

HMICFRS Values & Culture Spotlight Report - Recommendations

Raising Concerns				
Recommendation Number	Recommendation description	Due date	Service Update Summary	Is this recommendation complete?
1	By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way to staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes.	10-01-23	Already completed with the introduction of Say So in March 2023. Reminder communicated to staff about Whistleblowing Policy and process. Whistleblowing Policy amended to include details of Say So. Reminder to all staff - Bulletin 28/4/23. Comprehensive SharePoint site in place covering all speaking up processes available to staff. Included in induction for new starters. SPOC is ACO. Say So Plus arranged for public reporting to be launched in July 2023. Information to be hosted on the Service Website, SPOC for Say So Plus is the Monitoring Officer. Comms plan in development to launch new provider for confidential reporting (SafeCall) in February 25 for go live in March 25. July 2025 update: Contract commenced in March 2025 with Safe Call and launched with Service-wide comms	Yes
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.	10-01-23	N/A	
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.	06-01-23	Comprehensive support available for staff. Welfare team have a leaflet for employees, comprehensive information about support on staff SharePoint site. Say So building in links to signpost those that report a concern to internal support mechanisms. One page PDF created to summarise support available for staff. Backup buddy app launched in October 2024 and available automatically on Service phones and tablets for staff to access support when they need it at any time.	Yes
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.	06-01-23	The Leading and Developing People Fire Standard links to this recommendation which has been adopted, as well as the CCOE which underpins our intent. Concerns raised via Say So all receive an update as to progress via the online tool. SPOC ACO's co-ordinate and ensure concerns are prioritised. An Independent HR Consultant is contracted to provide independent HR and employment law advice. We also have an independent liaison officer in place to support those who are subject to investigation. An internal Independent HR Consultant and Solicitor provides oversight of cases and ensure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way. Checklist for investigation officer / commissioning officer - added to HR workstream. A quarterly report on support and information provided to those who have raised concerns discussed at HR Ops Meeting along with case debriefs to capture learning from cases and embedding professional behaviours - feed into new Culture and Ethics Steering Group as part of organisational learning. Additional training being provided for investigating managers. Professional Standards Board (PSB) in place and meet every 6 weeks 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 on how concerns are being handled and updates shared with those who have raised them. July 2025 update: Professional Standards Board in place and meet regularly.	Yes
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.	06-01-23	Independent and confidential helpline in place provided by Say So for internal staff members as of 28.03.23. SPOC is ACO. Say So Plus arranged for public reporting to be launched in July 2023. Information to be hosted on the Service Website, SPOC for Say So Plus is the Monitoring Officer. As of March 2025, the independent reporting function is provided by SafeCall. The Professional Standards Board provide case oversight. In all cases an appropriate / independent person is appointed to investigate allegations.	Yes
Background Checks				
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.	01-01-24	N/A	
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.	05-01-24	N/A	
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.	12-01-23	N/A	
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.	01-01-24	SLB paper approved regarding adoption of Standard Checks for preferred candidates as part of pre-employment checks. Role mapping exercise completed to determine level of DBS check required for each role. Recruitment policy updated and published to reflect changes. New levels of checks being conducted for new starters. Engaged with Rep Bodies to seek feedback on process. Criminal record checks policy out for formal consultation including NFCC guidance on managing a positive disclosure and a criminal record check risk assessment. Staff FAQs and letter drafted. Plan to commence checks in May 24. May 2024 Update: The Criminal Record Check policy has been through consultation, and has been signed off by SLB. Checks have commenced. SLB have also agreed to commence Social Media screening for all new applicants. July 2025 update: Checking programme continues for all staff, with the majority of staff now checked. Outstanding checks escalated to strategic lead for resolution. A DBS Assurance Panel continue to meet as required to consider any positive disclosures.	Yes
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.	09-01-23	N/A	
Misconduct Handling				
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.	12-01-23	N/A	
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.	03-01-24	HWFRS have adopted the NFCC Managing Allegations Guidance and updated local policies. Also adopted the Leading and Developing People and Leading the Service Fire Standards.	Yes
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/neutralty of the investigation panel/person.	12-01-23	N/A	
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.	03-01-24	In scope, no immediate action required. TBC following implementation of standard, however we do not feel we need the standard as an employer are satisfied we operate already to a high standard and have independent assurance of this. March 2024 Update: We have updated local policies including the Managing Allegations Guidance to reflect these changes. We've also adopted the Leading and Developing People Fire Standard.	Yes
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.	10-01-23	N/A	
16	By 1 October 2023, the National Fire Chiefs Council should	10-01-23	N/A	
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.	03-30-23	Anonymised, high level information about Gross Misconduct cases sent to SLL on 01.06.23. HMICFRS are in the process of looking at how recommendations will be followed up and how updates will be collected.	Yes
18	By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	08-01-23	Comprehensive support is available for those involved in an investigation, from the Welfare Support Team and reference to this is included in a letter received by staff involved in processes. OH referrals available, cases regularly reviewed and monitored in terms of time scales, counselling available. In addition, HR to prepare leaflet for those involved in investigations to explain what support is available. Backup buddy app launched in October 2025 and available automatically on Service phones and tablets for staff to access support when they need it at any time. Professional Standards Board (PSB) 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 all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	Yes
19	By 1 July 2023, the Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue misconduct cases are appropriate.	07-01-23	N/A	
Leadership				
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".	06-01-23	SLB have completed a gap analysis against the Fire Standard and actively considered the content and are confident that the Fire Standard is being met. Regular updates on further work linked to the Fire Standard will be reported quarterly to SLB and the Culture and Ethics Steering Group.	Yes
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.	06-01-23	Trans 2 Performance (T2) provide this for all aspiring strategic leaders at the moment. T2 have coordinated 360 Degree Feedback for all SLB Members who have not yet had it commenced W/C 15.05.23. 360's and debriefs all now complete.	Yes
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.	09-01-23	Options paper presented to SLB to consider approach and costs. People Plan objective for the future. In addition all new managers have had a PRIND profile and discussions with teams about the feedback generated. A maintenance programme is in place to capture new starters and those newly promoted into leadership / management posts. 360s are conducted for participants on the Aspiring Strategic Leaders Programme, and will be provided for people on a phased basis taking part in promotion processes as part of the People Excellence Framework.	No
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.	06-01-23	Staff survey completed in 2023 and in place every two years. Belong Index positive, 65% completion rate and engagement score of 65%. Say So confidential reporting line in place since March 2023. SPOC and SLB visits to all Watches and departments annually. Extended management team meetings every quarter. Cultural Audit undertaken in Spring 2023 by an external professional who spoke with 181 respondents (37 females and 144 males) through 19 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); 26 Face-to-Face One-to-One interviews (1-2-1s); and 24 telephone/video conferencing 1-2-1 interviews. This represents approximately 23% of the workforce, which in the consultants experience, is an exceptional response. Regular feedback will be sought via the Culture and Ethics Steering Group. Say So, updating communications and media channels, future staff surveys and a continuation of visits to staff annually. Next staff survey planned for 2026. A review of cultural audit recommendations is underway by the external professional who completed the 2023 review.	Yes
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.	10-01-23	Dr Debra Willoughby leading independent cultural audit across the Service. Her feedback and recommendations has fed into new inclusion and culture training for all staff. Workplace environment review of on-call units attached to WT stations is in progress by external consultant. Culture and Ethics Steering Group to use feedback to develop overarching Culture Statement for review by SLB. Staff survey undertaken in early 2023 by People Insights, 65% completion rate, 65% engagement score. Staff survey to be run every two years. SLB visit themes collated and considered. Culture and Ethics Plan developed. Culture Audit re-visit taken place and report is currently being collated. Member Champion appointed for Culture.	Yes
Management and Leadership Training and Development				
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.	01-01-25	N/A	
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.	10-01-23	Aspiring Supervisory Managers programme and Aspiring Strategic Leaders programme pilot implemented. People management training programme in place for line managers. Support for candidates for the ELP evolved to include Middle Manager candidates. ILM L3, ILM L5 and CMI L7 in place. Authority Members act as Champions for core areas of business and new Members have had an induction 13.6.23. Member EDI training completed in for Autumn 2023 by IODA as part of wider service rollout. Service-wide inclusion training commenced in April 24, well underway and due to conclude July 24. Overall review of 'Development Offer' focus of People Plan objective 2024/25. People Excellence Framework in draft which establishes a set of principles in relation to maximising the potential of our staff and our approach to talent. The Service's leadership and management offer (learning pathways) form part of this. July 2025 update: Learning pathways agreed at SLB. Work is ongoing and fits into the overall People Excellence Framework. New cohort of FRA Members being fully inducted in their new roles - which include training on Core Code of Ethics and their role in scrutiny.	No
Diversity Data				
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.	06-01-23	People Impact Assessment process is based on the NFCC EIA template. SharePoint available with toolkit and guidance. Additional/refreshing training arranged for February and March 2025 on PIAs. Heads of Departments to be asked to nominate relevant individuals to attend and places will also be offered to C&ESG members. July 2025 update: This is now BAU. Further training has been undertaken with nominated staff.	Yes
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.	06-01-23	Quarterly Performance Report includes EDI data. Annual Gender Pay Gap and Equality Monitoring Report is in place. Review of EDI Training complete with IODA commissioned to provide bespoke training for all staff over the next 18 months. Use of toolkits from NFCC such as Gender Diversity, Neurodiversity and Staff Network being used as reference. EDI Data toolkit being used to ensure our data is harmonised. Mapping exercise completed of the ethnicity categories used against the 2021 Census categories. EDI Officer liaising with Resourcing/HR Admin to ensure alignment in relevant areas. Poster showing local data community snapshot created for each Station. Diversity statistics for specific station areas, linked to On-Call firefighter recruitment campaigns are in development as part of a Station Risk dashboard, which will set out statistics on incidents and the demographics of the local population for each particular station. This dashboard will also be very useful in providing statistics of ethnic minority communities in the area, examining whether those communities are within the 5-minute radius of the station and considering how they can be targeted for On-Call recruitment. Culture dashboard also in development which will include equality data.	Yes
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.	12-01-23	N/A	
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.	12-30-24	N/A	
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.	12-01-24	N/A	
Improving Diversity				
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.	06-01-23	Workforce Planning Meeting and Policy in place. Appraisal template amended to include career discussion. EIA in place for recruitment and promotion processes. Strategic Workforce Plan approved (May 2022). EDI succession planning to be added onto workforce planning meetings. Specific targeted positive action activity is discussed/agreed/monitored/evaluated at workforce planning going forward. Overarching Positive Action Organisational Statement prepared for 23/24. People Excellence Framework in draft which establishes a set of principles in relation to maximising the potential of our staff and our approach to talent. The Service's succession planning approach forms part of this. July 2025 update: People Excellence Framework to be signed off at SLB at the end of the month. The framework establishes a set of principles in relation to maximising the potential of our staff and our approach to talent. The Service's succession planning approach forms part of this.	Yes
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.	08-01-23	We have transparent processes, support and routes for the development of all support staff, which many have utilised up to ACO level. Complimented by Workforce Planning Meeting, overarching Strategic Workforce Plan and Policy in place. Appraisal template includes career discussion. EIA in place for recruitment and promotion processes. Sponsorship has been available for all staff who wish to pursue development for the past three years. Letter from CFO to Support Staff to encourage career conversations (May 2022). Succession planning / career pathways statement to be created. We have 61 senior managers, 38% women and a significant focus on creating support staff / green book leadership roles and career pathways has been undertaken in the past two years. There are plans to build a more formal development framework for support staff in the future. People Excellence Framework in draft which establishes a set of principles in relation to maximising the potential of our staff and our approach to talent. This applies to all staff. July 2025 update: People Excellence Framework to be signed off at SLB at the end of the month. It establishes a set of principles in relation to maximising the potential of our staff and our approach to talent. This applies to all staff.	Yes
The Core Code of Ethics				
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.	03-30-23	CCOE Steering Group established 2022 to take forward implementation. Core Code of Ethics fully adopted, with a clear plan that is already well underway and was introduced in 2022, promoted widely and it replaced existing values. Also new policy and inclusion / ethical training being rolled out across the whole organisation facilitated by IODA. A culture statement of intent has been launched underpinning the CCOE and establishing "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. Inclusion training maintenance programme established based on the CCOE. Ethical Dilemma training rolled out across the organisation. July 2025 update: CESG has evolved into a Culture Board with its first meeting planned for September 2025.	Yes
The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England				
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.		N/A	