



# HMICFRS Values and Culture In Fire & Rescue Services Recommendations

## Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service Plan



The national [spotlight report](#) by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services was published in March 2023. The report focused on the values and culture of all 44 fire and rescue services in England.

35 recommendations were made to Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Home Office, Police and Government. Of those, 19 recommendations were identified for FRS to focus on directly with several key themes, including:

- Values and culture, with particular attention to bullying, harassment, and discrimination
- Training and skills development
- Fairness and diversity
- Leadership

No	HMICFRS Values and Culture Recommendations	Due Date	SFRS Update Summary	Date Completed
<b>Raising Concerns</b>				
1	By 1 October 2023, 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.	01/10/23	<p>SFRS uses an independent organisation FRS Speak Up to allow staff to raise concerns anonymously. FRS Speak Up is accessible via a QR code, webpage or phone number. This information is available via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posters in accessible areas both in public and private areas such as rest rooms.</li> <li>• Key ring fobs with the FRS Speak Up information have been distributed throughout the Service.</li> <li>• On its launch each member of staff received an email with links and information on FRS Speak Up.</li> <li>• Via our Fire Service app</li> </ul> <p>FRS Speak Up cases are monitored through the People Board.</p>	01/10/23

			SFRS and Suffolk County Council have an established Whistleblowing policy and procedure in place, with information and a link published to the Service on an annual basis via our Inservice news .	
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.	01/06/23	<p>SFRS has reviewed the level of support available to those who have raised concerns.</p> <p>Relevant support is provided in consultation with the person requesting the support, considering their preferences and needs. This support is open to all parties.</p> <p>Other support available through the Service is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Wellbeing Officer and Mental First Aiders.</li> <li>• Employee Assist Programme through Ask HR on Oracle.</li> <li>• My SCC internal landing page, which allows access to various Health and Wellbeing information and links.</li> </ul>	01/06/23
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.	01/06/23	<p>Professional standards in the Service are managed collaboratively with our Human Resources Business Partner and function.</p> <p>All concerns that are raised are managed with a strong focus on well-being, support and giving confidence in the process.</p> <p>Quality assurance is carried out on all cases, with feedback sought and improvements feedback to the People Board.</p>	01/06/23
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).	01/06/23	Accessible information on how to raise a concerns or access support for the public is through our website page on the Suffolk County Council website.	01/06/23

	<p>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.</p>		<p>This can be carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Via online form.</li> <li>• Through contacting our Business Support team direct.</li> <li>• Requesting accessible format.</li> </ul> <p>There is further information on the site on steps to take if they are unhappy with how the complaint is being dealt with and links to other agencies.</p> <p>SFRS has implemented an independent anonymous reporting tool called FRS Speak up.</p> <p>Other internal mechanisms for raising concerns include.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Via any manager.</li> <li>• Via Union representatives.</li> <li>• Information on our Whistleblowing Policy has been published.</li> </ul>	
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## Background Checks

9	<p>By 1 January 2024, chief fire officers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and the communities they serve; and,</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	01/01/24	<p>All staff have had the relevant disclosure check submitted.</p> <p>Some roles have been subject to enhanced or standard checks depending on the function and service area within SFRS.</p> <p>All new members of staff will have the relevant DBS check carried out on joining SFRS.</p>	01/01/24
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## Misconduct Handling

12	<p>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.</p>	01/03/24	<p>Team is in place to review and implement the standard on staff disclosures, complaints and grievance handling.</p>	In progress
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SFRS has reviewed the Grievance Policy and Toolkit with Suffolk County Council – completed 1 November 2023.</li> <li>• Adherence to SCC Officer disclosure policy.</li> <li>• Completion of DBS for all applicable members of staff.</li> <li>• Implementation of FRS Speak Up – Independent reporting line to compliment SCC. Whistleblowing and Customer Rights complaints process.</li> </ul>	
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.	01/03/24	<p>Team is in place to review and implement the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed Disciplinary Policy with SCC completed October 2023.</li> <li>• Created a strategic owner for criminal misconduct informing to HMI.</li> <li>• Reviewed Safeguarding Policy and employment of new Safeguarding lead.</li> <li>• Safeguarding training included in mandatory learning for training year.</li> <li>• Investigation training to be delivered in 2024/25 training year.</li> </ul>	In progress
17	<p>With immediate effect, chief fire officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs.</li> <li>• Are of a serious nature; or</li> <li>• relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades.</li> </ul>	<p>Immediate effect 01/04/23</p>	<p>The original request for information from the requested period of February 2022-March 2023 was submitted immediately.</p> <p>A mechanism has been implemented within SFRS to ensure that any cases identified in the future that meet these criteria are supplied to the HMICFRS.</p>	01/04/23
18	By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	01/08/23	This is embedded practice with all parties supported during an investigation by an assigned liaison support officer.	01/08/23

			The investigating officer has support from the HR liaison assigned to them who can offer support and guidance.	
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## 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 it's Leading and Developing People Standard.	01/06/23	<p>The Fire Standards are transparently managed through an internal sharepoint site and considered live documents which can be updated as required.</p> <p>A gap analysis has been undertaken for both standards with further work to be carried out on three identified criteria and the implementation of the Three lines of Defence model.</p>	In progress
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.	01/06/23	<p>The Service has access to an external toolkit supported by our HRBP.</p> <p>360-degree feedback exercise for both the CFO and DCFO has been completed.</p>	01/06/23
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.	01/09/23	<p>The Service has access to an external toolkit supported by our HRBP.</p>	01/09/23
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.	01/06/23	<p>The Service uses a range of engagement activities to purposefully provide staff with the opportunity to provide feedback which relates to our values, culture, fairness, and diversity.</p> <p>At present we use a variety of activities that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff survey.</li> <li>• Staff networks.</li> <li>• Senior Leadership Team and watch visits.</li> <li>• Staff can request to attend the four main board meetings as the open chair, with their opinions and feedback sought.</li> <li>• Managers function performance 1-1, allows feedback to be fed up and down.</li> </ul>	01/06/23

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refresh of the Staff Engagement Forum to commence in early 2024.</li> </ul> <p>Feedback that is acted on is reported in our Inservice news and also feedback through the various managers meetings and our performance 1-1's.</p>	
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	01/10/23	<p>Feedback activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff survey.</li> <li>Staff survey results are feedback to senior and middle managers.</li> <li>On-going work is being carried out to develop the survey and its accessibility for all our staff.</li> <li>Senior Leadership Team visits – part of the visit is to discuss values and culture within the watch or team and the opportunity for them to feedback on the wider Service and raise any issues.</li> <li>SLT visit reports are fed back to SLT and discussed and where relevant issues addressed.</li> <li>People Team monitor and analyses the feedback.</li> </ul>	01/10/23

## 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 (EIA) toolkit.	01/06/23	<p>Collaboration between Suffolk County Council and SFRS has developed an initial screening tool which includes two additional protected characteristics that are Suffolk relevant.</p> <p>They are effectively used in adherence to the NFCC EIA Toolkit and SCC policy and managed in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every service policy or project requires completion of an EIA Initial Screening and if required a full EIA.</li> </ul>	01/06/23
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training has been provided for staff to effectively complete the EIA's and to understand the purpose of them.</li> <li>• EIA are quality assured by SCC EIA team.</li> </ul>	
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.	01/06/23	<p>We apply a range of processes in the gathering and use of equality and diversity data, which improves our understanding of staff demographics and identifies gaps in our Service, which in turn informs our work force planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI lead in in post.</li> <li>• Collaboration work between People and Performance function creating data dashboards to enable us to have an easy view of service demographics.</li> <li>• The NFCC Diversity and Inclusion Data Toolkit is a regular source of reference.</li> </ul>	01/05/23

## 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.	01/06/23	<p>SFS has in place Succession Planning as part of our Work Force Plan and a commitment towards diversity and developing leadership.</p> <p>During our restructure, SFRS has employed an EDI lead and invested in a dedicated recruitment team to improve our recruitment and retention and make SFRS an employer of choice.</p> <p>Pending the outcome and findings from the NFCC direct entry pilot scheme launched in April 23, the Service will review arrangements in place to consider the practice.</p>	01/12/23
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.	01/08/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed as part of our Workforce and Succession plans.</li> <li>• During the SFRS restructure role reviews were carried out with relevant roles open to operational and non-operational staff.</li> <li>• Non-operational staff have multiple avenues for promotion within SFRS and the wider council.</li> </ul>	01/08/23

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.	Immediate effect 01/04/23	<p>The Core Code of Ethics (CCoE) has been embedded across the whole Service to enhance team understanding and inclusive ethical behaviours.</p> <p>The Core Code of Ethics aligns with Suffolk County Council's We Aspire Values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The CCoE has been appropriately incorporated into Service documentation.</li><li>• The CCoE and We Aspire principles are embedded into the annual staff personal development reviews.</li><li>• A Service lead is in place to take forward further work in line with the recommendation.</li></ul>	01/04/23
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