

Report of the Assistant Chief Officer: Director of Prevention

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Report – The Handling of Misconduct in Fire and Rescue Services

Purpose of report

1. To update Members on the Service's response to the recommendations made in the 2024 HMICFRS report titled "Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services".
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note that significant progress has been made against the recommendations made in the HMICFRS report Standards of Behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services.

Introduction and Background

2. On 1st August 2024, HMICFRS published their report titled Standards of Behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services (see Appendix 1). This report follows the 2023 report 'Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services.'
3. The report focuses on the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services in England and draws on the evidence collected through their inspection between October 2023 and January 2024. HMICFRS carried out detailed inspections of ten fire and rescue services which did not include HWFRS, and researched and analysed data across all 44 fire and rescue services and set out findings based on the following themes:
 - The extent to which services are identifying and investigating misconduct.
 - The effectiveness of misconduct processes and how consistently they are applied.
 - How confident FRS staff are in raising concerns and in misconduct processes.
 - The role of fire and rescue authorities and other organisations in handling misconduct.

HMICFRS Report Recommendations

4. In the report, HMICFRS made a series of 15 recommendations, which are aimed at Chief Fire Officers, fire and rescue authorities and the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) to consider and implement, along with deadlines for each recommendation.

Service Response to Recommendations

5. HWFRS has conducted a gap analysis in response to the recommendations to assist in planning and focusing the Service's activities where required.
6. An individual response to each of the recommendations has been provided where required. The gap analysis can be found at Appendix 2.
7. The target dates for each recommendation are over a 12-month period up to 1 August 2025. The gap analysis demonstrates HWFRS has already fully met 13 of the 15 recommendations. Where recommendations have not yet been fully met, appropriate actions are being considered in order to achieve these within the target dates.
8. There are currently two areas where the Service has not yet completed or fully implemented actions against the recommendations – see below:

Rec	Recommendation Detail	HWFRS Response
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.	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.
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.	The Service has an internal case management process, however we are currently exploring the options for a case management system. 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.

Conclusion/Summary

9. The thematic report “Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services” was published on 1 August 2024.
10. In the report, 15 recommendations were made to Chief Fire Officers. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service have fully implemented 13 of the 15 recommendations.
11. HWFRS will continue to provide further updates to Members on progress made against the recommendations in the report.

Corporate Considerations

<p>Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)</p>	<p>The HMICFRS Report highlights 15 recommendations relating to the handling of misconduct. Actions taken to address these areas are likely to have resource implications, which are to be highlighted in the action plan.</p>
<p>Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)</p>	<p>National efforts, including the Core Code of Ethics, have helped bring the issue of poor cultures in fire and rescue services (FRSs) into focus. The recommendations contained in the report are designed to provide practical steps that services can take to bring about lasting change. All responses will continue to be assessed to ensure they meet the Service’s overall Core Purpose and Vision and core strategies.</p>
<p>Productivity & Efficiency (Identify how proposal improves productivity or efficiency)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).</p>	<p>Lack of progress in meeting all the recommendations may damage our reputation and attract public, media and political scrutiny. Additionally it would likely impact negatively on future HMICFRS Inspection outcomes. Any risks associated with proposals will be assessed through continued monitoring of the recommendations in the action plan.</p>
<p>Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>Proposals to deliver the recommendations have the full participation of Senior Managers in relevant Service departments. Quarterly updates are sent to HMICFRS for consideration.</p>
<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>An EIA is not required for this report. EIAs will be considered as appropriate when addressing the recommendations through the action plan.</p>

Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personnel data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	Impact assessments, if required, will be completed by the relevant Departments as needed for the specific actions related to the recommendations and action plan.
--	---

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – HMICFRS Inspection Report – Standards of Behaviour: The Handling of Misconduct in Fire and Rescue Services

Appendix 2 – Gap Analysis against HMICFRS Recommendations