

HMICFRS
Standards of Behaviour - The Handling of Misconduct in Fire and Rescue Services
Gap Analysis Against Recommendations

Recommendation	HMICFRS Recommendation Detail	Recommendation Due	HWFRS Update Summary	Is This Recommendation Complete?
1	By 1 February 2025, chief fire officers should, as a priority, make sure their staff are aware of, and follow the Core Code of Ethics. Services should build the code into all relevant policies and practices.	02-01-25	<p>A number of workstreams have been completed in support of raising staff awareness and the Service's expectations on standards of behaviour and the Core Code of Ethics. This includes completion of an Independent Culture Audit, the creation of a Culture & Ethics Steering Group and a Code of Conduct based on the Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard. Messaging is reinforced to staff on the Code with supporting items such as a personal hard copy of the Code, branded water bottles, workplace posters, screensavers, dedicated SharePoint site, etc.</p> <p>A series of Ethical Dilemma workshops have been conducted with teams on the principles of the Code. The Code is also reflected in Service policy and appropriate processes. An organisation-wide EDI training programme has also been delivered by an external provider linking to a wider initiative to embed the Code; raising awareness, understanding and expectations.</p> <p>Future EDI & Culture workstreams will be delivered via the Culture & Ethics Steering Group.</p> <p>Aug 25 Update: A culture statement of intent has been launched that underpins the CCOE and establishes the "Our Culture is You" branding. Wider initiatives regarding the Service's culture and ethics are linked to Our Culture is You to reinforce messaging to staff.</p> <p>Inclusion training maintenance programme established based on the CCOE.</p>	FULLY MET
2	By 1 February 2025, chief fire officers 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 Core Code of Ethics and the Code of Ethics fire standard.	02-01-25	<p>Aug 25 Update: Probationary period is referred to in contracts of employment for Grey and Green Book. A Probation policy is in draft, next steps are to share with SLB for review and/or comment before proceeding to formal consultation. For completion Q3 25/26.</p>	PARTIALLY MET
3	<p>By 1 May 2025, chief fire officers 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, chief fire officers 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 isn't possible, chief fire officers should show how the risks of reinforcing a negative culture have been addressed.</p>	05-01-25	<p>Workforce plans and employment contracts already allow for this dependent on the exigencies of the Service.</p>	FULLY MET
		05-01-25	<p>Transfers and staff movements will normally be governed by organisational needs and requirements, with individual needs being considered but as a secondary factor.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the Station Commander to monitor Watch culture, and address poor behaviour. Navigating Challenging Conversations with Confidence training is being rolled out in Autumn for this target group to further develop skills in this area on how to have open and honest conversations with teams. This further supports the organisation EDI training programme (Inclusive Leadership series).</p> <p>Aug 2025 Update: Navigating Challenging Conversations and Managing Performance with Coaching Conversations has been delivered to Station Commanders and Support equivalents.</p> <p>Any requested staff transfers are documented, and if a move is honoured, the status is changed to complete and a comment provided to confirm reason. For promotions and postings, there are decision logs that show where successful candidates were posted to. This is generally based on where they were in the successful list, and they are given the choice of the remaining vacancies to choose from. Further consideration to be given on whether Response will also consider Station/Watch moves in this context.</p>	FULLY MET
4	By 1 February 2025, chief fire officers 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.	02-01-25	<p>Aug 25 Update: A Professional Standards Board (PSB) has been developed and the terms of reference include a responsibility for the PSB to maintain oversight of cases, with support from an external employment law consultant as an advisory member. This will assist in providing assurance and oversight on how concerns are being handled. The first meeting of the PSB took place in January 2025.</p>	FULLY MET
5	<p>By 1 November 2024, chief fire officers should make sure all staff understand how to raise a concern and use grievance and whistle-blowing processes. Chief fire officers should:</p> <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. 	11-01-24	<p>Confidential reporting line for staff in place. Whistleblowing policy and Grievance policy in place. Staff survey results showed that 95% of staff know how to report inappropriate behaviour. EDI training covers how to raise a concern. Dedicated Sharepoint page in place covering reporting and feedback mechanisms.</p> <p>Aug 2025 Update: A comprehensive SharePoint site is in place covering all speaking up processes available to staff. This is also included in induction for new starters.</p> <p>A Comms plan is in development to launch new provider for confidential reporting (SafeCall) in February 25 for go live in March 25. The relevant SharePoint page has been updated to clarify the differences between whistleblowing and other processes for raising concerns.</p>	FULLY MET
6	<p>By 1 February 2025, chief fire officers 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 HR services in helping managers to deal with staff concerns and misconduct issues. <p>Chief fire officers should make sure all managers and supervisors attend the training programme.</p>	02-01-25	<p>People management essentials training has been delivered for several years. New tranche of delivery scheduled to commence Quarter 3. This focuses on managing attendance, managing performance, employment law essentials and managing behaviours in the workplace.</p> <p>T2 have been commissioned to run Managing Performance and Navigating Challenging Conversations with Confidence workshops that will be delivered to SC's and support staff equivalents, later in the Autumn. T2 attended SLB with Head of Department/Group Commanders on 3rd September to provide an overview what is being rolled out to staff.</p> <p>Aug 2025 Update: New tranche of people management essentials training launched for delivery over Q3 and Q4. Navigating Challenging Conversations and Managing Performance with Coaching Conversations delivered to Station Commanders and Support equivalents.</p>	FULLY MET
		05-01-25	<p>Disciplinary policy and People Impact Assessment in place. The Service will seek to establish an assurance mechanism on the misconduct process in Quarter 4.</p> <p>Aug 2025 Update: Professional Standards Board (PSB) in place and the terms of reference include a responsibility for the PSB to maintain oversight of cases, with support from an external employment law consultant as an advisory member. This will assist in providing assurance that policies and processes for misconduct are consistent for all staff. The first meeting of the PSB took place in January 2025.</p>	FULLY MET
7	<p>By 1 May 2025, chief fire officers should make sure the policies and processes for misconduct are consistent for all 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>	08-01-25	NOT CFO RESPONSIBILITY	
		05-01-25		
8	<p>By 1 November 2024, chief fire officers should make sure all allegations of misconduct are handled in a consistent way and staff have confidence in misconduct processes. Chief fire officers 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 	11-01-24	<p>"As Is" Process flowchart for the handling of allegations of misconduct to be mapped by 30/10/24. This will determine any required remedial action to meet the recommendation and any further review.</p> <p>Aug 25 Update: The Process flow for the handling of allegations of misconduct has been mapped out and the next step is to review how it works in practice in consideration of this recommendation.</p> <p>This has been shared with the PSB for feedback. A final version will be signed off at the next meeting in September 2025 to use an ongoing "check and balance" for consistency in approach.</p>	FULLY MET
9	By 1 August 2025, chief fire officers should introduce a case management system if they don't 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.	08-01-25	<p>Aug 2025 Update: The Service has an internal case management process, however is currently exploring the options for a case management system.</p> <p>We have now tendered for a replacement HR System and are currently considering our options for a preferred provider which may include a case management module/case management functionality.</p>	PARTIALLY MET
10	By 1 May 2025, chief fire officers 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.	05-01-25	<p>Ad-hoc discussions take place re case load workload and availability is considered by the Commissioning Officer when allocating a misconduct investigation to an Officer/Head of Department. External investigators are used to support or investigate where deemed appropriate by the Service.</p>	FULLY MET
11	<p>By 1 May 2025, chief fire officers should review the training their services provide for supervisors and managers who investigate misconduct issues at all levels. Chief fire officers 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' HR provision, staff associations and any trade union representative or fellow employee will support the investigation process. 	05-01-25	<p>People management essentials training on employment law essentials and managing behaviours in the workplace is delivered to supervisory level. SCs and equivalents and above are provided with misconduct investigation training. Future training requirements and providers are being considered.</p> <p>Roles and responsibilities are outlined in the Disciplinary policy and relevant correspondence relating to the investigation process.</p> <p>Aug 25 Update: Investigation training and Chairing Hearings training now completed. Refresher / maintenance programme being established.</p>	FULLY MET
12	<p>With immediate effect, chief fire officers should make sure all staff are aware of the welfare support, including occupational health support, that is available to staff involved in misconduct processes. Chief fire officers 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>	Immediate	<p>Staff subject to the disciplinary process are offered a Service Liaison Officer who acts as the point of contact for the employee during the formal stages of the disciplinary process. They are not involved in the investigation, or privy to any information regarding the investigation. The employee can speak to the Service Liaison Officer about any personal concerns or issues they have. The Service Liaison Officer will regularly check-in with the employee and arrange further support where necessary e.g. counselling and regularly signposted to the Welfare Support team. OH referrals are made where necessary.</p> <p>The Service's Welfare Support team is well embedded and trusted within the organisation and are appropriately trained. Individuals involved in misconduct processes are regularly signposted to the Welfare Team contacts.</p>	FULLY MET
			<p>The Appeal Officer is a manager whose level is higher than the Hearing Officer who conducted the disciplinary hearing and awarded the disciplinary penalty. For cases heard by an Area Commander (where dismissal is a potential option) then the Appeal is heard by an ACFO/ACO or above, with no previous exposure to the case. Consideration to be given on the future approach to hearings in light of the recommendation to determine whether an amendment to policy is appropriate.</p> <p>Refresher training being planned in line with organisational need.</p> <p>Aug 25 Update: Chairing Hearings training completed with those who hear appeals including members of SLB in attendance.</p>	FULLY MET
13	<p>By 1 November 2024, fire and rescue authorities and chief fire officers 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 chief fire officers should make sure all service managers and members of fire and rescue authorities who hear appeals receive appropriate training.</p> <p>Chief fire officers should make sure services have a consistent approach to hearing appeals.</p>	11-01-24		FULLY MET
		02-01-25		FULLY MET
14	<p>By 1 November 2025, chief fire officers 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 identification of learning outcomes and how they will be shared with fire and rescue service staff, to prevent repeat behaviours. 	11-01-25	<p>Confidential reporting line disclosure numbers and themes are reported to the FRA. Organisational culture themes are also reported to the FRA. Comms issued to staff in the Bulletin from the CFO on case themes and outcomes. Disciplinary and grievances, bullying and harassment figures are reported in the annual Equality Monitoring report. The Service will consider how an overview of performance and analysis of trends including protected characteristic can be incorporated into a new case management system. See update for recommendation 9.</p> <p>Aug 25 Update: Professional Standards Board (PSB) in development and the terms of reference include a responsibility for the PSB to oversee and scrutinise the Service's performance relating to misconduct. Suggest an annual report for SLB from PSB Chair. PSB to also make recommendations on how learning will be shared with staff to prevent repeat behaviours.</p> <p>Annual report of cases, performance and trends template being created. This will be compiled at the conclusion of 2025/26 and presented to SLB. This will inform suitable recommendations following any identified themes for organisational learning and relevant communications to staff.</p>	FULLY MET
		02-01-25		FULLY MET
15	<p>By 1 February 2025, chief fire officers 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>	02-01-25	<p>Aug 25 Update: Formal process to be established for sharing learning from misconduct cases by the recommendation due date.</p> <p>Professional Standards Board (PSB) in place and terms of reference include sharing of learning from misconduct cases.</p> <p>Confidential reporting line disclosure numbers and themes are reported to the FRA. Organisational culture themes are also reported to the FRA. Comms issued to staff in the Bulletin from the CFO on case themes and outcomes. Disciplinary and grievances, bullying and harassment figures are reported in the annual Equality Monitoring report. This also links to R14 i.e. the annual report will inform sharing of learning from misconduct cases thematically. The PSB also maintains oversight of the completion of any recommendations made by Hearing Officers and any relevant learning to be shared with staff as appropriate.</p>	FULLY MET
		05-01-25	NOT CFO RESPONSIBILITY	