



Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service

HMICFRS Cause of Concern Action Plan

2025



Our Commitment to Improvement

In Autumn 2024, our service was inspected by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). As a result of this inspection, HMICFRS provided us with 23 recommendations for how we can improve.

The inspection, which assessed our performance against 11 principles, resulted in 23 recommendations for improvement and 1 cause of concern

This document outlines our Action Plan, developed in response to the five recommendations laid out in the Cause of Concern.

The service was issued one cause of concern focusing on culture & values with senior leaders not managing effectively; providing poor scrutiny and oversight and are disengaged from the issues raised by managers and the wider workforce. There is a lack of strategic focus on key people areas. The inspectorate highlighted examples of senior leaders not acting as role models and not demonstrating the culture and behaviours of the service.

The Service has developed an action plan to address the Cause of Concern recommendations identified within the report. We have worked collaboratively across our service—consulting with our staff, managers, and representative bodies—to create a clear and comprehensive plan for addressing each recommendation.

We are dedicated to making these improvements, and our progress will be publicly updated every three months.

Work will also continue, to build on areas where the service was identified as performing well.

HMICFRS 2024 Inspection Graded Judgements		11 Principles
Outstanding	0	
Good	2	Prevention
		Protection
Adequate	2	Major & Multi Incident Response
		Performance & Development
Requires Improvement	6	Understanding risk
		Response
		Resources
		Financial Sustainability
		Right people, right skills
Inadequate	1	Fairness & Diversity
		Culture & Values



CC No	Recommendation	Action	Action Update	Date	Status
1	The internal governance arrangements in place are effective	We will establish a clear governance framework	The initiative to establish a clear governance framework is progressing well, with advancements across both the Fire Standard review and the definition of the new structure. The Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard review has been initiated, and its methodology enhanced by applying the 'Three Lines of Defence' approach. We will be trialling a new method for completing and presenting fire standards, learned from Norfolk Fire and Rescue, on the Governance Standard to assess its wider applicability. In parallel, progress has been made on defining the new governance structure. Draft documentation has been produced and will inform an upcoming SLT governance workshop in September, where the proposed structure will be reviewed. To ensure enhanced board effectiveness, all board Terms of Reference have been reviewed, and a strategic focus on EDI is now embedded, including a standing EDI team talk on the SLB agenda.	25/09/25	In progress
		We will establish an online Governance resource	Progress has been made on the action to establish an online Governance resource via a dedicated SharePoint tile. The overall SharePoint project is underway, and the Performance and Improvement (P&I) team has successfully been migrated to the new environment. While the project is in the early stages, P&I and FireIT are currently collaborating to develop a "golden thread" tile that prioritises end-user requirements.	25/09/25	In progress

			The next steps for this resource are dependent on related activities. Following the upcoming governance workshops and the formal agreement of the new governance structure, content creation for the tile (including governance pathways, charts, agendas, ToRs, and logs) will commence. We will then partner with the Communications team to promote the new resource and announce its availability across the wider service.		
		We will launch the Governance structure to the service		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites

2	Its values and behaviours are demonstrated at all levels of the organisation.	We will reinforce our values, ensuring desired behaviours are consistently demonstrated at all levels of the service, encouraging a positive, proactive and accountable culture.	Progress on reinforcing our values and desired behaviours is focused primarily on integrating the Core Code of Ethics into training and recognition. The Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard review is complete, and the Code is now a key strand throughout all Learning & Development interventions. The associated e-learning is now mandatory training for the 2025/2026 period, complementing the existing Dignity at Work training. Furthermore, the Core Code of Ethics has been explicitly linked to the Staff Awards Categories to ensure recognition aligns with desired behaviours. Regarding the awards, the categories for 2025 have been cross mapped with the Core Code of Ethics and presented to both the ED&I Working Group and the Staff Engagement Group (SEG) for feedback. An action has been given to the SEG to consider how staff can feel more connected to the ceremony,	25/09/25	In progress
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			which will be incorporated into the review of the nomination and ceremony process. Work on the visual communication of core values and the development of the Mission and Vision statements is currently not started.		
		Delivery of the Leadership Development Programme	The phased leadership development programme is progressing well, with the first phase successfully delivered in collaboration with an independent provider, DGI. Sessions have been completed for Senior Leaders (SLT), Group Managers, and Station Managers. These day-long team sessions focused on current and desired team function, future working models, and how to move forward as a cohesive whole team. All attendees also completed 360° feedback assessments prior to the sessions and were provided with opportunities for individual feedback and coaching	25/09/25	In progress
		Link individual and teams' performance to service priorities and core values	Significant progress has been made on the Performance Development Review (PDR) process to link individual and team performance to service priorities and core values. The key step has been the review of the PDR process, where it was agreed to adjust the County Council (SCC) templates to create a bespoke version for SFRS. This new paperwork, which covers both green and grey book staff, has been developed and is designed to allow data collection to align with Oracle systems. Consultation with union partners has been integrated into the plan, with meetings held with Unison and a further meeting scheduled with the FBU in October. Training for both managers and	25/09/25	In progress

			staff on conducting and getting the most out of the PDRs is scheduled for October 2025.		
		Driving continuous improvement through exit interviews	Significant progress has been made on the action to drive continuous improvement through exit interviews, with a focus on modernisation and data collection. The exit interview process has been reviewed, developed, and implemented. This includes an updated exit form tailored to meet SFRS requirements and the launch of automated exit interview forms in September 2025. Power BI reporting is now in place and will inform the People Report. The process is being monitored monthly, and while the number of returns has increased from two to seven per month, the evaluation of the data collected so far has not yet revealed clear patterns.	25/09/25	In progress
		Improving and understanding our workplace through data and trend analysis.	Significant progress has been made on the action to improve and understand our workplace through data and trend analysis by establishing a reporting process for key workplace statistics. The plan to develop a clear and concise report format for quarterly statistics on workplace-related stress, dismissals, and other behaviours is underway. The HR Business Partner has provided the foundational People Report containing key Suffolk County Council data points. This data has since been reviewed and converted into a presentation for the People Board on July 10, 2025. Following this, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) presented assurance on the findings to the Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) meeting on July	25/09/25	In progress

			23, 2025. This establishes a clear pathway for anonymised data to inform strategic oversight.		
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3	Senior managers act as role models and show they are committed to service values through their behaviour	Senior leaders will create a culture where they understand and demonstrate behaviours always aligned to our core code of ethics and values, building staff trust and confidence.	Senior leaders are actively working to create a culture of trust and confidence by visibly aligning their behaviours with the Core Code of Ethics and service values. Senior Leaders (SLT) are participating in the leadership development programme (DGI), with their initial session in April 2025 and follow-up sessions, including the most recent one in September. Leaders are also enhancing their visible presence and accessibility across the service through increased visits to departments and teams, and by using different stations as locations for meetings. To champion service values, EDI starter sessions are now held at the beginning of every Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) meeting, and the discussion of values expectations has been integrated into the start of all other board meetings.	25/09/25	In progress
		Delivery of the Leadership Development Programme	Sessions have been completed for Senior Leaders (SLT), Group Managers, and Station Managers. These day-long team sessions focused on current and desired team function, future working models, and how to move forward as a cohesive whole team. All attendees also completed 360° feedback assessments prior to the sessions and were provided with opportunities for individual feedback and coaching	25/09/25	Completed awaiting feedback

		Senior Leader effectiveness through transparent and accountable communication and engagement.		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites
		Senior leaders will attend the NFCC dignity at work workshop	Attended	25/09/25	Completed awaiting feedback
		Senior leadership engagement		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites
		Senior Leaders will review and develop a clear policy for Equality Impact Assessments		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites
		Senior leaders will actively champion the EIA process and take ownership of its effective implementation.		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites
		EIA training for Senior Leadership and G8/GM team		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites

4	Improves communications between staff and senior managers, so questions and feedback receive prompt and appropriate responses.	Review of the fire standard: Communication and Engagement		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites
		We will build stronger connections between senior leadership and staff to improve communication and address service concerns.	The action to build stronger connections between senior leadership and staff has advanced through a comprehensive review of the Staff Engagement Group (SEG). The SEG's Terms of Reference have been updated to clearly define its role. To ensure broad representation, membership remains open to all staff and was recently promoted across the organisation.	25/09/25	In progress

			A clear reporting line has been established: the SEG can now raise issues to the People Board, which can then be escalated to the Strategic Leadership Board (SLB), the highest level of service governance. Additionally, the SEG chairs are now invited to and can request attendance at Senior Leadership Team away days to discuss and inform important issues and changes, ensuring a direct conduit between staff concerns and top-level decision-making.		
		We will develop and implement diverse communication methods to effectively reach all members of our service.		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites
		Develop and implement a Continuous Improvement Meeting (CIM).	The Continuous Improvement Meeting (CIM) has been successfully implemented and is currently held on a monthly, in-person basis. The meeting is chaired by the Organisational Risk and Improvement Area Manager and includes relevant Grade 8 and Group Managers, with attendance open to all service personnel. To ensure robust tracking, an action tracker has been developed in MS Lists to manage deliverables across the service. The CIM is integrated into the governance structure by reporting quarterly to the Performance Assurance Board (PAB) for high-level oversight and issue escalation. The meeting is described as well-attended and action-focused; an official evaluation is scheduled for Q4 2025-26 to review its Terms of Reference, agenda, and overall impact ahead of the new financial year.	25/09/25	In progress but potentially completed

		Development and implementation of a service wide management Q&A platform		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites
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5	Staff are confident in raising issues and concerns	We will conduct an independent, confidential exploration of staff hesitation in raising issues and concerns		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites
		We will provide training via a skills workshop to support a proactive feedback culture	To embed the cross-service feedback model and culture, full-time equivalent (FTE) Professional Standards Officers will assist in implementation. The topic of proactive feedback is being incorporated into existing training structures, specifically within the new Grievance training and the Performance Development Review (PDR) training, with input from the unions also covering this subject.	25/09/25	In progress
		We will create a culture of trust between managers and staff	An Operational Development (OD) role was employed on August 27, 2025, with a focus on people development across the service. The specific scope and plan for the new management training programme—which will target Crew Manager upwards and cover key skills like relationship building and effective discussions—will be agreed upon after the OD 100-day induction period. This training represents Phases 4 and 5 of the overall plan and will cross-reference with the ongoing Leadership Development Programme (Action 2.5).	25/09/25	In progress
		Improve staff understanding on how to raise a idea, issue or concern.		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites

		We will develop and implement a You said We did - closing the loop and showing the staff the tangible results of their input.		25/09/25	Not started due to outstanding prerequisites
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