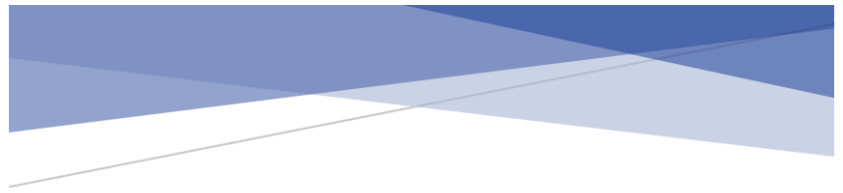




**DORSET & WILTSHIRE**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE**



# AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO THE WORKPLACE CULTURE OF DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

## RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

OCTOBER 2023

### ABOUT THE MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

We are fully committed to positively moving forward so that together we will continue to build a better workplace. We therefore fully accept all aspects of the Independent Review Team's recommendations.

The Independent Review Team's report outlines a number of themes and recommendations. These are:

- Workplace culture.
- Robustness of key policies and procedures.
- Women's experiences in the workplace.
- Barriers that prevent the reporting of issues.
- Robustness of former disciplinary action.

For completeness, we have provided a response to each of the recommendations which recognises the:

- Arrangements and practices already in place.
- Work that we were already progressing.
- Work we are planning to do that arises from the Independent Review.

An action plan will be produced that brings together the actions arising from this review and the on-going work that has and continues to be undertaken.

The progress of this action plan will be reported to staff, and to elected Members through the Fire and Rescue Authority committee structure.

## WORKPLACE CULTURE

### **Recommendation 16**

*There is an urgent need for the Service to categorically set out the expected standards of behaviour and how failure to comply will be dealt with robustly. This should be clearly aligned with the Code of Ethics. It is imperative that each member of staff across the organisation understands their own personal responsibility for compliance with these standards and for managers at all levels to challenge inappropriate behaviours consistently.*

**Management Response:** We accept that it is vital for all staff to be absolutely clear of behavioural expectations, and that these are aligned to the Code of Ethics.

**What we do now:** Following the publication of the national Core Code of Ethics in May 2021, the Service replaced its existing behaviours and values framework and fully adopted the Code of Ethics in December 2021. All relevant procedures were updated to reflect the new code, we developed a code of ethics handbook, revised workplace posters, held management sessions across the Service, and formulated an action plan to further embed the code.

**What we plan to do:** The new Dignity at Work framework will build upon existing procedures to further strengthen and reinforce expected behaviours. To ensure further organisational wide understanding and responsibility, we will roll out a series code of ethics workshops to sit alongside our newly developed e-learning package.

### **Recommendation 23**

*The proposed Dignity at Work framework policy should include a clear position on social media and its acceptable use. The organisation should also make it clear that unacceptable use of social media will result in disciplinary action.*

**Management Response:** We already have the relevant procedures in place, these were reviewed and validated by the Independent Review Team, we appreciate that a Dignity at Work framework will bring all of these procedures together in one place. This will give our managers and staff easy access to the information that is in place to support them.

**What we do now:** Our social media procedure has been in place for some time, along with separate supporting guidance on the use of WhatsApp and other social media platforms. Regular training and guidance are provided to support the high number of accounts across the Service, used to help engage with local communities. The procedure has been regularly refreshed and was last reviewed in April 2023, when linkages to our discipline procedure was further strengthened. Disciplinary action has been taken when breaches to the procedures have come to light.

**What we plan to do:** Our approach to social media will be included in the Dignity at Work framework. Once this is in place and associated procedures have been further strengthened, we will ensure that our managers receive additional training and support, so they can confidently manage the performance and behaviours of their teams.

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

### **Recommendation 28**

*The Service should establish an independent review/advisory board to assist in the monitoring and implementation of the internal action plan and any recommendations emanating from this independent review. Chair/co-chaired by an independent person, this will enhance visibility and generate accountability for the Service. Inclusion of diversity staff associations and other stakeholders would be beneficial.*

**Management Response:** The Terms of Reference for the Independent Review stated that a steering group would be set up to ensure delivery of the report recommendations, with progress updates being provided to the Fire and Rescue Authority. We recognise the value that an independent person will bring to this Committee.

**What we do now:** An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee has been in place for several years, chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer. This Committee has recently evolved into the Cultural Development Committee, with broader attendees from across the Service, including trade union representatives, staff networks, staff involved in our Internal Review and members of our Leadership Consultancy group. Representatives from our Learning and Organisational Development Team also now attend so that initiatives and organisational learning can be put into practice. The revised terms of reference have more focus on culture and community engagement issues and initiatives. Like all meetings across the Service, open seats are available to any member of staff to help improve trust, transparency, and personal development.

**What we plan to do:** The existing culture development plan will be revised to pick up on the recommendations from this review and the Service's own Internal Review that was commissioned immediately following the publication, in November 2022, of the independent review of London Fire Brigade's culture. We will provide regular strategic reports to the Fire and Rescue Authority, so that progress is scrutinised by elected Members and made available to the public and other stakeholders via our website. We will ensure a suitably experienced independent stakeholder is sought.

## ROBUSTNESS OF KEY PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

### **Recommendation 6**

*The review team recommends a further review of the existing suite of procedures pertaining to conduct, performance and capability to ensure that they meet the needs of a modern workforce. This should include accurate and central recording to enable the Service to identify trends and take appropriate action, as required. This would also ensure a consistent approach to discipline. This should include:*

- a) accurate and central recording to enable the service to identify trends and take appropriate action, as required including central recording and monitoring of HR043 performance improvement plans.*
- b) a review of the modified procedure and overall review of the discipline procedure to ensure a consistent approach to discipline sanctions.*

**Management Response:** Our current procedures already align with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and good practice, but we accept that they need to be reviewed to fully take on board the recommendations of this review. We acknowledge that there is a need for greater oversight, monitoring and trend analysis to build trust and confidence in our processes.

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**What we do now:** Human Resources Business Partners (HRBPs) and specialist legal advice is secured, as appropriate, to provide on the ground support and advice to managers and staff, so that a consistent, fair and proportionate approach can be taken. Generalised reports of quarterly and annual trends are already made available via the Service's intranet and are reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority within the restrictions of data protection and employment law. This information is also summarised in our annual workforce equality report presented to elected Members for their scrutiny and approval. Management monitoring of disciplinary sanctions and cases does occur; however, this needs to be further strengthened in order to drive greater consistency and to identify any improvements or training needed. Additional investment in HR resources has already been agreed to support this and recruitment is well underway.

**What we plan to do:** We are reviewing our managing performance and discipline procedures so that the specific recommendations raised by the Independent Review Team can be fully considered and addressed. We will also ensure improved oversight, monitoring and trend analysis. Once our procedures have been reviewed and where necessary strengthened, we will ensure that our managers receive further training and support, so that they can confidently manage the performance and behaviours of their teams.

### **Recommendation 7**

*The review team also recommends the introduction of a new 'Dignity at Work' framework to deal specifically with unacceptable behaviour relating to bullying and harassment or EDI issues. This would allow greater clarity and fit with the Service's desire for a 'zero-tolerance' approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour.*

**Management Response:** The Independent Review Team have confirmed that our performance management procedures align to ACAS and good practice. However, we acknowledge there is a need to review these. We are committed to ensuring that when inappropriate behaviours occur, they are challenged, and swiftly and appropriately managed. Everyone should have the confidence to challenge and report where standards fall short. We agree that there is benefit in the introduction of a 'Dignity at Work' framework to support this.

**What we do now:** We have procedures in place, but we acknowledge there is a need to review these. Once they are reviewed, we will also provide further training and support to managers who implement them. This training is provided to all investigating officers and those involved in grievance or disciplinary hearings, and much of the training is provided by specialist legal firms.

**What we plan to do:** We are developing a Dignity at Work framework which will bring all of the procedures together in one place to enable our managers and staff to access information and support more easily. This will include a zero tolerance and organisational culture statement in line with this recommendation and recommendation 8. Once our procedures have been reviewed and updated, we will ensure that our managers receive further training and support, so they are more confident in managing the performance and behaviours of their teams. We are also in the process of refreshing our leadership development programme which will incorporate enhanced training on managing performance and behaviours.

### **Recommendation 8**

*Implement a new EDI policy statement that includes the NFCC position published in July 2023 on embedding EDI in the workplace.*

**Management Response:** We agree that there is benefit in the introduction of an EDI policy statement which incorporates the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) position.

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**What we do now:** The Fire and Rescue Authority has a people policy that encompasses the key responsibilities for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and this is regularly reviewed. A range of supporting procedures are in place to support the delivery of the policy. We do however recognise the benefit of reviewing this in light of the recently published NFCC policy position.

**What we plan to do:** We are incorporating the NFCC position statement within a new zero tolerance and organisational culture statement. We will ensure, through our communications and engagement arrangements, that all staff are aware of this statement. We will assess the effectiveness of our approach through staff surveys and increased data analysis, so that we can be better assured that this commitment is embedded across the organisation.

### **Recommendation 10**

*The Service should strengthen their reporting to the Fire and Rescue Authority of the number and type of discipline/grievances and the type of sanctions delivered on a quarterly basis. There needs to be sufficient detail to ensure Members are reassured any inappropriate behaviours are being dealt with robustly and trends recognised.*

**Management Response:** We recognise the importance of increased transparency and awareness of discipline and grievance data as a means of ensuring the trust and confidence of staff in our processes. We wish to be more transparent, and we are reviewing our procedures to enable us to do this, whilst complying with privacy law.

**What we do now:** Performance information is provided to the Fire and Rescue Authority's Finance and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis, as well as being part of six-monthly performance reports to the Fire and Rescue Authority. Grievance, Discipline and Bullying and Harassment data is also contained within the Annual Workforce Equality Report as part of our Annual Report that is scrutinised and approved by elected Members. This information is also made available to staff on the intranet; however, we accept that this is not easily accessible.

**What we plan to do:** We are developing an electronic Culture Dashboard for all staff to have better and more efficient access to a range of existing performance data. The Dashboard will include information on the number and types of discipline/grievance cases, along with information on discipline outcomes. The intention is that the data will be updated on a monthly basis. The launch of the Dashboard is expected to be in October 2023. Again, this reporting must be generalised in order to comply with data protection and employment law.

### **Recommendation 11**

*It is equally important to provide relevant training for all managers who are required to carry out investigations (formal and informal), to give them the confidence and support to deal with what are often challenging disciplinary and grievance matters. All supervisors from Crew Manager upwards need to be able to act confidently to resolve or escalate issues at the earliest opportunity. This should ensure victims and perpetrators are dealt with appropriately. This training should be delivered in conjunction with an increased understanding of EDI to ensure they recognise inequality. This should ensure that all managers are accountable for delivering outcomes in line with policy, and in accordance with prescribed timescales. A consistent approach to investigating grievances and other complaints should be undertaken, with trained investigating officers and strong HR support.*

**Management Response:** We will enhance the training provided to supervisory and middle managers to ensure that they are more confident in managing performance and behaviour issues and are fully accountable for the performance and behaviours of their teams.

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**What we do now:** Supervisory managers already attend a leadership development programme which includes modules on managing performance and behaviour. Equality awareness sessions and thought-provoking conversation have taken place with watches and sections led by the EDI team and operational personnel. At middle manager level (Station Manager and above) we have used an external training provider to deliver training to those who carry out investigations. This has also included additional training to those who undertake the role of presiding officer (decision maker). We have already agreed further investment in HR resources and recruitment is underway to assist with this training and oversight.

**What we plan to do:** We are refreshing our leadership development programme to include an increased focus on cultural and equality matters, to ensure that supervisory level managers have the skills to confidently manage the performance and behaviours of their teams. We are already increasing the resources within HR to provide enhanced training in this area and will provide specific training to our HRBPs to further enhance their skills, qualifications, and experience so that they can further support managers at hearings. The additional investment will allow us to undertake enhanced analysis of our performance data to identify gaps in training so that we are better able to support individuals to manage performance more effectively. A central panel will be set in place to provide greater oversight and consistency that will also aid organisational learning and development in this area.

### **Recommendation 13**

*DWFRS should consider establishing a central group whose role is to assess and monitor all disciplinary, grievance and bullying/harassment cases. The group's role would be to assess risk, ensure the correct procedure is being applied, appoint investigating officers, provide HR guidance and support, ensure consistency of procedure and monitor progress. DWFRS should ensure that all grievances and other complaints are recorded centrally and monitored for repeat offenders, victims and trends. The HR department will need to be appropriately resourced to deliver this recommendation.*

**Management Response:** We agree that there would be benefit in setting up a central panel to provide increased oversight, ensuring that risk and consistency issues are monitored and that improved data analysis and organisational development is captured.

**What we do now:** Whilst there is some existing oversight, resources within the HR department have been limited to properly provide for this function. We previously recognised that this was an area that needed strengthening. We have already agreed additional investment and recruitment is well underway.

**What we plan to do:** Once the additional resources are in place, we will establish a central panel to provide a greater and more consistent oversight of cases. This will enable the Service to be more consistent and to better identify and deliver any required training or procedural improvements.

### **Recommendation 14**

*Review the current HR provision to ensure there is sufficient capacity to help it support and develop line managers in managing people. This should include effective HR oversight of all its suite of policies and procedures and central recording and monitoring. The current HR Business Partner model with appropriately qualified and/or experienced professionals is perceived to be best practice and should be enhanced where possible.*

**Management Response:** We accept that there is a need to ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the HR department to better enable it to help managers to effectively manage their teams.

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**What we do now:** We are fully committed to the HRBP model, which we know provides support to our managers. All HR professionals are appropriately experienced and/or qualified and undertake continuous professional development to ensure they remain up to date with employment case law, good practice, and future HR thinking.

**What we plan to do:** We will fundamentally review the HR structure to ensure that it best supports the needs and future direction of the organisation. Resources have already been approved to provide additional capacity for case management. This will enable more rigorous monitoring and oversight of procedures and data analysis to aid organisational development. We are also looking at the feasibility of establishing a small pool of qualified and experienced investigating officers with the intention of improving consistency and timeliness of investigations.

### **Recommendation 15**

*Amend the current exit interview process, strengthening it to enable the organisation to learn from the employee experiences, and improve policies and systems accordingly. This should include:*

- a) allowing the leaver to consider whom it may be appropriate to share their experiences and reasons for leaving with.*
- b) consistently and confidentially recording all exit interview centrally.*
- c) adopting a suite of indicators that identify workforce turnover, with a particular focus on those with protected characteristics.*

**Management Response:** We agree that there is a need to further strengthen our exit interview process. A new electronic process was introduced in September 2023 to ensure organisational learning is better captured from this. We will ensure that staff leavers have the option to speak to someone other than their line manager (e.g., staff network lead).

**What we do now:** A suite of performance indicators are already in place to monitor workforce turnover. Exit interview completion is monitored at team level within electronic performance dashboards that are updated on a daily basis and overseen at a Service level. This information and trend analysis are also monitored and reported, as part of the quarterly performance meetings, to both managers and elected Members. Our annual equality workforce report is presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority as part of our Annual Report. This report provides analysis of starters and leavers against protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. The exit procedure has recently been strengthened and a revised process came into effect on 1 September 2023, which changes exit interviews (renamed 'leaver discussions') from voluntary to mandatory. As it is now electronic, it is easier to monitor and draw relevant data from.

**What we plan to do:** A Culture Dashboard is being developed drawing into one place a range of existing data and key performance indicators. It will include high level leaver discussion data on a monthly basis. We intend to enhance trend analysis once the additional HR resources, that have been approved, are in place. The central panel (recommendation 17) will look at equality data to identify any issues or organisational learning needs. We will ensure that staff leavers have the option to speak to someone other than their line manager (e.g., staff network lead).



## WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN THE WORKPLACE

### **Recommendation 1**

*DWFRS should further develop its range of positive action initiatives to encourage greater levels of recruitment and promotion of all under-represented groups, particularly women. Examples of positive action initiatives include: targeted attraction and recruitment campaigns; targeted career development initiatives including mentoring, shadowing, coaching and bespoke training; identifying positive role models from black and ethnic minority and female staff; ensuring all recruitment and promotion adverts include a positive action or welcome statement; ensuring all selection panels are diverse; consider anonymising application forms and carry out EQIAs on all promotion and selection processes to ensure they do not inadvertently impact those with protected characteristics.*

**Management Response:** Whilst there is already an extensive range of positive action initiatives addressing examples highlighted within this recommendation, we recognise that our approach can be further strengthened.

**What we do now:** We have focused on positive action initiatives for a number of years and have a wide range of initiatives and targeting mechanisms in place. Fire stations and central teams already do a great deal of work in this area. They are supported by a wide variety of guidance and information including bespoke cultural guides associated to individual station risk profiles that enable station personnel to better understand the make-up of their communities. A number of operational women took part in the 'Our Time' progression initiative in 2022. Their involvement in this initiative has supported them in their progression. Coaching and mentoring procedures are in place and a number of staff are qualified at Level 5 and 7 of the Institute of Leadership and Management's coaching certification. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are systematically used and have been in place for several years. Our EIA process was significantly reviewed in 2021 when the NFCC template was published. A positive action review group meets regularly with a clear and structured programme of work which incorporates many of the suggestions set out within this recommendation.

**What we plan to do:** We will introduce more targeted coaching/mentoring support, specifically for underrepresented groups to complement existing arrangements. We will continue to use the 'Our Time' programme to support the progression of our operational females. Our EDI Manager is leading on our positive action improvement programme which includes broadening our 'have a go day' offer, better targeting and tailoring our approach, and a more comprehensive and structured buddying scheme so that effective positive action is embedded in all that we do.

### **Recommendation 2**

*Establish goals to significantly increase female representation at both the whole time and on-call firefighter level whilst ensuring the selection procedures are fair and transparent.*

**Management Response:** We accept that we are underrepresented within our operational workforce, but we are fully committed to increasing female representation. Recruiting a diverse workforce has been a challenge across the fire and rescue service sector, particularly for predominately rural services that rely heavily on on-call staff. With 46 of our 50 stations being partial or wholly staffed by on-call firefighters, this represents a significant and on-going challenge to us.

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**What we do now:** We work closely with our operational women's group to discuss our positive action plans and change initiatives. They have led the redesign of our buddying scheme which will form an integral part of our positive action programme. Our operational women have also developed and delivered input on Public Services further education courses, acting as role models to encourage students to consider a career in the fire and rescue service. Our operational women provide fantastic support to our positive action events such as 'have a go days' and are steadfast that whilst they want to encourage more women to become firefighters, our recruitment standards must be maintained and be seen as such by those that often do not fully appreciate the difference between positive action and positive discrimination. Whilst our operational workforce is unrepresentative, in corporate roles and fire control, we have many females in middle and senior manager roles.

**What we plan to do:** We will continue to deliver our extensive work in these areas. We are undertaking a deeper analysis of our recruitment data to help inform our positive action work. We have also created a Watch Manager (Cultural Development) role to work closely with staff, particularly under-represented operational staff, to drive forward change and improvement initiatives. We have undertaken some significant data analysis and will be using this information as part of our community engagement and positive action work.

### **Recommendation 3**

*Identify barriers to women and other underrepresented groups from being attracted to joining and being successful in the selection process to become a firefighter. Any identified barriers should be removed from the process whilst ensuring no dilution of the robustness of the selection criteria.*

**Management Response:** We want to reflect the communities that we serve and know the value that a diverse workforce brings to our organisation. We accept that further work and deeper analysis is required to identify and remove any barriers.

**What we do now:** We actively participated in the NFCC recruitment project to ensure that our firefighter recruitment process continued to align to the National Firefighter Selection Tests, NFCC recommendations and reflected good practice. We analyse our recruitment data to identify the stages where applicants are not successful, so that our 'have a go' events, our website information and our social media posts can be better targeted to provide helpful information to support those considering a career in the fire and rescue service. Our work with the operational women's group has led to initiatives that seek to attract and retain females – for example changes to maternity arrangements, buddying scheme, targeted social media campaigns.

**What we plan to do:** We are keenly awaiting the outcome and findings of the second part of the NFCC recruitment project which is focussed on practical tests so that we can ensure our approach aligns to good practice. Through our long standing on-call review group and our quarterly on-call engagement sessions, we have identified areas that are impacting our ability to recruit and will explore the appropriateness of making any changes. We continue to work with our operational women's group to understand their perspective on barriers to progression, so that changes can be considered and set in place. We have also created a Watch Manager (Cultural Development) role, to work closely with staff, particularly under-represented operational staff, to drive forward change and improvement initiatives.

### **Recommendation 4**

*DWFRS should renew their corporate Women in the Fire Service membership and avail itself of the many opportunities for female progression. (At time of writing we are pleased to note that they have recently renewed their membership.) DWFRS should also consider supporting attendance at the FBU women's school and any other staff association training.*

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**Management Response:** We recognise the value that this membership will bring to our female staff and our wider workforce. We have renewed our corporate Women in the Fire Service Membership and look forward to working with them again.

**What we do now:** We recognise the importance of staff networks and encourage our staff to take up opportunities for personal development. We support underrepresented staff to attend development and networking events, encouraging them to bring back valuable learning that can be implemented within the organisation. Attendance at the FBU women's school and other conferences is also encouraged and supported.

**What we plan to do:** Our Watch Manager (Cultural Development) will lead on initiatives such as these so that we can put in place a stronger network to support organisational change, learning and improvement.

### **Recommendation 17**

*The Service should immediately issue communication regarding the appropriate use of WC facilities.*

**Management Response:** We are disappointed that this is happening in our organisation, and this will not be tolerated. We will take prompt action to ensure our watch and station managers robustly enforce our position.

**What we do now:** Following feedback from our network groups, all of our buildings have separate facilities for male and female staff. There are some where the female facility is also the accessible toilet. This is due to the physical restrictions on some of our smaller fire stations.

**What we plan to do:** We will issue an immediate directive that female facilities should not be used by male staff. Through increased visibility of our station managers, we will ensure facilities are better monitored and failure to comply will result in disciplinary action.

### **Recommendation 18**

*The Service should continue, making it a priority, its full survey of its buildings and facilities and prioritise improvements.*

**Management Response:** We agree that all our staff should have appropriate facilities and we are working hard to ensure this can be achieved.

**What we do now:** Through our capital programme and the cyclical maintenance work, we have invested in works to modernise our estate, but this investment has to be considered against other financial planning challenges and the medium-term deficit that the Service faces. All investment programmes have a people impact assessment associated with them to help ensure that welfare issues and considerations are considered at the earliest of stages.

**What we plan to do:** We will continue to prioritise this work and use our staff network groups as key stakeholders. We will continue to modernise our facilities as finances allow.

### **Recommendation 19**

*The Service should take immediate steps to ensure a consistent approach to welfare and WC facilities at operational incidents. This should include regular audits to ensure the request and use of such facilities.*

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**Management Response:** Whilst we have welfare and toilet facilities available to be mobilised to operational incidents, we acknowledge that these can be improved. We have instigated an incident ground welfare review earlier this year to explore options available.

**What we do now:** We have welfare and portable toilet facilities available to be mobilised to operational incidents and this is included in incident command training and Service procedure. Fire ground welfare arrangements are available when incident commanders believe that the incident will be protracted, incident commanders are also prompted by fire control to consider mobilising the welfare facilities for larger incidents. We have already commenced a strategic review of our operational welfare facilities and have management considerations for deploying these resources as part of the incident commanders' action cards.

**What we plan to do:** Whilst facilities are available to be mobilised, we recognise that further monitoring is required to provide assurance that this is done routinely, and in line with operational protocols. We will act upon the outcome of the on-going strategic review of our incident ground welfare facilities.

### **Recommendation 20**

*The current initiative, 'Not on My Watch', run by a female Crew Manager, is an example of best practice around bystander challenge. The Service is encouraged to actively support the profile of this initiative and consider rolling it out across the organisation. It is also recommended that the programme should be externally validated and evaluated to test its effectiveness.*

**Management response:** The current initiative has been well received by station-based staff and there are plans to roll this out across the entire organisation.

**What we do now:** This programme was already in place, and we are working through a structured timetable. We are currently seeking more female staff to accelerate the roll out of this initiative.

**What we plan to do:** We will continue to deliver this programme as rapidly as we are able to.

### **Recommendation 21**

*The Service should continue to consider the impact of its maternity and menopause procedures and processes and ensure that they are as inclusive and supportive as possible. The most vital element of this recommendation is for policies and procedures in this area being understood, fully supported and applied consistently and empathetically by all managers.*

**Management Response:** We fully recognise the importance of supporting staff during their pregnancy, maternity and when they return to work, and through menopause. The individual's manager is a vital part of this support network, and we will ensure appropriate training and awareness is in place.

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**What we do now:** A review of the maternity procedure was completed in December 2020 which provided enhanced support on return to work for operational women. The financial and other arrangements in place for maternity welfare are in excess of national terms and conditions. Workforce menopause champions are in place and have been since 2019, with information available within our Health and Wellbeing procedure, a document 'Supporting Women at Work through the Menopause', resources on our staff intranet and a range of events in place to support staff. We also collaborate with other fire and rescue services on menopause awareness initiatives and virtual conferences.

**What we plan to do:** The maternity procedure is currently under review again by the Women's Support Network. We will work with our staff network groups to understand what further improvements and/or financial support that might be put in place.

### **Recommendation 22**

*Dealing with pregnancy, maternity leave and the menopause should be key features in the new EDI training programme.*

**Management Response:** We recognise the importance of supporting staff during their pregnancy, maternity and when they return to work, and through menopause. The individual's manager is a vital part of this support network, and we will ensure appropriate training and awareness is in place.

**What we do now:** Our current procedures provide information and guidance to line managers so that they are able to support staff in these situations. HR business partners work closely with managers and provide further advice and guidance. Workforce menopause champions are in place and have been since 2019, with information available within our Health and Wellbeing procedure, a document 'Supporting Women at Work through the Menopause', significant resources on our staff intranet and a range of events in place to support staff.

**What we plan to do:** We will ensure that our refreshed leadership and development programme includes further awareness and discussion about the support needs during these times. We will continue to promote menopause awareness sessions and ensure staff feel comfortable and confident to discuss it. We will ensure our suite of guidance material remains up to date and relevant.

### **Recommendation 24**

*The Service should implement formal mandatory face-to-face training on EDI to show the SLT's commitment to changing the culture and ensure that it aligns to the Service's Code of Ethics. This training should be to all members of the Service, training records should be completed to show training completion. The training should be rank and role specific and include challenging inappropriate behaviours, understanding positive action and dealing with specific issues, such as neurodiversity, menopause, racial and cultural awareness and sexism and misogyny. This training must also incorporate key elements, such as victim-blaming, bystanding and tackling difficult conversations.*

**Management Response:** We recognise and accept there is a need to enhance structured face to face training on a range of EDI and culture matters.

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**What we do now:** Whilst we have comprehensive e-learning arrangements in place, we recognise that EDI is not always best delivered this way. We have previously seconded senior female operational staff to facilitate EDI training within our fire stations which was well received. We have also delivered training at Bitesize Leaders and Managers Engagement Days over many years but recognise that this does not reach all staff.

**What we plan to do:** We are reviewing and refreshing our Leadership Development programmes and will include a greater focus on EDI as well as bystander/upstander training for all staff as a priority. Our Watch Manager (Culture Development) will be an integral part of this process.

## BARRIERS THAT PREVENT THE REPORTING OF ISSUES

### **Recommendation 5**

*Continue an ongoing and regular engagement programme to provide visibility of and accessibility to the SLT. The Service needs to articulate properly the responsibility of each leader for visibility. This will include all leadership grades that have responsibility for staff at numerous locations.*

**Management Response:** We recognise the importance of enabling our leaders to be visible, at all levels of the Service and across all of our workplaces. A large geography, poor north-south road networks and workloads have created some barriers for us to doing this effectively. We want to support our managers to find solutions to improve this through clearer expectations and restructuring operational teams to increase the capacity for middle and strategic management visibility.

**What we do now:** A comprehensive internal communications and engagement plan is in place which is monitored on a monthly basis. Strategic leaders have engaged in a programme to meet with watches and sections at fire stations and have used MS Teams extensively to connect with our staff. Strategic leaders are visible within their own directorates and at a wide range of corporate and operational events. However, workloads and working across a large service area with long travel times remains a significant challenge for more routine visibility.

**What we plan to do:** It is important that strategic leaders are visible, and we will provide clarity on expectation including the primary objective to increase the visibility and contact time between station-based personnel and their Station and Group Manager. We are currently restructuring our operational groups and management arrangements do this and ensure that staff are aware of when these visits are scheduled.

### **Recommendation 25**

*Whilst it is inevitable that there will be temporary promotions, on each occasion the incoming manager should be fully briefed and have continual mentoring in their role. The Service should review the number of temporary promotions to provide stability and ensure visible leadership across stations. This may mean that if someone is given a temporary promotion after due process, they are not swapped for another temporary promotion.*

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**Management Response:** Temporary promotions are an inevitable consequence of meeting financial and workforce challenges, but the Service strives to keep them to a minimum. We recognise the challenges that temporary promotions have on the day-to-day management of teams and are looking at ways to further limit this. We expect those in temporary promotions to carry out the full requirements of their role which includes managing performance and behaviours. We will ensure that managers are equipped to confidently do this.

**What we do now:** We have robust and systematic workforce planning arrangements in place that help us minimise the number of temporary promotions, however with the financial constraints that we are under temporary promotions will need to continue to respond to organisational change and react short-term crewing needs. Through these workforce planning arrangements, we have introduced a number of measures such as fixed term operational contracts. Although we do have handover arrangements, these are not always as structured as they might be. Our 1:1 review process has the facility to create handover notes. Support is available through the management chain and through the HRBPs, who are able to provide continuity of information and support to managers.

**What we plan to do:** Through the restructured operational groups and management arrangements, we will ensure that induction and handover arrangements are improved for those undertaking temporary promotion. We are in the process of developing a handover form, based on our team performance management dashboard, to strengthen the oversight of these arrangements. We will also ensure that the individual in the temporary promotion is appropriately supported and accountable for the management of their team whilst they are in post.

### **Recommendation 26**

*Develop a coaching programme to support senior leaders and managers of the Service in generating cultural change, in line with many modern, progressive organisations.*

**Management Response:** We recognise the importance of developing our managers and appreciate that coaching programmes will bring a number of benefits to our organisation.

**What we do now:** All strategic, senior and middle managers have a Colourworks profile which provides information about their managerial style, preferences and blind spots. This is used as a tool for personal development in addition to two development dates each year. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) have undertaken a 360° assessment process and made a commitment to the actions for improvements. This is now being rolled out to corporate and operational middle managers. Members of SLT have successfully completed the fire and rescue service Executive Leadership Programme, as have a number of Area Managers and Heads of Department. The Strategic Leadership Team have also undertaken executive coaching and shadowing opportunities. A significant number of senior leaders have also secured professional accreditation with external organisations such as the Chartered Management Institute, Institute of Directors, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and Institution of Fire Engineers.

**What we plan to do:** The 360° assessment process will become part of the Leadership Development Programme which is currently being reviewed and will be rolled out to middle managers. We will explore further opportunities for executive coaching for all senior leaders and managers.

## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

### **Recommendation 27**

*Strengthen leadership development, with particular focus on supervisory and middle managers. The organisation should, through training records, know who has received appropriate by rank and role, leadership training. This will not be functional training on the technicalities on rank and role such as equipment use or incident command. There is a need for high quality leadership training with the golden thread of equality, diversity and inclusion running through it.*

**Management Response:** We have structured leadership development programmes in place at supervisory, middle and senior manager level but recognise the need to review, refresh and where necessary improve what is already in place as well as ensuring that all managers attend.

**What we do now:** Our existing leadership development programme which has been in place since 2018 includes: Leadership in Lifesaving – supervisory managers, Leading for Performance – middle managers, Bitesize Leaders – middle and senior managers. All programmes include input and discussion on EDI, values, behaviours, and culture. Some have included specific sessions given by external agencies on how they are progressing with cultural change and EDI issues. We have a number of face-to-face leadership interventions at watch level involving operational supervisory managers focused on areas including EDI, managing performance, having difficult conversations, however these have not been corporately mandated but rather delivered through naturally occurring workplace attendance. Operational training is well recorded, and e-learning is routinely monitored, however the recording of supervisory and middle management leadership training needs to be improved.

**What we plan to do:** We are reviewing our leadership programmes to ensure an even stronger focus on EDI, behaviours, and culture. We are also reviewing the structure of our Learning and Organisational Development team to ensure sufficient resources are in place to strengthen this work. We will ensure that all managers attend our leadership programmes and that this is duly recorded and overseen at a corporate level.

## ROBUSTNESS OF FORMER DISCIPLINARY ACTION

### **Recommendation 9**

*The review team strongly encourages DWFRS to find an appropriate way to provide greater levels of transparency regarding the outcome of processes. This will help to provide 'closure' and support for all victims. This is a matter for DWFRS to continue to raise at a national level with the Home Office, HMICFRS and the NFCC.*

**Management Response:** We recognise that 'closure' for victims is an important part of the recovery process and feel that we should be able to communicate the outcome of grievance and disciplinary cases to improve transparency and trust in the procedures in place.



## Independent Review into the Workplace Culture - Response to the Recommendations

**What we do now:** We currently only provide victims with 'generic' outcomes advising that 'appropriate management action has been taken'. We accept that this can cause upset but a balance needs to be struck between this and the right to privacy. We publish generic discipline and grievance data on the staff intranet so that our staff know the numbers of, and reasons for, discipline investigations as well as the outcomes. This information is also presented to elected Members via both the Finance and Audit Committee and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

**What we plan to do:** We are developing a Culture Dashboard that will include grievance and discipline data at a level to comply with data protection and employment laws. This information will be more accessible for all staff and will be refreshed on a monthly basis. We will continue to call upon the Home Office and other national stakeholders for changes that would enable us to be more transparent in our reporting.

### **Recommendation 12**

*Provide regular updates to those involved in HR-related investigations to ensure transparency and to help build trust and confidence.*

**Management Response:** We recognise the frustrations for those involved in HR related investigations, particularly in terms of how long investigations take, and the level of information we are legally able to disclose. Whilst we endeavour to keep all parties regularly updated about general progress, this is clearly not happening as well as it should.

**What we do now:** Line managers and HRBPs are provided with regular updates on investigation progress so that they can keep the individual informed. Support is also provided to the complainant and any additional parties, but we recognise that this not happening consistently. In order to ensure impartiality, we have often used outside agencies and bodies to undertake initial investigations and to present at disciplinary hearings. Their restricted capacity has, at times, also caused delays.

**What we plan to do:** Additional HR resources have been approved and recruitment is currently well underway. This will enable case management arrangements to be better overseen and, where necessary, strengthened. We will also continue to call upon the Home Office and other national stakeholders for changes that would enable us to be more transparent in our reporting of disciplinary cases so that we can build the trust and confidence within our workforce and communities.