

SYFR HMICFRS Report 2022 Recommendations	SYFR Analysis as at 30/11/23	Deadline	RAG Rating
<b>Recommendation 1:</b>			
CFO should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes.	<p>Staff can raise concerns confidentially both informally and formally. If they wish to raise them informally, they can speak to managers, People Partners, Occupational Health nurses, representative bodies, staff group members and colleagues. They can also use the Service's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is available 24/7 and provides a range of advice and assistance and counselling.</p> <p>The Service has engaged an independent speak up service (SeeHearSpeakUp) to provide staff with a further option to confidentially raise concerns.</p> <p>If they wish to raise them formally, we have an Individual Grievance policy and Dignity at Work policy and they can receive advice and support from People Partners or representative bodies on how to use these.</p> <p>The Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) have a Whistleblowing policy and this is currently under review. BMBC and the Service are currently doing a joint review of the policy and are improving accessibility in terms of the content and location. We aim to complete this work by end of January 2024. Once it is approved by the FRA, there will be a communications campaign to ensure staff know it is available to them. This has been communicated in the Staff Bulletin so that staff know there is an existing policy and how to access it.</p>	1/10/23	
<b>Recommendation 2:</b>			
The National Employers, LGA and NFCC should review any current independent arrangements whereby staff can raise concerns outside their FRS. They should then ensure that all FRS staff have access to an independent reporting line that can be used as a confidential way to raise concerns outside of their own FRS.	<p>The Service will communicate this option to staff once the outcome of this work is known.</p> <p>The Service is aware of a new charity called Blue Light Whistle Blowers launched in June 2023. This appears to be an option for staff or members of the public to raise concerns about blue light services, which will be forwarded on to services to address. The Service has not received any issues to date via this service.</p>	1/10/23	
<b>Recommendation 3:</b>			
CFO should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.	<p>Staff who raise concerns are given support from managers, People Partners, OH nurses (where required), representative bodies and can access the EAP.</p> <p>If someone raises a concern under the Dignity at Work policy, they also have access to Contact Advisors (staff who have been trained to provide this support).</p> <p>Where a formal investigation is instigated, the complainant(s) and the alleged perpetrator(s) are given a nominated 'welfare officer', who is a manager from a different area of the service. The welfare officers are advised by the People Partners on their role.</p>	1/6/23	

	<p>We have issued written guidance for welfare officers and staff receiving their support, so they are clear on roles, manage expectations, etc.</p> <p>Managers investigating concerns will ask those raising concerns if they have the required support and take action if they do not.</p> <p>We issue a survey to staff who raise grievances to enable them to give feedback on their experience during the investigation into their grievance and once the outcome has been shared. This includes questions on the support available and provided.</p> <p>Nationally, the Firefighters (FF) Charity has also set up a Suicide Prevention Crisis Line that each FRS will contribute to financially from Yr 2 of implementation (Yr 1 is funded by the FF charity). Details of this service has been communicated to all SYFR staff and information is on the intranet.</p>		
<b>Recommendation 4:</b>			
<p>CFO 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.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in service (or from an external service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved.</p>	<p>Where a formal investigation is instigated, the complainant(s) and alleged perpetrator(s) are provided with a minimum of a 2-weekly update by the investigating manager. The manager is prompted by the People Partner to ensure this is happening. The updates are ideally verbal, but may be written if the circumstances require this.</p> <p>The Service regularly considers if a separate team that work solely on investigations should be created. The conclusion is that we may not have sufficient work to justify continuous employment and that managers would lose out on valuable people management experience if they are not involved in casework. It is recognised however, that the casework is done alongside other work and that it can be challenging at times to balance demands and in some circumstances we will engage external support.</p> <p>People Partners work with all investigating managers and through this we manage fairness and transparency and ensure we have a consistent approach as a service. The People Partners review the headlines of all casework on a monthly basis to ensure consistency and fairness.</p> <p>On occasions, the Service will engage independent investigators if casework has achieved significant peaks or it is felt independence will assist the process, although this is an area of dispute by the FBU.</p> <p>The Director of People and Culture provides an overview of casework on a monthly basis to the Executive Team to provide assurance that issues are being managed effectively and that all staff are supported.</p>	1/6/23	
<b>Recommendation 5:</b>			
<p>CFO 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</p>	<p>All staff have access to the intranet, where they can access all people policies. Blogs by senior leaders or articles in the staff bulletin are also provided on a regular basis to remind staff of the policies and how to access them. The intranet also has health and wellbeing pages so that staff can access information on support and advice available to them. This includes details of the EAP which offers staff (and their immediate family)</p>	1/6/23	

<p>agencies). CFO should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.</p>	<p>access to a wide range of advice and support. The new independent 'speak up' service also informs staff how to manage their concerns and how to access support. The corporate communications team work closely with the people function to ensure information is regularly communicated to staff on how to access support and the service has a health and wellbeing app that can be download to both service and personal phones that gives advice and signposts to support available. Investigations are undertaken by a manager with no prior knowledge of the concern raised and are normally from a different area of the service. They will certainly be independent of the alleged perpetrator(s). For members of the public, the service's website makes clear how they can raise concerns and directs them to a complaints procedure. Complaints are managed by the governance team and are allocated to an appropriate manager to investigate and respond, within clear timescales. There are 4 stages of the complaints procedure, the highest level is stage 4. Stage 4 provides a route if the complainant is not satisfied with the final response they have received from the Chief Fire Officer, they may take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. Complaints (numbers/outcomes/speed of response) are monitored by the FRA on a quarterly basis.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b></p>			
<p>The Home Office, working with the Ministry of Justice, should make sure that the Government incorporates fire and rescue authority employees within the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 so that they are eligible for the appropriate DBS checks.</p>	<p>A report was presented to SLT in September 2023 to consider the implications of these changes and agree the policy for the Service (see 9 below).</p>	<p>1/1/24</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b></p>			
<p>The Home Office, working with the FRS sector, should make sure that the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002, or a similar appropriate legislatively enabled solution, makes detailed provisions for FRSs.</p>	<p>The Service will take appropriate action once the changes are known.</p>	<p>1/5/24</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b></p>			
<p>The Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the NFCC, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and underpinning guidance. It should:</p>	<p>The Service contributed to the consultation on this and is now implementing the published guidance to enact required changes (see 9 below).</p>	<p>1/12/23</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly state the requirements for background checks undertaken by services;</li> <li>• clarify the minimum requirements (including levels of DBS checks) for all roles, particularly roles where staff have access to vulnerable members of the public;</li> <li>• define the standards required to embed a culture across fire and rescue services that empowers all members of staff and local communities to report concerns; and</li> <li>• be subject to review following any legislative change.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Recommendation 9:</b></p>			
<p>CFO should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and communities they serve; and</li> <li>• make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standards Board.</li> </ul>	<p>The Service previously carried out a basic disclosure check on all staff and volunteers as part of the pre-employment checks. Some roles (not firefighters) that meet the current DBS criteria for enhanced checks have enhanced checks as part of pre-employment checks and every 3 years thereafter. The people function monitor that these re-checks are completed as required.</p> <p>With the recent changes in legislation (Rehabilitation of Offenders Act – Exceptions Order) the Service has implemented changes as referenced in recommendation 6 above. All new employees have either a standard or enhanced DBS check, depending on their role. Some of those with enhanced checks will also have checks against the adult and/or child barred lists, again dependent on role.</p> <p>We will be commencing a process to undertake a standard or enhanced DBS check on all existing employees in 2024 and these will be renewed every 3 years using the DBS update service.</p> <p>The Service is in the process of procuring a provider to undertake the checks as we do not regularly recruit sufficient numbers to become an umbrella body.</p> <p>All other pre-employment checks are carried out (substance misuse, references, fitness (where required), etc.)</p>	1/1/24	
<p><b>Recommendation 10:</b></p>			
<p>Chief constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services</p>	<p>(this is the duty to pass on information to an employer or regulatory body to allow them to act swiftly to put in measures to mitigate danger to the public)</p>	1/9/23	

<b>Recommendation 11:</b>			
The Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the NFCC, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle staff disclosures, complaints and grievances.	The Service will further review policies and procedures once information is shared.	1/12/23	
<b>Recommendation 12:</b>			
CFO should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling.	The Service will further review policies and procedures once information is shared.	1/3/24	
<b>Recommendation 13:</b>			
The Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the NFCC, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle misconduct and safeguarding-related allegations and outcomes. These should include requirements to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conduct and complete investigations, whether or not the staff member under investigation leaves;</li> <li>• consider whether the incident requires immediate dismissal;</li> <li>• provide training for staff who are carrying out investigations; and</li> <li>• ensure the diversity/neutrality of the investigation panel/person.</li> </ul>	The Service will further review policies and procedures once information is shared.	1/12/23	
<b>Recommendation 14</b>			
CFO should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.	The Service will further review policies and procedures once information is shared.	1/3/24	

<p><b>Recommendation 15:</b></p> <p>The Home Office should work with the NFCC and fire and rescue service employers to make sure there is a process to handle misconduct allegations against CFOs. The Home Office should immediately notify HMICFRS of any allegations and outcomes that it is aware of.</p>	<p>The Service will further review policies and procedures once information is shared.</p>	<p>1/10/23</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 16:</b></p> <p>The NFCC 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.</p>	<p>The Service will further review policies and procedures once information is shared.</p>	<p>1/10/23</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 17:</b></p> <p>CFO should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs;</li> <li>• are of a serious nature; or</li> <li>• relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades.</li> </ul>	<p>The Director of People and Culture or People Relations Manager notifies HMICFRS of any allegations meeting this criteria as they occur.</p>	<p>31/3/23</p>	

<b>Recommendation 18:</b>			
CFO should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	Staff who raise concerns are given support from managers, People Partners, OH nurses (where required), representative bodies and can access the EAP. If someone raises a concern under the Dignity at Work policy, they also have access to Contact Advisors (staff who have been trained to provide this support). Where a formal investigation is instigated, the complainant(s) and the alleged perpetrator(s) are given a nominated 'welfare officer', who is a manager from a different area of the Service. The welfare officers are currently verbally advised by the People Partners on their role. We have issued written guidance for welfare officers and staff receiving their support, so they are clear on roles, manage expectations, etc. Managers investigating concerns will ask those raising concerns if they have the required support and take action if they do not.	1/8/23	
<b>Recommendation 19:</b>			
The Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue misconduct cases are appropriate.	The Service made proposals to the FRA to improve current appeal processes. A member of the Executive Team now advises the FRA Appeals Committee on all dismissal appeals. The Service will further review policies and procedures once information from the Home Office review is known.	1/7/23	
<b>Recommendation 20:</b>			
CFO should have plans in place to ensure they meet the Fire Standards Board's leading the service standard and it's leading and developing people standard.	The Service has set up a Culture Programme, with supporting projects for leadership and management training, development folders & pathways. This programme will ensure that the Service is meeting the requirements of the leading and developing people standard and this will be overseen and scrutinised by the People and Culture board and the Service Improvement board. The leading the service standard has recently been identified as a standard to be overseen by the CFO and the SLT. The service has met on a number of occasions with the NFCC People Programme Implementation Manager for these standards and we work closely with them to implement required changes. The Service also uses the implementation tools provided by the NFCC.	1/6/23	
<b>Recommendation 21:</b>			
CFO 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.	As part of the Culture Programme, the service has implement a 360-degree feedback process for all senior leaders (Area Managers and above). The feedback deadline for contributors was Sept 2023 and feedback to individuals was provided in mid-Sept. Senior Leaders have been encouraged to discuss the content of their feedback in 1-2-1's and in team-building events. The feedback and learning will be used as part the PR process.	1/6/23	

<b>Recommendation 22:</b>			
<p>CFO 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.</p>	<p>The Service has commenced the delivery of 360-degree feedback to all managers in service. Due to the requirements to ensure all managers are appropriately trained and supported to provide feedback and the need for clear communications to all staff to explain what it is, why it is being used, etc, the Service has an implementation plan in place which will be completed in spring 2024. Managers currently undertaking the CMI apprenticeship also undertake a 360-degree feedback process and this will continue alongside the above arrangements.</p>	1/9/23	
<b>Recommendation 23:</b>			
<p>CFO 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.</p>	<p>Staff have a range of opportunities to provide feedback and these are regularly communicated. The Service has a regular pulse survey, where staff can provide feedback anonymously or otherwise. After each survey, a small group of senior managers review the scores and feedback and agree what actions can be taken. Scores and actions are shared back to all staff via the staff bulletin. The survey process was recently reviewed and staff now have the opportunity to add their name, if they choose to do so, so that any issues they raise can be addressed.</p> <p>The Service also recently ran a staff culture survey which closes in October 2023. The results were communicated to all staff and there will be a clearly communicated action plan. The Service plans to run staff surveys at least every 3 years (wellbeing, engagement and culture - in rotation).</p> <p>The Service has a staff group for all protected characteristics and each group has a strategic influencer (SI), who is a member of SLT or a senior manager. The role of the SI includes encouraging feedback on diversity and culture. There is an open invitation to all staff groups for Exec Team members to attend and ask questions/provide feedback. The service also has a combined Staff Engagement Group, which meets quarterly with members of the Exec and SLT, where feedback is sought and actions are agreed for issues raised.</p> <p>The SLT has a rotational programme to visit all watches and teams to discuss key organisational/national issues and encourage feedback from staff in or after these meetings. Collective issues raised may be responded to in blogs or articles in the Staff Bulletin.</p> <p>The Service has an active EDI committee, chaired by the Director of People &amp; Culture and attended by a manager from each function within the service, representative bodies, chairs of staff groups and a member of the FRA. The committee scrutinises the work of the service and provides feedback on performance.</p> <p>The Service has a People and Culture Board which has responsibility for scrutinising the Service's culture programme, including staff engagement.</p>	1/6/23	



	<p>The FRA's Performance &amp; Scrutiny board receives a quarterly update on EDI activity and performance. The FRA receive a quarterly update on culture improvement plans. The CFO, SLT and managers constantly encourage staff to provide feedback in blogs, communications, meetings, etc.</p> <p>The Service produces an annual EDI performance report, which sets out the work undertaken to improve diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>All consultation and negotiation meetings with representative bodies have culture as a standing item and they are encouraged to provide feedback.</p> <p>The Service has embedded the national Core Code of Ethics within the service's 'Our Story' framework.</p>		
<b>Recommendation 24:</b>			
CFO 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.	See recommendation 23 above	1/10/23	
<b>Recommendation 25:</b>			
The Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, as proposed by the White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service. There should be no further delay to its implementation.	The Service will take any required actions once the details are known.	1/1/25	
<b>Recommendation 26:</b>			
As a precursor to the development of the College of Fire and Rescue, CFOs and the NFCC should work with the Home Office to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.	<p>The Service's Culture Programme and associated projects will improve the training and support offered to staff in management and leadership roles.</p> <p>We currently offer CMI level 3 and 5 to managers/aspiring managers and level 7 courses to senior managers/aspiring senior managers.</p> <p>All staff have an electronic Personal Review (PR) record and this is reviewed and updated every 6 months with their line manager. A training needs analysis for each role is in place (and regularly reviewed) so managers/employees can easily identify training needs specific to role. There is also an option to identify wider training and development needs. All identified needs are recorded in the PR and are then reviewed and organised via the OD team, so opportunities are offered fairly.</p> <p>All levels of operational staff have a clearly identified development programme that incorporates a range of learning and development activities appropriate to their role. The Service is currently reviewing 'passport' programmes for each rank.</p>	1/10/23	

	<p>The Service has an eLearning system that provides a wide range of modules for managers to provide support and development.</p> <p>A range of in-house training sessions are available to managers covering areas such as people management, conducting investigations, project management.</p> <p>The Service has a Workforce Development committee, which is attended by a range of function managers and rep bodies. This reports into the People and Culture board and the board reports to the FRA on the performance of this and other people-related committees.</p> <p>All new FRA Members receive induction training for their role and we regularly provide briefings and updates to Members on strategic issues.</p>		
<b>Recommendation 27:</b>			
CFO should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the NFCC equality impact assessment toolkit.	<p>The Service reviewed its EqIA policy and process in 2022 to bring this in line with the NFCC guidance and toolkit.</p> <p>The Service has arrangements in place for EqIA's to be monitored and reviewed and is implementing a recording system for this.</p>	1/6/23	
<b>Recommendation 28:</b>			
CFO 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 NFCC equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit.	<p>The Service has a high disclosure rate from staff so that we can accurately understand and report on demographics. The Service prepares an annual workforce profile report that is shared with all staff and the FRA and is available on the service website. This also identifies planned actions to improve diversity.</p> <p>The Service has a number of Local Performance Indicators (LPI's) around equality and diversity and these are reported on at the EDI committee, People and Culture board and FRA Performance and Scrutiny board.</p> <p>Some of the LPI's relate to recruitment and selection processes and at each stage of these, the service reviews for any potential barriers and takes appropriate action.</p>	1/6/23	
<b>Recommendation 29:</b>			
The Home Office should publish greater detail on the protected characteristic data it collects about FRS staff, including joiners and leavers, by rank and role.	The Service will use this data to benchmark and support plans for improvements.	1/12/23	
<b>Recommendation 30:</b>			
The Home Office should align the data it collects on protected characteristics with the Office for National Statistics harmonised standard and publish this data.	The Service will use this data to benchmark and support plans for improvements.	30/12/24	

<b>Recommendation 31:</b>			
The Home Office should collect and publish experimental statistics on public complaints and conduct matters in relation to FRS staff, similar to that which it currently publishes on police forces in England and Wales.	The Service will use this data to benchmark and support plans for improvements. The Service will consider publishing similar data relating to service staff, ensuring data protection.	1/12/24	
<b>Recommendation 32:</b>			
CFO 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.	The Service has a comprehensive workforce planning policy and process, which includes succession planning. Within this process is a requirement for managers to identify how they intend to improve diversity within their team/function.  The Service is awaiting the evaluation of the national direct-entry schemes for operational roles before deciding whether to implement a similar scheme. The SLT recently discussed options for fast-tracking high potential candidates and work is underway to develop options for this via the leadership projects.	1/6/23	
<b>Recommendation 33:</b>			
CFO 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.	Some of the Service's functions already have clear progression pathways in place e.g. BFS, Finance, People function. Further work is being undertaken within the Development Folder/Pathway project to develop pathways for all corporate functions.	1/8/23	
<b>Recommendation 34:</b>			
CFO should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their services.	The Service's Core Code of Ethics project has closed down having provided assurance to the People and Culture board and Service Improvement board that it has achieved its objectives. Work will continue as part of Business as Usual (BAU) to ensure it continues to be embedded in everything we do. A post-implementation review was held 6 months after project closure (August 2023), which was very positive and it was determined BAU work was well underway or completed. A further review will be held at 12 months post-implementation.	31/3/23	
<b>Recommendation 35:</b>			
The Government should consider the findings and recommendations in this report when refreshing the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.	The Service will implement the requirements of the Framework once known.	20/7/23	