



Open Report on behalf of Mark Baxter, Chief Fire Officer

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	20 June 2023
Subject:	Culture, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within Fire and Rescue

Summary:

There is a national and local focus on culture within Fire and Rescue Services for some time. This has been heightened following recent reports that have come out of other Fire and Rescue Services of where behaviours have been displayed that are completely unacceptable.

There has also been a report released by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue (HMICFRS) on 'values and culture in fire and rescue services' that summarises what has been identified across the Fire Sector during round two of inspection (2021-2022) with stated recommendations to be addressed.

This report outlines the work that Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue has done and is committed to ensuring there is continual improvement within Culture and EDI for staff.

Actions Required:

That the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee receives the findings within this report and endorses the submission of follow up reports on actions against recommendation within HMICFRS report on values and culture by March 2024.

1. Background

Culture within Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service (LFR) has been a priority focus since the outcome of the first HMICFRS inspection in 2018 where it was stated that "Culture and values were not understood by staff within LFR". This prompted a review of what culture meant within LFR and more importantly gaining an understanding on how staff viewed working within LFR was for them.

The outcome of staff surveys and many staff engagement sessions re-affirmed what HMICFRS reported on, in that staff found it difficult to express what the culture and values of LFR where. This was in the main part due to the 'confusion' that staff displayed in relation

to Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) culture and values as they were the only reference points that existed at that time within LFR. However, what was clear from the staff surveys was that staff did feel that the culture within LFR was *good* but did not have a clearly understood identity in relation to the values of the organisation.

The work that was undertaken from this point was a Service wide engagement programme that involved all areas within LFR to reflect to the Senior Leadership Team at the time what staff believed should be the appropriate behaviours and culture that is expected of everyone to support LCC values. At the time there was also the roll out of LCC Unwritten Ground Rules (UGR) concept to help develop greater understanding of what expected behaviours and culture should look like.

It was recognised to develop a cultural and behavioural concept would require buy in from all staff and a connection that could be viewed as authentic and also owned by everyone. Therefore, LFR took the direction from staff that there was a 'gap' within LFR to bridge between what staff's expected behaviours were to be like to support the LCC core values of Professional, Respectful, Resourceful and Reflective.

The outcome of the service wide engagement and staff surveys was a core group of behaviours that LFR staff reflected that they expected everyone to adhere to support the core values of LCC. These were:

- Trust
- Help
- Respect
- Include
- Value
- Empower

This developed the initial concept of 'Our Culture' through mid-2020 to April 2021, where we formally launched 'Our Culture' within LFR, which is summarised in the booklet in Appendix A.

In May 2021, the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC), launched an important 'Fire Standard' called 'Core Code of Ethics' that outlined how Fire Service employees should act in the best way towards each other whilst serving our communities. This is based on five key ethical principles:

- Putting our communities first
- Integrity
- Dignity and respect
- Leadership
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

As LFR had recently launched and embedded 'Our Culture', it was important to not de-value the significance of this work and just solely adopt the Core Code of Ethics. Therefore, a gap analysis was undertaken to see if 'Our Culture' concept supported the Core Code of Ethics. The outcome was that 'Our Culture' did support the Core Code of Ethics. Therefore, the

Core Code of Ethics strengthened concept and identity of the behavioural model that was designed by LFR staff.

Since 2021 LFR Senior Leadership Team (SLT) committed to understanding what staff views were about culture whilst working in LFR through staff survey and two external engagement programmes from sector specialists (Faye Cooper and Miriam Heppell). The feedback from this shaped significant work to address areas that were highlighted and also recognise the positive feedback that was received.

The feedback was grouped into main five headings of:

- Leadership
- Development and Learning
- Communications and Engagement
- Vision and Values
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The summary of the findings and actions that have been taken since 2021 can be found in Appendix B.

During 2021 HMICFRS conducted round 2 of their inspections for LFR. In regard to culture, HMICFRS recognised the progress that had been made for how staff understood culture and values and judged LFR to have 'good' for culture and values within the report.

However, they did raise a 'Cause of Concern' for "The service hasn't done enough since the last inspection to improve EDI in the service" and in particular the following five areas:

- Give greater priority to how it increases awareness of EDI across the organisation.
- Make sure that all staff receive appropriate EDI training.
- The service needs to improve how it engages with its staff and provides feedback in relation to EDI issues.
- Improve the understanding and use of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's) in all aspects of its work and consider if its policies and procedures are inclusive and support those with protected characteristics.
- Make sure that there is a programme of positive action initiatives to support its recruitment programme

This has been previously reported on progress in this area for HMICFRS through PPCSC.

The subsequent action plan to address these issues has been managed through the newly created EDI Steering Group that is Chaired by Chief Fire Officer. Regular updates on progress have been fed back to HMICFRS, which resulted in a letter received in September 2022 to confirm they were satisfied we had a robust plan in place and that they would no longer require further updates. HMICFRS recognised that it takes time to embed improvements related to EDI and therefore will use the 2023 round 3 inspection to assess progress and impacts of the action plan. The EDI 3-year action plan is attached as Appendix C.

As summary of the main areas that have been delivered as part of the action plan to address the 'Cause of Concern' are:

- Face to face EDI awareness training programme developed and delivered to all staff. Year one completed and Year two currently being delivered.
- EDI Steering Group implemented with representation from all areas of the Service to develop EDI related issues.
- Representation on LCC Corporate Diversity Steering Group
- Staff networks set up in areas such as:
 - LGBT+
 - Women in Fire Service
 - Careers Network – LFR Chair the LCC Careers Network
 - Neurodiversity
 - Non-operational network
- Equality Impact Assessment Policy review and implementation in all relevant areas
- Reporting lines available and promoted to all staff to raise issues, concerns or good practice.
- Back to floor visits, staff engagement sessions and 'you said, we did' feedback.

Values and Culture in fire service report – HMICFRS

In March 2023 HMICFRS released a report on values and culture in fire and rescue, more commonly known as 'spotlight report on values and culture'. This report is a consolidation of round two inspections of all fire and rescue services relating to values and culture. HMICFRS have not completed a separate review on this subject, but just brought together existing findings into a single report.

This report has been commissioned in response to previous reports from other services that brought to light unacceptable and abhorrent behaviours that existed in some services. This was subsequently followed up by other high profile media reports of disturbing behaviours in services that had brought a spotlight on what culture existed in our fire and rescue services.

Following the release of the report into London Fire Brigade, LFR engaged with all staff to highlight what the expected behaviours were for everyone. It was also re-enforced the need to support anyone to be able to report any issues of unacceptable behaviour with confidence it will be listened to and investigated and if needed to in confidence. In particular all women in LFR were engaged with, to raise issues and feedback on experiences working for LFR, as it was recognised the areas that had been raised nationally had a focus on how women in fire services were treated.

The spotlight report from HMICFRS has resulted in thirty-four recommendations that are aimed at Chief Fire Officers, NFCC, Home Office and Police Chief Constables to implement by specific deadlines. All recommendations need to be completed by April 2024. Nineteen of these recommendations are the responsibility of Chief Fire Officers to implement into their own Service.

Thread	No	Deadline	Owner	Action
Raising Concerns	1	01/10/2023	CFO	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
	2	01/10/2023	NFCC/LGA	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
	3	01/06/2023	CFO	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
	4	01/06/2023	CFO	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
	5	01/06/2023	CFO	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	6	01/01/2024	HO/MoJ	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
	7	01/05/2024	HO/NFCC	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
	8	01/12/2023	NFCC / FSB	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.
	9	01/01/2024	CFO	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.
	10	01/09/2023	Police CC	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	11	01/12/2023	NFCC / FSB	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
	12	01/03/2024	CFO	chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling
	13	01/12/2023	NFCC / FSB	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.
	14	01/03/2024	CFO	chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling
	15	01/10/2023	HO	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
	16	01/10/2023	NFCC	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
	17	01/04/2023	CFO	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
	18	01/08/2023	CFO	chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations
	19	01/07/2023	HO	the Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue misconduct cases are appropriate
Leadership	20	01/06/2023	CFO	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
	21	01/06/2023	CFO	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
	22	01/09/2023	CFO	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
	23	01/06/2023	CFO	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
	24	01/10/2023	CFO	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	25	01/01/2025	HO	the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, as proposed by the <i>White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service</i> . There should be no further delay to its implementation
	26	01/10/2023	HO/NFCC/CFO	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	27	01/06/2023	CFO	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
	28	01/06/2023	CFO	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
	29	01/12/2023	HO	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
	30	30/12/2024	HO	the Home Office should align the data it collects on protected characteristics with the Office for National Statistics harmonised standard and publish this data
	31	01/12/2024	HO	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	32	01/06/2023	CFO	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
	33	01/08/2023	CFO	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	34	01/04/2023	CFO	chief fire officers should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their services

LFR has merged the recommendations into an action plan and assigned strategic leaders to address the nineteen recommendations that are direct responsibility of Chief Fire Officers. The recommendations that are assigned to NFFC will be supported by Chief Fire Officers to address but will be reported through NFCC process.

HMICFRS have released a letter in June 2023 to outline how they wish fire services to report on progress. LFR have implemented a Cultural Steering Group that is Chaired by Chief Fire Officer to quality assure the progress of these actions and to also support the development of culture in general within the service. The Cultural Steering Group has representation from all areas within the service and is currently evolving the terms of reference of the group.

A gap analyses and initial progress report on these actions show that LFR are working positively against the recommendations. Regular updates will be provided through to Executive Councillor and CLT, with recommendation that Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee have six monthly updates. The following areas have already been addressed, but a full report is currently being developed to update HMICFRS by end of June.

- Item 1 – Complete
- Item 2 – Complete
- Item 17 – Complete
- Item 18 – Complete
- Item 21 – Complete
- Item 26 – Complete
- Item 27 – Complete
- Item 33 – Complete
- Item 34 - Complete

Since the release of national reports, there has been significant engagement across LFR in values and behaviours. Staff have been very open and honest in how they view the culture within LFR, which in itself is a good indicator that staff feel supported in raising issues. The overview is still that there does not appear to be institutionalised issues of poor behaviours such as misogyny, racism, or bullying. However, it is also clear that there is no room for complacency and that there are examples of where behaviours need to improve and addressed.

LFR Senior Leadership will continue to visibly promote expected behaviours and culture and always be open to challenge if these standards are not being demonstrated by themselves.

The improvement journey for culture and EDI will be continuous and will not be a ‘task and finish’ style workstream. The LFR Senior Leadership Team are fully commitment to ensure the culture of our fire and rescue service enables all staff to be the best versions of themselves at work, be able to express their views in a safe and secure environment and have the opportunities to reach their full potential. Only then can LFR be at its most effective to service the diverse communities that we represent within Lincolnshire.

3. Conclusion

LFR has placed culture and EDI as a high priority agenda for service improvement. The commitment over the last few years has shown a positive direction travel in these areas that has been reflected within staff engagement.

This will keep evolving and developing as we link in more with national feedback and NFCC standards to ensure the people of Lincolnshire receive the highest standards they expect from Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue.

LFR has just completed round 3 inspection by HMICFRS. At this time feedback hasn't been received as this is expected by end of June with the full report to be made available approx. 8 weeks following. The findings within this report will provide further evidence of how culture and EDI is developing within LFR.

4. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

5. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Our Culture – What this means for us booklet
Appendix B	Leadership Stocktake 2023
Appendix C	EDI Action Plan

6. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Mark Baxter, Chief Fire Officer, who can be contacted on 07799 110463 or via mark.baxter@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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