

Areas for Improvement (AFI) from the HMICFRS inspection report for SYFR – Action updates as of January 2022

Effectiveness:

AFI: The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

This action is now considered business as usual. All Operational Risk Information (ORI) collected is accessible on the Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) including over the border information. The information submitted on ORI, Site Specific Risk Information etc. is audited in the Firefighter Safety Team, and is of varied standards. The FF Safety Team have produced a guidance document to assist the end user and carried out virtual training sessions during July and August 2021 and every watch and Station Manager was invited to these sessions. The information captured as part of our operational risk inspections allows first responders to access this and it provides useful operational information to support decision making and tactical planning and as such, developing consistency and quality of information will continue to be an important role for the FF Safety Team.

AFI: The service should ensure it addresses effectively the burden of false alarms.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

Our Business Fire Safety team have a good record for reducing unwanted fire signals (UwFS). We have an UwFS policy in place, which has a number of steps we can take to interact with the businesses to address UwFS and the new call challenge criteria is also helping to reduce the number of unnecessary calls that SYFR attends. SYFR will continue to engage with businesses and highlight UwFS in the media as appropriate. Reducing the number of unnecessary calls outs to false alarms allows us to focus more time on essential training and other service delivery and community engagement activity.

AFI: The service should ensure it has effective arrangements for providing specialist protection advice out of hours.

Action update: This action is behind schedule. Progress so far:

The provision of out of hours work has now commenced on a pilot basis, following extensive consultation with staff and representative bodies. The arrangements have been tested with on call Business Fire Safety staff deployed out of office hours and it has so far worked well. We continue to work with the team and their representative bodies to embed the arrangements and secure this provision into the future.

AFI: The service should ensure it understands what it needs to do to adopt national operational guidance (NOG) and put in place a plan to do so.

Action update: This action is behind schedule. Progress so far:

The National Operational Guidance (NOG) programme has been produced through the National Fire Chiefs Council and provides a one stop shop for good practice operational guidance that can be tailored to local needs. It provides guidance, suggests how to train against operational scenarios and provides useful risk assessments and learning materials. Our NOG implementation project has a clear work stream, with a comprehensive timeline.

The timeline for the work has been extended by around 8 months due to CV19 priorities and staffing shortages in the Firefighter Safety Team. As NOG 'product packs' are released they are uploaded onto the SYFR Operations, Training and Information webpage, and a communication sent out so that our operational staff can access the guidance and other relevant materials. However, the implementation plan aims to ensure it is embedded in SYFR and for this we need a comprehensive communications strategy. A communications plan has been produced.

It is still a project with the emphasis on engagement and one area we still need to progress with is our e-learning packages to support the implementation. We have struggled to recruit a new e-learning coordinator which has impacted on the progress of this. An engagement plan is being drawn up linking policy and training with the end users. The development of several NOG-compliant Safety Critical elearning modules have now been completed.

AFI: The service should ensure it has an effective system in place to capture operational learning so as to improve its operational response.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

A full and comprehensive process is in place. Currently experiencing capacity issues within OST to manage the increasing amount of information that is being submitted, both internally and externally. Evidence submitted to show the process updating the Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA) for vehicle in water

AFI: The service should make sure its operational staff have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information. This should include cross-border risk information.

Action update: This action is behind schedule. Progress so far:

Operational Risk Information (ORI) team leader has been tasked with carrying out a fact finding exercise to confirm what information is available, from which services, and test the Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs). Extended anticipated completion date due to work load of ORI team leader. New staff have started and once trained can assist with this work.

AFI: The service should make sure it participates in a programme of cross-border exercises, sharing the learning from these exercises.

Action update: This action is on completed. Progress so far:

Plan and schedules in place. Limited exercising due to CV-19 restrictions. It has always been expressed as a priority to both exercise and train jointly with other FRSs, this has been identified in the previous exercise plans and polices, where we have not done so well is the capturing of this and including training.

As the Exercise planning Group we have revised and released the policy highlighting the need the 2021 plan expresses to district that joint exercising must be done and that the means of creating an exercise and reporting will capture where this occurs. We do already have evidence of this from this year but due to COVID a number of exercises have understandably been postponed or some have been delivered as a table top exercise.

11/03/21 Policy and plan have reflected this over 18 months ago - data collection was the issue around under reporting which has been sorted and tested - continued evidence can be found in both the policy, plan on Resilience Direct (RD) and Station District plans.

Efficiency:

AFI: The service should ensure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

The internal audit carried out by RSM on 'collaboration and benefits realisation' has been produced and finalised. Internal audit rated SYFR collaboration and benefits at the highest assurance possible - 'substantial assurance'. The following is the internal audit's summary opinion: "Taking account of the issues identified, the Board can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage the identified risk are suitably designed, consistently applied and operating effectively'.

In addition to this, the service also commissioned Rose Regeneration to deliver an external independent review of specific collaboration initiatives between SYFR and South Yorkshire Police, (SYP). The report methodology followed the process set out in the HM Treasury Megenta book, which is the template for good practice in terms of evaluation and overall identified modest but positive return on investment in relation to our collaboration across the Joint Community Safety Department and Joint Vehicle and Fleet Management arrangements across SYFR and SYP. The report was presented to the SYFRA in September 2021.

AFI: The service should ensure it has sufficiently robust plans in place which consider the medium-term financial challenges beyond 2020 so it can prepare to secure the right level of savings.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

The service's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is presented for approval by the Fire and Rescue Authority around November each year. In addition to detailing how the service is funded and what the service spends money on, it also captures the financial risks that may impact the service in future. The plan provides information on the service's reserves strategy and relevant financial updates for the capital spend programme. The MTFP is also informed by and reflects the outcomes of our new workforce planning arrangements to capture detail on any investments and efficiencies that result from the workforce planning events that are now scheduled each year.

AFI: The service should assure itself it fully exploits external funding opportunities and options for generating income.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

The revised and approved MTFP clearly articulates savings and plans through scenario planning. Grants are being utilised where available and there is a view to apply for funding through the decarbonisation fund. Due to COVID income generation is limited to what can be done. We do have special services and generate income through hydrants, secondments etc but this is limited

People:

AFI: The service should assure itself that staff understand how to access wellbeing support.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

The Health and wellbeing support provided to all staff across SYFR was reviewed using various intelligence sources e.g. health and wellbeing survey, staff pulse survey. SYFR has developed a dedicated Health and Wellbeing webpage on its intranet where various documents and support can be accessed both internal and external (confidential). We have also worked with the British Red Cross Psycho-Social Support Team to develop a training programme to enable in-house Critical Incident Wellbeing (CIW) Supporters to deliver peer-to-peer support to personnel following critical incidents. There is now on station learning developed by CIW Supporters and issued to station Oct 2020. Critical Incident Wellbeing Support (CIWS) is consistently and regularly referenced in staff Bulletin updates and other communication methods.

AFI: The service needs to ensure that staff involved in protracted operational incidents have adequate welfare facilities.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

The service has completed a review of the welfare offer to SYFR personnel at incidents. Key personnel were involved in this review as appropriate. An Operational Information Note (OIN) 'Managing Fatigue and Welfare at Operational Incidents' was developed and issued providing additional guidance to staff on supporting welfare of staff at emergency incidents.

There is a new joint SYFR/British Red Cross welfare vehicle that is hosted within service and an awareness visit programme has been delivered across all fire stations. There is also a shared Welfare unit (joint SYP & SYFR) and this will complement / back-up the new British Red Cross welfare vehicle. All SYFR Group Managers have been issued with SYFR credit cards in order that they are able to source / fund emergency food and refreshments at protracted incidents as appropriate. Since issue they have been used on a number of occasions successfully. Larger welfare units and providers have been identified should additional welfare capability be required - shared comms/video on this during Dec 2020.

Getting the right people with the right skills

AFI: The service should ensure its workforce plan addresses any gaps in capability which affect the availability of fire engines.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

The service has now embedded a Workforce Planning Policy that sets out governance of workforce planning and the process for engaging managers in the process, which culminates in an annual workforce plan. The governance of workforce planning is via the new People Board, chaired by the DCFO. This is underpinned by a workforce planning committee chaired by the Head of Human Resources, (HR), and attended by senior managers, HR Business Partners and staff representative bodies.

The workforce planning annual process commences in spring each year when managers are asked to review and refresh their workforce planning arrangements (included skills gaps and succession planning proposals) and to submit these to HR. Managers are invited to attend

present business cases for investment and/or efficiencies to an annual workforce planning event hosted by the Senior Leadership Team. Approved business cases are then built into the financial planning process in early autumn so that they can be presented to the Fire Authority as part of the service's investment and efficiency plans. These are also reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan that is presented to the FRA around November each year.

Workforce Planning process is now implemented and continuing with ICT process support and ongoing training and support to be provided for Line Managers. In relation to availability of fire engines, the service is progressing with plans to better align the strength profile (actual number of staff) to the establishment profile (actual number of posts) within operational roles. This will result in additional recruitment to both accommodate the future retirement profile as well as recognising that our strength profile needed to increase. In addition to recruitment of new trainee firefighters for whole-time posts, we have also increased the number of on-call staff that have migrated into whole-time posts, accepted transfers in from other FRSs and will continue into 2022 with this blended approach to recruitment into operational posts.

AFI: The service needs to assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained for their role. It needs to ensure all staff keep their skills up to date and have a consistent method of recording when they have received training.

Action update: This action is behind schedule. Progress so far:

SYFR is reviewing the way in which skills and competence are recorded. SYFR is looking to review how processes work for corporate staff and this will link to the current Training Needs Analysis in place for all roles and Training and Development Framework in addition to the newly developed frameworks of competence for non-operational employees.

In relation to the provision of staff on On-Call stations lacking specific skills resulting in poorer availability, work on this project is ongoing. Skills gaps have been identified and individuals have been booked onto or identified for future development to meet these skills gaps (e.g. Incident Command and Driver training/qualifications). Covid 19 has had an impact on this as the ability of individuals to attend courses and training has been reduced but this is now being progressed as more training becomes available. The same approach and consideration of wider specialist attributes is ongoing for whole-time operational staff.

Training and development was recently audited by the service's external auditors and there were no management actions identified as the auditors could see clear evidence of staff training needs being identified, appropriate training being provided (under Covid conditions) and that this is being correctly recorded. This work is recommencing in a number of areas tying in with the Maintenance of Competence (MOC) project, Core Learning Pathways, NFCC Leadership Framework and other identified requirements. This will be supported by the additional resource within workforce development.

AFI: To identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity, and make its workforce more representative, the service should ensure the value of positive action is well-understood by staff.

Action update: This action is behind schedule. Progress so far:

All staff are required to complete the mandatory EDI Essentials e-learning course, which covers positive action and the importance and value of this. Managers also complete a mandatory Managing Diversity e-learning module. The service has also been rolling out a face to face one day training course to all staff, which allows participants to explore their understanding, thoughts and experiences of positive action.

We have delivered a communications programme around positive action including Black History Month and LGBT+ History Month. We have increased the number of SYFR staff directly involved in positive action activities to widen engagement and understanding. Work is progressing in this area to further develop understanding. SYFR have published a video (and shared nationally) around Positive Action to increase understanding and all individuals will be expected to be in ticket for EDI Essentials e-training by the end of July 2021 at the latest. Final face to face courses are being progressed and additional training has been developed alongside staff groups with a focus on microaggressions. This will be rolled out face to face as needed with access for all via the e-learning platform. An audit of completed ED&I Learnpro has been carried out and reminders sent to those that have not completed to date.

AFI: The service should identify and implement ways to improve staff confidence in the grievance process.

Action update: This action is completed. Progress so far:

If the timescales of the Grievance process are not met this is usually because the case has been more complex or an extension to the timescale has been agreed by all parties. Managers have been reminded to make every effort to keep to the timescales and offered support where required. The culture of the organisation is changing and improvements are being made in relationships between managers and staff. The Service will continue to be open and transparent in its communications about how decisions are arrived at. Although grievances are confidential, where possible and with agreement, improvements that have arisen as a result of grievances will be shared. The role of the First Contact Advisors (FCA) is being reviewed and refreshed. Once this is confirmed, details of the scheme and the contact details of the FCA's will be communicated throughout the Service.

AFI: The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

Action update: This action is on schedule. Progress so far:

As part of the Workforce Planning and the Personal Review processes, high-potential and aspiring leaders can be identified and supported through coaching, mentoring and learning and development opportunities. The service aims to implement high potential (HIPO) and Aspiring leader's programmes in the future. Work is progressing in line with succession, workforce planning and pathway reviews and a project will be commenced to implement further processes to identify high potential individuals for fast track development programmes but the service recognises more work is required on this. The service is engaging with the NFCC People Programme that has various projects including National Occupational Standards, EDI, Direct Entry, Supervisory Leadership Development and Coaching and Mentoring. These projects are still developing and the service will continue to engage with them.