Cumbria Office of Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

**Cumbria Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) response to inspections of Cumbria Constabulary published by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

*Section 33 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days.*

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| **Inspection Title:** | #27831 Values and culture in Fire and Rescue services |
| **Date Published:** |  |
| **Type of Inspection:** | National Inspection |
| **Key Findings** | |
| This report focuses on the values and culture of all 44 fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England and draws on the evidence collected through our inspections of FRSs since 2018.  HMICFRS define values as principles or standards of behaviour, and culture as ideas, customs, and behaviours. We define ‘poor’, ‘unacceptable’ and ‘inappropriate’ cultures and behaviours as those which have or have the potential to negatively affect others. These behaviours include bullying, harassment, and discrimination.  HMICFRS researched and analysed evidence on the following themes: - values and culture, including bullying, harassment, and discrimination - training and skills - fairness and diversity - leadership | |
| **Recommendations:** | |
| **Recommendation 1 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 3 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 4 from report:**  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 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.  **Recommendation 5 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 9 from report:**  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.   **Recommendation 10 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 12 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 14 from report:**  By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.  **Recommendation 16 from report:**  By 1 October 2023, the National Fire Chiefs Council should develop and manage a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct (including staff who have already left services). It should ensure that this list is referred to in all appointment processes to prevent those who are barred from rejoining another service. After the College of Fire and Rescue has been established (see recommendation 25), it should take responsibility for managing the list.  **Recommendation 17 from report:**  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.   **Recommendation 18 from report:**  By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.  **Recommendation 20 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 21 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 22 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 23 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 24 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 27 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 28 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 32 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 33 from report:**  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.  **Recommendation 34 from report:**  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.   1. #2783 - Recommendation 10 from report:   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. | |
| **PFCC & Chief Fire Officer Response to Report and Recommendation:** | |
| Cumbria’s Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has welcomed the inspection by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) regarding HMICFRS Spotlight Report: Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services.    “Following Local Government Reorganisation in April 2023, I took on governance responsibility of Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS). This includes responsibility for the service’s legal elements, the employees, budget, estates, and ethics and integrity.    I am acutely aware that the findings presented in this report may have an impact on public confidence as well as the hardworking firefighters and staff within the service. As such, I want to reassure communities, and those within the service, that the Chief Fire Officer and I are taking this report seriously and we will continue to ensure that staff feel supported and are part of an inclusive culture.    Through my accountability structure, I will continue to hold the Chief Fire Officer to account against the recommendations made within this report, specifically through our one-to-one meetings, my Strategic Finance & Governance Board and Ethics and Integrity Panel.  My one-to-one meeting with the Chief Fire Officer provides further opportunity for additional scrutiny regarding any issues and areas for improvement identified by HMICFRS, along with any agreement of remedial actions.  The Strategic Finance & Governance Board meets monthly and involves senior managers from my Office as well as the CFRS. The Board receives regular updates and assurance as to how the service is embedding the HMICFRS recommendations.  Moving forward, the Ethics and Integrity Panel will support me in monitoring how the service is dealing with integrity and ethical issues such as, conduct, complaints, quality of service, as well as quarterly deep dives of specific thematic areas.  Protecting our communities is always of significant importance, but equally as important is the need to protect our staff too, because without them, we would not be able to do what we do.  I want to recognise the hardworking staff within the CFRS and the great work they provide for the community within Cumbria. It’s important, that we develop and maintain an environment for which they feel they can thrive and feel reassured. With this is in mind, I am looking forward to the future discussions that my Office and I have, with Chief Fire Officer and CFRS, as we both build towards a positive future for Service and its staff.”  Chief Fire Officer, Rick Ogden, commented on the HMICFRS Report:    “Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service welcomes the publication of the HMICFRS report on Values and Culture in fire and rescue services, known as the Spotlight report.  We recognise that the national report is very difficult reading, and from our own specific HMICFRS report we know we still have work to do on our culture and we are prioritising this as an area of focus. We have improved and progressed positively since our initial inspection and are continuing to learn and improve, taking on board recommendations from HMICFRS, NFCC (National Fire Chiefs Council) and from other services and sectors. The recent change in governance to the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner and the appointment of myself as new Chief Fire Officer, has provided us with the opportunity to review the values and cultures of the Service.    In addressing the recent Spotlight report, a dedicated group of senior managers, chaired by my Deputy Chief Fire Officer, has been established to consider each and every recommendation and how it is rolled out in Cumbria.  Updates are provided monthly to HMICFRS, and recent successes include the role out of DBS checks for all staff within Cumbria, the establishment of an independent confidential reporting line, and the use of an independent body to provide robust scrutiny.” | |