

Police, Fire and Crime Panel – 12 February 2024

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Safety Plan 2020 - 2024 Update Report

Report of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to update the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the delivery of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan (SP - Community Risk Management Plan - CRMP). The publication of the Safety Plan fulfils the legislative obligations as defined within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Panel note the update on the delivery of the SP 2020 – 2024 and make comment as appropriate.

3. Background

- 3.1 There is a statutory requirement under the National Framework for England, for each Fire and Rescue Service to have in place a **Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)**, which describes how the Service intends to keep people safe and meet its statutory obligations. We currently call this our **Safety Plan**.
- 3.2 The Commissioner approved the Service's Safety Plan for the period 2020 to 2024. Legally the Service must have a new CRMP in place when the previous plan ends and we would normally expect to develop the next CRMP for launch on 1 April 2024 in line with our financial, planning and performance cycles to cover the following four-year period.
- 3.3 The current 'Safety Plan' was extended by instruction from the Commissioner and will now conclude at the end of December 2024. The decision to extend the current Safety Plan was approved by Strategic Governance Board (SGB) on the 24 April 2023.

- 3.4 The extension to the term of the Safety Plan is necessary due to the election for the office of Police Fire and Crime Commissioner which will take place in May 2024. The Commissioner is required to produce a Fire and Rescue Plan and approve the Service's CRMP and as such, some time will be needed to develop and deliver the plan and ensure this and the Service's plan, priorities and governance arrangements align.
- 3.5 Following consultation with our staff, partners and our communities in the autumn of 2023, we have updated our Safety Plan, which sets our priorities for 2020-2024, to ensure those areas of focus are still relevant and meet the needs of our communities. Responses from the consultation identified a need to increase working with the most vulnerable in our communities and with partner agencies to improve our collective response.
- 3.6 The original Safety Plan document has been reviewed and updated to include:
- A refreshed Welcome message from the Chief Fire Officer and an explanation to inform staff, partners and our communities the reason for extending the period of our Safety Plan.
 - New easy reference sections – What We Do, Your Fire and Rescue Service and Our Principles. Our Principles includes information on values and culture, the Service's adoption of the Core Code of Ethics and highlights the importance we place on Safeguarding.
 - Our Priorities – We have incorporated reference to the Commissioner's priorities so that readers are able to understand how our priorities align. We do this in the annual Statement of Assurance to ensure consistency.
 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) - Detail in this section has been expanded and elaborated on compared with the original Safety Plan document in light of increased inspection activity and requirements to provide updates to HMICFRS around our progress against recommendations in national reports, e.g. the 2023 Values and Culture in Fire & Rescue Services.
 - Our Achievements – as part of the evaluation of the Service's progress over the life of the Safety Plan since 2020 we have included a new section pointing out some of the positive changes and improvements to date.
- 3.7 The most significant change from the original document is that we have incorporated detail on our approach to Identifying and Understanding our risks to better inform our staff, partners and communities. The Risk Planning team

has undertaken a comprehensive horizon scanning exercise and review of the risks we face to understand what may have changed, aligned to National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) guidance and Fire Standards where appropriate.

- 3.8 The revised Safety Plan document describes our community profile and details those known community risks and, importantly, highlights new and emerging risks that we may face and which may impact on the Service's strategic direction or operational delivery during the remaining term of the Safety Plan. You can view the full updated plan [here](#).
- 3.9 During the summer we will start to engage with our staff, partners and communities to develop the next four-year plan, but in line with guidance from the NFCC, moving forward we will refer to our new plan as our CRMP.

4 A flexible and responsive service

- 4.1 **Three-person crewing for on-call staff** has been piloted for six months from 1 June 2023. This departure from the traditional practice of crews responding with crews of four or more aimed to provide extra resources to respond to emergencies. The trial's objective was to improve appliance availability and response times to emergencies to enhance public safety without compromising firefighter safety. The service still strives to crew on-call appliances with 4 or more crew members and is actively recruiting on-call staff. In addition, the service continues to work on an on-call improvement plan to improve staff retention and availability. Prior to its implementation, the trial underwent extensive consultation with the workforce and their representatives on policies, procedures and a risk assessment.
- 4.2 Three-person crewing has been a national issue for some time due to availability and response of on-call staff. Trials have been carried out in many Fire and Rescue Services to address this issue, with some Services already having a 'Reduced Crewing' type policy in place. There is an expectation from communities that firefighters will attend as quickly as possible, and undertake some meaningful activity that begins to establish a safer situation for the communities we serve. Three-Person Crews can respond quickly and take immediate meaningful action, avoiding a delayed response and the risk of escalation of an incident.
- 4.3 As of 30 January 2024, Three-Person Crews attended 338 emergency incidents (in addition, there were 206 standby moves to give fire cover). The top six incident types attended are:
 - 94 Building fires

- 65 Road traffic accidents
- 58 Automatic fire alarms
- 33 Fires in rural areas
- 17 Vehicle fires
- 18 Incidents involving animals

4.4 There have been no reported safety concerns through our Health and Safety System. On-call station availability has increased by a mean average of 12%.

4.5 A report containing data, feedback and options for next steps was considered by the service on 5 December 2023. Ahead of this, four focus groups were held with on-call staff from across the service. These were attended by around one hundred staff members (approximately one-third of the entire on-call staff). At each focus group, on-call staff shared their views about the trial and gave their verbal and online responses to three specific questions:

- Do they feel safe when responding as a three-person crew?
- Do they think that the trial is improving public safety?
- What changes, if any, would they like to make, if the trial was to continue or become adopted practice?

The responses to all of the questions was extremely positive. In general, on-call teams feel safe, recognise the improvement to the safety of the public and have identified a number of changes which would enhance the trial.

4.6 In addition to the staff feedback, the data clearly shows an **improvement in our response times of circa 9 minutes and 45 seconds ahead of the next fully-crewed appliance** and therefore an improvement to the service that is being provided to the community.

4.7 The options presented to the board were:

Option 1. Discontinue the trial with immediate effect

Option 2. Extend the trial for a period of 12 months until the end of 2024.

Option 3. Adopt the trial as a working practice with immediate effect

There was a healthy discussion in relation to the options and the majority of the board voted for option 2, to extend the trial (21 in favour, 2 against). The reason for doing so is to ensure further training, learning, exploration and data gathering can take place. The service also recognised that many on-call firefighters had not yet experienced being mobilised as a crew of three so it was important to allow more time for this to happen.

4.8 After listening to feedback from the representative bodies, it was also agreed that there is a need to consult with the public before making a final decision as to whether this would become an adopted working practice on a permanent

basis, which we will do as part of our CRMP (currently called our Safety Plan) consultation. There were a number of key areas that were agreed to progress during the extended trial:

- That following further work with Fire Control, Three Person Crews be allowed to respond to Motorway incidents and prison incidents as a Multi pump attendance. (feedback from crews)
- Further exploration with Emergency Response Team (ERT) and ICT of equipment such as stabilisation struts, battery operated cutting tools and Airwave radios. (feedback from crews)
- Stations will undertake further training with three-person crews before building up to 4, 5 and 6 crews on drill nights. (feedback from crews)
- The Service will ensure it consults the public further on the issue of how it crews its appliances in the next iteration of the CRMP.

There was also a proposal to extend the types of incidents three-person crews can attend (as part of a multi-pump attendance) to include motorway and prison incidents, following feedback from on-call crews. However, it was requested that further consultation with the representative bodies is carried out in relation to this prior to any changes being made.

4.9 There have been some recent questions from the workforce around the minimum accepted level of **crewing on wholetime appliances**, being four firefighters, which was introduced in July 2022. We recognise that the FBU's national position on crewing, which has been outlined in their recent manifesto, may impact on local views about crewing arrangements. The FBU will not agree to anything less than a minimum of a crew of five on all fire appliances and a response time of 5 minutes, however, neither of these are achievable within Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service with the current levels of funding and resource available. In light of the questions that have been raised, we have reviewed the current situation ahead of further consultation with the representative bodies and workforce.

4.10 Over the last 12 months, wholetime appliances have been crewed with four riders on 65% of occasions, five riders on 32% and six riders on 3%. During this time:

- There have been no safety concerns recorded.
- The revised crewing arrangements since July 2022 save circa £400,000 per year.
- Data shows that the previous arrangements meant that Hanley was taken off the run to detach out staff on a total of 27 shifts over a 12-month period. It has not been taken off the run since the change in July 2022.

- Prior to the change, there was clear evidence that the workforce had become saturated with overtime working and it was difficult to cover every shift. This has not been the case since the change.
- In 2022 the WT crewing policy was agreed by the Service and the FBU. An earlier proposal to roster the leave of firefighters was rejected by the FBU. In order to reduce the occasions of four riders, the service will be consulting with the FBU on accepting the previous draft of the crewing policy to bring this into effect for 2025. The estimated impact of this would be that appliances would be crewed with four riders on 20% of occasions rather than 65% currently.

- 4.11 Our **Falls Response Service** has continued throughout 2023 and is currently supported until the end of March 2024. The team has transitioned to the Fire and Health Partnership Team and embarked on a pilot to assist the NHS with the discharging of patients called Home from Hospital (HfH). The team is currently based in two fire stations, Lichfield and Newcastle, and collectively provide cover for a Falls Response Service and a HfH Service. The team has been increased by 4 personnel to facilitate this.
- 4.12 The team has continued to provide this valuable service to the communities across the whole of Staffordshire and since the start of this initiative (7 December 2022) have responded to 863 calls, being mobilised by the Unscheduled Care Coordination Centre (UCCC). These calls are triaged by the UCCC and deemed as 'Green' non-injury falls, where the patient just requires assistance to get up.
- 4.13 The team's average attendance time is approx. 38 minutes, bearing in mind they cover the whole geographical area of Staffordshire. On 86% of occasions the team are able to pick up the patient with no further assistance from NHS Urgent Care services. On some occasions the patient does require some medical intervention, in which case the team will assess and make the necessary arrangements.
- 4.14 The HfH pilot commenced on 4 December 2023 and is scheduled to run until end of March 2024. It provides a discharge and settle-in service for patients identified by the Integrated Discharge Hub (IDH) and is currently operating from various wards of the Royal Stoke Hospital. The team will attend the hospital on request and take a patient home and settle them in, ensuring they have access to all requirements to keep them safe, eg electricity, heat, food etc and will carry out safety checks including a Safe and Well check. The team also have the capability to transport patients in wheelchairs.
- 4.15 Up to the end of December 2023 the team had helped to discharge 63 patients across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, with each job taking on average 1

hour 45 minutes to complete from time of mobilisation to completion of the job. The Team continues to develop our approach to this.

5. Protect people and places

- 5.1 **Community Sprinkler Project** - In late 2020 SFRS entered into collaboration with Midland Heart to install sprinklers in a number of their properties. What started as an idea to retrofit sprinklers in a single block of flats in Lichfield subsequently turned into a much larger project to provide sprinklers in 8 different buildings across the wider West Midlands area and the Staffordshire phase of this project is now complete.
- 5.2 The final building was Andrews Court, an 8-storey building with 59 flats of sheltered accommodation in Lichfield catering to the over 60s. This project was commissioned and delivered in April 2023.
- 5.3 A renewal of a previous Community Sprinkler Project partnership has occurred with Bromford Housing, a social housing provider in the south of the county. Edgeworth House, a 5 storey building housing people who have been referred for temporary housing, is due to go out to tender for a water-misting system in an extension of the remit of the Community Sprinkler Project. Embracing alternative technologies for bespoke solutions in specialised housing enables the limited funding available in the current climate to be allocated in the most value driven way whilst still maintaining the protection sought.
- 5.4 Stoke-on-Trent City Council are continuing their investment in their high-rise stock with Wellington and Westwood Court going to tender for the retro-fitting of sprinklers in the next few months. It is anticipated that completion of this phase of the project will be completed within the next financial year of 2024-25.
- 5.5 SOTCC have also had some success in engaging leaseholders that were not embracing sprinkler installation in previous developments. Flats in other high rises in the Stoke-on-Trent area, which have already been fitted out with sprinklers, will be retro-fitted, further enhancing the safety of the entire building.
- 5.5 Personal Protection Systems (portable sprinklers) are in high-demand as SFRS Prevent staff, and referrals in from other agencies, identify vulnerable people in the community. Unfortunately, the current financial situation is making it more challenging to gain agreement from housing providers to fund maintenance and servicing costs, and whilst PPS systems are provided as a temporary measure they are becoming ever more long-term as alternative arrangements for the occupier are becoming less available. This has a knock-on effect on SFRS budgets for further systems.

6. Help people most at risk stay safe

- 6.1 **Education and Volunteering;** Supporting communities to make informed and positive lifestyle choices, improving their health, safety and wellbeing.
- 6.2 The updated **Education Policy and Delivery Plan** launched in December 2023. The targeted focus of our education offer is Crews delivering Fire Safety and Road Safety to Key Stage 1, Deliberate Fires to Key Stage 3 and 4, and supporting colleges with Uniformed Public Services students. Safe+Sound is the Service's universal offer to Key Stage 2 children at Fire stations across the County.
- 6.3 Between September and December 2023 **Safe+Sound** was delivered to Year 5 (Key Stage 2 children) as follows;

| Safe+Sound live delivery Sept – December 2023 | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fire Station | Dates | Number of children | Number of adults | Partners involved |
| Stone | 18-20 Sep | 409 | 30 | SFRS (POD), Police, Canal & River Trust (C&RT), Network Rail, HSBC Bank |
| Lichfield | 25-29 Sep | 365 | 35 | SFRS (POD), Police, C&RT, RNLI, Network Rail, HSBC Bank, SFRS (What to do in an emergency), Hawkins Logistics |
| Burton | 4-13 Oct | 528 | 54 | SFRS (POD), Police, C&RT, RNLI, Network Rail, HSBC Bank, SFRS (What to do in an emergency), Hawkins Logistics, DHL |
| Leek | 17-25 Oct | 504 | 40 | SFRS (POD), Police, C&RT, Network Rail, HSBC Bank, St. John Ambulance, DHL |
| Biddulph | 7-9 Nov | 133 | 13 | Fire safety– SFRS, Water safety – Canal & River Trust, Smart money – HSBC, Being a good citizen – Staffordshire Police, Rail safety – SFRS |
| Tamworth | 14–30 Nov | 594 | 58 | Fire safety (POD) – SFRS, Water safety – Canal & River Trust and the RNLI, What to do in an emergency – Mercia EMS, Being a good citizen – Staffordshire Police, Dementia Friends – Community Together CIC |
| Penkridge | 4 – 15 Dec | 419 | 45 | Fire safety– SFRS, Water safety – Canal & River Trust, Being a good citizen – Staffordshire Police, Smart Money – HSBC, Railway safety – Network Rail |
| Total | | 2952 | 275 | |

- 6.4 Online delivery of Safe+Sound on the Learn Live Channel is still going very well with a weekly programme every Wednesday (term time only).
- 6.5 September to December 2023 (Autumn Term) saw a total of 147,931 devices tuning in – of which 62,463 were devices based in Staffordshire, compared to 40,266 during the same period in 2022. Feedback from participants and partners remains positive. 22/23 highlights produced by Learn Live can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/851654446>
- 6.6 **Volunteering** opportunities are increasing, including examples of partnership working such as Pathfinder and Community Speedwatch support. There are currently 40 volunteers in the service which is a reduction on the previous year – our current cohort of volunteers are more productive than ever before. Examples of volunteer engagement between October and December 2023 include:
- Support with delivery of a 3-pump exercise - Operational Assurance providing casualties that were used to deliver a realistic scenario for operational crews.
 - Support with hosting and delivering at Safe+Sound events across the County.
 - Continued support for all operational and support staff by our Chaplains.
 - Educational visits to stations for local Beavers, Cubs and Brownies groups.
 - Supporting the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership with the Pathfinder project, and community speed watch.
 - Supporting CSO's at local events and delivering fire safety leaflets to businesses.
 - Supporting our community Engagement Officer with local events and open days across the county.
 - Supporting production of Safe+Sound programmes.
 - Helping to maintain and upkeep the Memorial garden.
 - Support in canteen - external partner Agency volunteer.
 - Local community events with Crews.
 - Supporting SFRS Welephant club with Admin.
- 6.7 A total of 1,786 volunteer hours were given between September and December 2023 compared to 999.5 hours in the same period last year.
- 6.8 **Princes Trust** - during 2023 we ran a total of 12 programmes: 6 twelve-week Princes Trust Team programmes out of both Stafford and Cannock Fire Stations, 5 Princes Trust Get Started programmes from various locations and one five-week Explore programme.

- 6.9 In March 2023 we delivered our final Explore program, due to Explore being withdrawn in the south of the county and delivered by Princes Trust themselves in the North. This resulted in a knock effect for our anticipated number of young people whom we are able to engage with. To compensate we sourced and engaged with various alternative organisations, creating positive new long-term partnerships.
- 6.10 It has been encouraging to see how many of our young people are participating in our delivery programmes - a total of 117 young people aged between 16 and 30. Participants have been supported throughout by trained SFRS staff, resulting in positive outcomes where they have progressed onto either further education, work or referred onto appropriate partners.
- 6.11 For 2024 we have scheduled a further 12 programmes, equivalent to 78 weeks of delivery, consisting of 6 Teams programmes and 6 Get Started programmes. It is anticipated that each of these courses will continue to generate positive interest.

7. A fire and rescue service for tomorrow

- 7.1 Following its last full inspection in 2021 HMICFRS identified 20 'Areas for Improvement' (AFIs) for the Service in its report - **Effectiveness, Efficiency and People 2021/22 – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service** – published July 2022. To view the report in full please click [here](#).
- 7.2 The Service created an action plan to address these AFIs and progress is monitored via our Action Tracker and scrutinised internally through Service governance boards, and the Staffordshire Commissioner.
- 7.3 The Service has already taken steps to address these AFIs and the most recent updates are below. Eight have been completed and signed off at Service Delivery Board (SDB), with a further three completed and to be taken to SDB for overview and decision.

HMICFRS Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service 2021/22 Effectiveness, Efficiency and People progress overview

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 01 | The Service should make sure that firefighters are confidently and suitably trained in gathering risk information. | Completed and Signed Off |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 02 | The Service needs to improve how it engages with seldom-heard people and groups in its local community to build a comprehensive profile of risk in its service area | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 03 | The Service should make sure it puts in place measures to catch up on the backlog of Safe and Well visits | Completed and Signed Off |
| 04 | The service should assure itself that its RBIP prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk. | On Track |
| 05 | The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process, so that staff carry out audits to a consistent standard. | On Track |
| 06 | The service should make sure that it has effective systems in place to reliably understand resource availability | On Track |
| 07 | The service should improve the availability of its fire engines to respond to incidents in line with its IRMP | On Track |
| 08 | The service should make sure that it improves the way in which it captures and shares learning from operational incidents | On Track |
| 09 | The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and that their time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in the IRMP | Completed and Signed Off |
| 10 | The service should assure itself that its IT systems are resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible. | Completed and Signed Off |
| 11 | The service should make sure all staff understand and demonstrate its values | On Track |
| 12 | The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours | Completed and Signed Off |
| 13 | The service should monitor secondary contracts and overtime to make sure working hours are not exceeded. | On Track |
| 14 | The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public. | On Track |
| 15 | The service needs to review its reliance on overtime to consider whether there are more effective arrangements to provide its core service. | Completed and Signed Off |
| 16 | The service should assure itself that staff are confident using its feedback mechanisms. | Completed and Signed Off |
| 17 | To identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity, and make its workforce more representative, the service should make sure | Completed and Signed Off |

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | diversity and inclusion are a priority and become important values of the service | |
| 18 | The service should review how effective its policy on bullying, harassment and discrimination is in reducing unacceptable behaviour towards its staff. | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 19 | The service should make sure HR policy is consistently applied in the management of employment cases. | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 20 | The service should aim to diversify the pool of future and current leaders | On Track |

7.4 Following the NFCC’s Culture and Inclusion Conference and the publication of the HMICFRS Spotlight Report - **Values and culture in fire and rescue services** in March 2023, the NFCC developed a Culture Action Plan to improve culture and address discrimination, bullying and harassment across UK fire and rescue services. To view the report in full please click [here](#).

7.5 The NFCC plan is a commitment to work with fire and rescue services, UK Governments and wider fire partners to deliver sustainable improvements and establish an inclusive, safe culture. The plan will do this by continuing to support services in developing effective leadership and behaviours, embedding equality, diversity and inclusion, finding and nurturing diverse talent, and supporting the health and wellbeing of people in fire and rescue services.

7.6 Working with partners, the NFCC will monitor and review progress, drawing on feedback and learning to continue to develop and implement the plan. These national recommendations were directed towards National Government, the National Fire Chief’s Council, Local Authorities and all Fire and Rescue Services within Great Britain.

7.7 Out of these 35 national recommendations; 19 were directed for the attention of Chief Fire Officers, and these have since been adopted by SFRS into an action plan for the review and reform of culture within the Service.

7.8 Four National recommendations have been completed and signed off, and eight further recommendations are completed and to be taken to the next SDB for overview and decision.

HMICFRS Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services Progress Overview

(Only actions relevant to Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Displayed)

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes. | Completed and Signed Off |
| 3 | By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable. | Completed and Signed Off |
| 4 | By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them. The updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the service response. Consideration should be given to creating 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. | Off Track but in progress. |
| 5 | By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief fire officers should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator. | Completed and Signed Off |
| 9 | By 1 January 2024, chief fire officers should: - immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and communities they serve; and - make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standards Board. | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 12 | By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling. | On track |
| 14 | By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling. | On Track |
| 17 | With immediate effect, chief fire officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:- involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs;- are of a serious nature; or- relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades. | Completed and Signed Off |
| 18 | By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations. | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 20 | By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the " Fire Standards Board's leading the service standard " and its " leading and developing people standard " | Off Track but in Progress |

| | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 21 | By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (assistant chief fire officer equivalent and above) in service. | Off Track but in Progress |
| 22 | By 1 September 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports. | Off Track but in Progress |
| 23 | By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should seek regular feedback from staff about values, culture, fairness and diversity, with due regard to the leading and developing people standard . They should show how they act on this feedback. | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 24 | By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should put plans in place to monitor, including through the gathering and analysis of staff feedback, watch and team cultures and provide prompt remedial action for any issues they identify. | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 27 | By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit. | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 28 | By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review how they gather and use equality and diversity data to improve their understanding of their staff demographics, including applying and meeting the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit . | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 32 | By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the service. This should include offering increased direct-entry opportunities. | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |
| 33 | By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity. | Off Track but in Progress |
| 34 | With immediate effect, chief fire officers should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their services. | Completed and Awaiting Sign Off |

7.9 In 2023, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to carry out a **thematic inspection on the handling of misconduct by fire and rescue services** in England. The Service was chosen as one of 10 fire and rescue services to be inspected. This review builds on the findings in HMICFRS's spotlight report on culture and values in the fire sector and other high-profile reports of unacceptable behaviour.

7.10 The other services included in the inspection are: Northamptonshire, Humberside, Lincolnshire, Dorset and Wiltshire, Tyne and Wear, West

Midlands, Cornwall, Greater Manchester and Kent. The services have been selected to make sure evidence is gathered from a range of services, large and small, rural and urban, cover the different governance models and to avoid overlap with scheduled service inspections.

7.11 These thematic inspections focus on:

- the extent to which services are identifying and investigating misconduct;
- the effectiveness of misconduct processes and how consistently they are applied;
- how confident fire and rescue service staff are in misconduct processes and in raising concerns; and
- the role of fire and rescue authorities and other organisations in handling misconduct.

7.12 Our thematic inspection took place between 6 November and 24 November 2023. The inspection included a mix of remote and on-site engagement and desktop reviews of a sample of complaint, grievance, discipline, and whistleblowing files; interviews; focus groups and reality testing. We were also required to submit a number of policies, procedures and other documents (including completed case files) for review as part of the inspection process.

7.13 The Service received a hot debrief at the end of the fieldwork for the thematic inspection. The inspectors were pleased with the openness of our organisation and commented upon how everyone involved with the interviews and focus groups conducted themselves in a very professional manner. They also stated that they could see that the Service was working hard to deal with inappropriate behaviours every time they occurred, and that the investment made in human resources was improving the experiences of those involved in cases. The full report is scheduled for publication in June 2024.

7.14 As this is a thematic inspection, HMICFRS will use the evidence gathered to inform its understanding of the handling of misconduct in general. HMICFRS will not be publishing reports on the individual services or making graded judgments as part of this review. However, the evidence gathered as part of this inspection will be considered when HMICFRS come to conduct our Round 3 full service inspection and will therefore influence the report and graded judgments we receive at that point.

7.15 HMICFRS has already commenced Round 3 of its full inspection schedule and since 2018 every service has been inspected at least twice meaning there is now a benchmark against which progress can be monitored. In Round 3, therefore, HMICFRS will be assessing the progress made by the service since our last inspection, and will comment on our progress in its report against:

Effectiveness – HMICFRS will continue to consider how well the Service is performing its principal functions of preventing fires from happening, making sure the public is kept safe through the regulation of fire safety and responding to emergency incidents.

Efficiency – consideration is given to the way the Service uses its resources to manage its current risks and how well it is securing an affordable way of managing its risks in the future. During Round 3, HMICFRS will place a greater focus on assessing how productive we are as a service and what productivity improvements have been made since the last inspection.

People – the Inspectorate’s assessment of how well the Service looks after its people will remain focused on leadership at all levels of the organisation. While HMICFRS will continue to look closely at training, values and culture, there will be a particular emphasis on diversity and how services are trying to overcome inequalities.

7.16 The scheduled dates for Staffordshire’s inspection are as follows:

Document request & Self-assessment - w/c 29 January 2024

Inspection fieldwork starts - w/c 26 February 2024

7.17 **Wellbeing, Inclusion and Culture** – A staff survey was carried out in November 2023 following workshops with Senior Leaders, managers and employees. Using the Hive methodology, the survey comprised of 27 scaled and 2 free text questions, all of which were aligned to Hive’s validated question bank to ensure a good baseline measure.

7.18 The aim of the Survey was to help SFRS understand our progress on this journey and actions we can take to build on our strengths and address areas of improvement. Senior Leaders have been asked to consider the trends and themes highlighted in the report to take forward with their teams.

7.19 Three themes have been identified:

- Leadership - Emerges as an area for development, with moderate scores in trust and recognition, suggesting a need for increased leadership, trust and transparency in the decisions made by senior managers.
- Professional fulfilment – Is underscored by positive scores in meaningfulness, but demonstrates a need to develop career opportunities. While many employees find meaning in their work, there is a perception that not all can progress in their careers and many find the promotion process unfair.
- Nurturing Wellbeing - Is highlighted as a critical factor in employee engagement; emphasising the importance of positive wellbeing and the role

employees play. The positive average score for work-life balance suggests a good foundation.

7.20 Next Steps - In order for leaders to make the biggest impact on engagement levels, each area should be viewed as a key focus point for action planning.

- Improving response rates and participation
- Trust in Senior Leadership
- Professional development

7.21 Working groups are being established across the Service with emphasis on Operational Staff and an overview meeting will be held at the end of January 2024 to focus on different elements in the report.

7.22 **Wellbeing Champions and Mental Health First Aiders** - A new Wellbeing plan has been put together in collaboration between Occupational Health, HR and ED&I and the recommendations are due to be presented for agreement at the next WIC Meeting, due to take place in January 2024.

7.23 Five areas of wellbeing are proposed, with the following leads:



The aim is that our 30 volunteers will all have a lead within their areas so that responsibility is shared and monitored. Once the proposal has been ratified by the WIC Group and any proposals considered, it will then be presented to the Principal Officers for consideration and sign off with a view to launching at the next Wellbeing Day scheduled for April 2024.

7.24 **Networks** – The Neurodiversity Network is going from strength to strength with an event held in January 2024 with a schedule of speakers and opportunities for assessments if required, the aim being for this to be followed with a National Event.

- 7.25 The Menopause Network is reaching larger audiences and is gaining traction every month, there is a strong link to the Police network but is run independently. Events have included guest speakers including a practicing GP who specialises in this area who gave an informative talk and answered questions from staff. The knowledge and shared experiences of this group are used to provide valuable insights that can be used by the Service. The Women's Network has been formed from the roots of the Menopause Network and an LGBTQ Network is now in its infancy.
- 7.26 **Wholetime recruits' course** will commence in February 2024 - Sixteen recruits have been selected, offered positions and are currently progressing through the Services on-boarding process. The course will accommodate new starters and some existing on-call staff who were successful on application and selection.
- 7.27 Key dates for the course are outlined as follows:
- Friday 23 February – Contact day
 - Monday 26 February – Induction week
 - Wednesday 29 May – Exercise Week
 - Wednesday 5 June – Passing out parade
- 7.28 Over the fifteen-week programme the cohort will be trained and work as a collective unit. After week 5 assessments, however, they will be split into two syndicates of eight, in line with trainer ratios, maximising learner experience and ensuring safe systems of work. The course will encompass a continual assessment process in order to meet key performance indicators. Progress will be tracked throughout with performance, capability and disciplinary tracking along with bi-weekly performance meeting held with Learning and Development Station Managers.
- 7.29 The L&D team continually strive to improve working practices for the Service which has led to some additional content being included compared to previous courses. These areas include:
- Focus and understanding of the Core Code of Ethics.
 - Occupational Health input, support and monitoring.
 - Active bystander training.
 - Practical training sessions, learning from Health and Safety lessons:
 - Stop codes and radio messages.
 - Utilisation of small toolkit and practical use of tools.
 - Training and application of Dynamic Risk Assessment and Analytical Risk Assessment processes.
 - Avoiding re-ignitions.
 - Exercise week.

- 7.30 The course is an extremely rewarding and challenging experience for the students, trainers and department as a whole. One which the L&D team relish as it sets newly qualified firefighters off to progress on an exciting and rewarding career path.
- 7.31 The **Manchester Arena Inquiry**, Volume 2 Emergency Response, was published November 2022. There are 149 recommendations covering all the Emergency Services involved and the Local Resilience Forums. It is important to note that SFRS has taken the opportunity to include other recommendations from other services and multi-agency related recommendations to expand on the opportunity to learn and improve our procedures.
- 7.32 SFRS has developed an action plan including 35 actions, with an additional 17 actions from our shared Fire Control, which West Midlands Fire Service will be taking the lead with our involvement and scrutiny. Of the 35 actions, 17 are complete with 18 in progress. Of the 17 Fire Control actions, 2 have been completed with 15 ongoing (of which 9 are 75% complete). The main themes are:

Sharing of major incident plans

A multi-agency group has been set up to move this work forward, SFRS has rewritten our major incident plan and will be shared through resilience direct, so all related partners can view. Training with each multi-agency plans will be scheduled at the Fire Operational forum during April 2024.

Record keeping

The scope of this work includes providing the training and tools to enable officers to keep relevant records of decisions. New larger books have been introduced to support the use of note taking, bespoke training to all officers including the use of trigger notes to support contemporaneous note taking.

Sharing of plans

Each organisation has a set of site-specific tactical plans. A wider discussion has started following the Staffordshire Resilience Forum workshop, reference multi-agency tactical plans. SFRS will work with partners and the Civil Contingency Unit (CCU) to understand how this can be achieved. We currently have multi-agency plans for sites covered by the control of major accident hazards (COMAH) and sites such as waste sites, however we intend to expand these plans.

Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme (JESIP)

This area covers joint training and awareness of partners working together, to ensure shared situational awareness and shared communications. Currently the three blue light partners have relaunched joint training for all incident commanders and dates will continue to be programmed throughout 2024 and onwards. A good example of exercising was a recent multi-agency training event, incorporating all levels, operational, tactical and strategic. Testing our response to a major incident, learning was collated and shared and a further exercise will be planned for 2024 to assure all partners of the learning gathered.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 The Police, Fire and Crime Panel will continue to receive updates in line with their proposed work plan for the coming year and as requested.

Ben Adams
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Contact Officer: Rob Barber
Telephone: 01785 898664
Email: rob.barber@staffordshirefire.gov.uk