFOs should make sure a policy for probationary staff is in place. This policy should make clear that Services can immediately dismiss probationers who fail to meet the required standards of behaviour set out in the CCoE fire standard.	01-Feb-25	Closed
3	<p>By 1 May 2025, CFOs should make sure their workforce plans allow staff to be moved from a wholetime watch to a different watch or station, within their contractual requirements, proactively and reactively as required.</p> <p>By 1 May 2025, CFOs should also make sure firefighters who are promoted are posted to a different watch or station, including when the promotion is temporary for two months or more. If this is not possible, CFO should show how the risks of reinforcing</p>	01-May-25	Closed

a negative culture have been addressed.

The Extent to Which Services Are Identifying Misconduct

Recommendation	Action Required	Timescale	Status
4	By 1 February 2025, CFOs should make sure their Services create or have access to a dedicated professional standards function to oversee the investigation of concerns raised within a Service or from an external source. This should oversee cases to make sure they are investigated in a fair and transparent way, manage complex cases directly and act as a point of contact for all staff involved.	01-Feb-25	On-going
5	By 1 November 2024, CFOs should make sure all staff understand how to raise a concern and use grievance and whistle-blowing processes. CFOs should: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure staff know how Services will handle responses and maintain confidentiality and anonymity; and• Explain how staff can access Services' whistle-blowing capability and the difference between whistle-blowing and other processes for raising concerns.	01-Nov-24	Closed

6	<p>By 1 February 2025, CFOs should make sure a programme of training is in place for all supervisors and managers on how to manage staff performance and welfare and how to raise an issue. It should be supported by relevant policies and procedures. Training should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff welfare and absence management; • The process for managing individual staff performance, addressing poor performance and potential misconduct issues; • How to handle difficult conversations and resolve issues informally, if appropriate, when a concern is identified; and • Clarifying the role of human resources services in helping managers to deal with staff concerns and misconduct issues. <p>CFOs should make sure all managers and supervisors attend the training programme.</p>	01-Feb-25	Closed
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The Effectiveness of Misconduct Processes

Recommendation	Action Required	Timescale	Status
7	By 1 May 2025, CFOs should make sure the policies and processes for misconduct are consistent for all	01-May-25	On-going

	<p>staff and are fairly applied within their respective conditions of employment.</p> <p>By 1 August 2025, the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services and the National Joint Council for Local Government Services, supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council, should make misconduct processes consistent for all staff irrespective of the terms and conditions of their employment.</p>	01-Aug-25	
8	<p>By 1 November 2024, CFOs should make sure all allegations of misconduct are handled in a consistent way and staff have confidence in misconduct processes. CFOs should carry out a full review of the processes, from initial identification of a misconduct issue through to the resolution or outcome. This should include a review of how services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and manage investigations; • Maintain accurate records; and • Adhere to required timescales. 	01-Nov-25	On-going
9	<p>By 1 August 2025, CFOs should introduce a case management system if they do not already have one. The case management system should allow data to be produced that will help them to better understand and oversee misconduct cases in their services.</p>	01-Aug-25	On-going

10	By 1 May 2025, CFOs should make sure their Services have enough capacity to carry out their misconduct investigations. They should consider using external investigators or a similar independent resource to support the process if required	01-May-25	On-going
Recommendation	Action Required	Timescale	Status
11	<p>By 1 May 2025, CFOs should review the training their Services provide for supervisors and managers who investigate misconduct issues at all levels. CFOs should make sure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff who carry out investigations receive adequate training to carry out the task; • A programme of refresher training and ongoing support is available so that staff can maintain a level of competence; and • It is clear how Services' human resources provision, staff associations and any trade union representative or fellow employee will support the investigation process. 	01-May-25	On-going
12	With immediate effect, CFOs should make sure all staff are aware of the welfare support, including occupational	Immediate	Closed

	<p>health support, that is available to staff involved in misconduct processes. CFOs should encourage all staff involved in misconduct processes to access this support, whether they are an alleged perpetrator, complainant, witness, investigator or decision-maker.</p> <p>Welfare personnel should be independent of the investigation and have been appropriately trained for this role.</p>		
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13	<p>By 1 November 2024, fire and rescue authorities and CFOs should consider varying the approach to hearing appeals so that appeals for complex or serious cases are heard by a panel rather than one person.</p> <p>By 1 February 2025, fire and rescue authorities and CFOs should make sure all Service managers and Members of fire and rescue authorities who hear appeals receive appropriate training.</p> <p>CFOs should make sure Services have a consistent approach to hearing appeals.</p>	<p>01-Nov-24</p> <p>01-Feb-25</p>	On-going
Understanding Misconduct and Sharing Lessons Learned			
Recommendation	Action Required	Timescale	Status
14	<p>By 1 November 2025, CFOs should implement a process that makes sure they can oversee and scrutinise their Services' performance relating to misconduct issues. This process should provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic overview of performance and analysis of trends, including disproportionality; • Regular reporting of issues, outcomes and trends to the fire and rescue authority; and 	01-Nov-25	On-going

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of learning outcomes and how they will be shared with fire and rescue service staff, to prevent repeat behaviours. 		
15	<p>By 1 February 2025, CFOs should put in place a process for sharing learning from misconduct cases that have been resolved while preserving the confidentiality of all parties involved. Any learning should feed into the national system, when established.</p> <p>By 1 May 2025, the National Fire Chiefs Council should establish a system for sharing learning from more serious cases of misconduct with fire and rescue service staff. The information shared should preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of all parties involved. The College of Fire and Rescue, once it is established, should take responsibility for maintaining this system.</p>	<p>01-Feb-25</p> <p>01-May-25</p>	On-going