



DEVON &
SOMERSET
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

HMICFRS Tranche One Review: People

Benchmarking the Devon & Somerset
Fire & Rescue Service position

Organisational Assurance: Strategic Analysis

Devon & Somerset
Fire & Rescue Service

08/02/2018

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“We have concerns about how some fire and rescue services support their staff. Our inspectors found some disappointing practices in this respect. We also found a striking lack of diversity in fire and rescue workforces. Too often services do not have the networks or structures to give people who are different a voice in the organisation. This needs to get better.”

Zoë Billingham HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services

1. Introduction

1.1 “People” is one of the three pillars against which the Service will be inspected by the HMICFRS. This has emerged as a particular area of concern from HMI as highlighted through the publication of the results from the first tranche of inspections, with 10 of the 14 services graded as “Requiring Improvement” and one as “Inadequate”.

1.2 This report looks at the key themes emerging from the tranche one inspections and provides an indication of the current DSFRS position.

2. Review and benchmark

2.1 Section: How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?

Outstanding	Good	Require Improvement	Inadequate
1	3	9	1

“Too few of the services we inspected have achieved a positive culture” - HMICFRS

Themes – Good or Outstanding:

- 1) Clear statement of values and culture of the organisation to guide behaviour and decisions
- 2) Staff understand expectations, with leaders acting as visible role models of behaviours
- 3) Staff respect leaders

Themes – Require Improvement or Inadequate:

- 1) Leadership knew values and behaviours but didn’t communicate them effectively
- 2) Staff did not understand values and behaviours well enough
- 3) Poor or inappropriate behaviour and language witnessed by inspection teams
- 4) Anecdotal evidence of autocratic and domineering behaviour by middle and senior management
- 5) Lack of visibility of senior management leading to limited opportunities to role model organisational values to staff

The most prevalent theme within this section of the HMICFRS reports related to the communication of the organisational values and how staff demonstrated those values in the workplace.

Lancashire FRS received "outstanding" and was given exceptional feedback, including:

"The service's values of 'service, trust, respect, integrity, valued and empowered' are clearly linked to the vision of making Lancashire safer"

"The service communicates its values clearly by a variety of methods, and its values form part of individual staff appraisals. Each value has also been broken down with practical examples of what it should look like for staff and managers."

"We spoke to a variety of the service's partners and they unanimously described their interactions with the service in ways that reflected these values"

"We were impressed to find that the staff we spoke to across the service were, without exception, welcoming, motivated and positive."

DSFRS Position

- In 2018 more than 250 members of staff contributed to revising the organisational values. The values are reinforced through regular communication and form a key part of the new appraisal process.
- The new People Strategy will set out the organisational culture and how the service will support people to perform at their best.
- We carry out cultural reviews and staff surveys to identify and develop improvements.
- A trial using the new Fire Fit drill ground test has been completed, with the Service introducing a more flexible approach to fitness testing.
- The Service has introduced fitness advocates, fitness testing vans, an on-call physical activity fund, invested in fitness equipment on stations and support is available from our physical education team.

"Staff don't always understand what wellbeing services are available" - HMICFRS

Themes - Good or Outstanding:

- 1) Good support structures are in place
- 2) Staff understand how to access welfare services and are confident to do so
- 3) Information on welfare services available is easy to access

Themes – Require Improvement or Inadequate:

- 1) Staff do not understand what is available for them to access
- 2) Staff lack confidence to access the services available
- 3) Lack of dedicated welfare support following traumatic incidents

Cornwall received "good" and was given positive feedback including:

"The service prioritises wellbeing and fitness of staff"

"Works hard to promote mental health awareness and support"

"Staff appreciate the support the occupational health team gives"

"Effective help for staff handling traumatic incidents"

DSFRS Position

- DSFRS supports wellbeing through a number of services including:
 - A dedicated welfare officer
 - Staff supporters
 - suicide awareness training
 - mediation services
 - two external counselling services
 - physiotherapy
 - defusing after critical incidents with a trained defusing dog
 - Support groups for under-represented staff
 - A network of fitness champions

- Our most recent staff survey showed a positive upwards trend around health and wellbeing.

- The level of sickness absence seen in 2017/18 is above the average for English fire services. Overall DSFRS has the 13th highest rate of sickness out of 45 services.

- DSFRS is one of nine services that did not submit data for physical fitness testing. Across the sector the average pass rate for Station Managers or below is 95% and for Group Managers or above is 96%.

- DSFRS has one of the lowest rates of injuries sustained to firefighter per 100 FTE. In 2017/18 the service reported 58 personnel injured which is 3.3 per 100 FTE, the average for all English fire services is 4.9. The 58 personnel injured consists of 36 (62%) occurring at operational incidents, 18 (31%) at training activities, the remaining 4 (7%) occurred during routine activities. DSFRS investigates all occupational injuries and where appropriate provides feedback and learning outcomes to the organisation.

“There is a lack of trust in the grievance process” - HMICFRS

Themes – Good or Outstanding:

- 1) Policy in place

Themes – Require Improvement or Inadequate:

- 1) Insufficient records of resolution
- 2) Lack of confidence from staff in raising concerns about treatment
- 3) Inconsistency in approach and lack of managerial training
- 4) Concern from staff regarding bullying and harassment

There was little positive feedback in this area across the reports, with many highlighting that staff did not have confidence in the grievance process.

DSFRS Position - Data

DSFRS has a rate of 0.5 formal grievances per 100 full time equivalents (FTE). The average across all English fire services is 0.6 per FTE.

DSFRS has a slightly higher than average rate of misconducts or gross misconducts. In 2017/18 the service had 1.1 per 100 FTE, the average for all English fire services is 1.0 per 100 FTE.

2.2 Section: How well trained and skilled are FRS staff?

Outstanding	Good	Require Improvement	Inadequate
0	10	4	0

Staff are appropriately trained in risk-critical safety skills – HMICFRS

Themes - Good or Outstanding:

- 1) FRS show how they make sure staff are appropriately trained in risk-critical safety skills
- 2) Training and learning opportunities are provided
- 3) Combination of practical and e-learning or online training to help workforces learn
- 4) Records of planned training exercises
- 5) Strong culture of learning and improvement

Themes – Require Improvement or Inadequate:

- 1) Inefficient ICT solutions lead to poor access competency records
- 2) Lack of up-to-date understanding of risk-critical safety skills

The inspected FRS generally saw a more positive outcome in this area, with HMICFRS recognising that most services have a good understanding of the skills within their operational workforce and the training requirements.

The main criticisms were levelled at poor ICT systems that made accessing information on competency difficult and inefficient.

DSFRS Position

- The Service is in the process of redesigning training delivery to improve overall assurance regarding competency, safety and governance.
- A new training delivery operating model was commissioned in 2018, including the development of a new ICT system.
- The Service has commissioned an external company to develop a risk-based algorithm to identify bespoke training requirements, improving efficiency of delivery and focusing on what is relevant to specific locations and individuals.

“Fire and rescue services need to improve their workforce planning” - HMICFRS

Themes - Good or Outstanding:

- 1) Detailed workforce planning, identifying future requirements and potential skills gaps.

Themes – Require Improvement or Inadequate:

- 1) Ineffective workforce planning; leaders need to anticipate future recruitment needs resulting from an aging workforce.
- 2) Reliance on overtime to overcome shortages
- 3) Difficulty with recruitment and retention of On-Call personnel

Workforce planning has been highlighted as an area for improvement in a number of the HMICFRS reports. Four of the inspected services received notably positive feedback.

DSFRS Position

DSFRS has the 5th lowest percentage of Wholetime staff (31.3%) as a proportion of total FTE. The percentage of Retained Duty System staff is 54.2%, with Support Staff at 12.8% and Fire Control at 1.7%.

The service has a high proportion of leavers when compared to other services. For DSFRS the largest proportion of leavers were On-Call Duty System personnel. In number terms, 189 people left in 2017/18 and this is the 3rd highest of English fire services. As a proportion of the total FTE, the percentage of leavers is 11% and is the 9th highest.

2.3 Section: How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity?

Outstanding	Good	Require Improvement	Inadequate
0	9	4	1

“Too few services are good at promoting fairness and diversity” - HMICFRS

Themes - Good or Outstanding:

- 1) Staff networks are in place
- 2) Inclusion strategies are in place

Themes – Require Improvement or Inadequate:

- 1) Staff do not understand the value of diversity or for taking positive action
- 2) Services’ diversity do not match that of the communities they serve
- 3) Staff from underrepresented groups do not feel that they have a voice

None of the FRS inspected had a workforce representative of the diversity of the communities they served. Significantly a number of the reports identified a lack of understanding about the value of diversity.

DSFRS Position

- DSFRS has seconded two trade union representatives to work with the Organisational Development team on the Safer Together Programme.
- The Service regularly used workshops to engage with people across the organisation on key issues including our culture and values, People Strategy and duty systems.
- An internal communications review was completed in 2018
- We are using technology to support two-way conversations, such as live question and answer sessions on our Facebook Workplace site and video updates.
- Senior leaders have monthly meetings with representative bodies to seek challenge and feedback.
- DSFRS proactively supports and promotes networking groups including LGBT with Fire Pride, WANDS, and dyslexia support.

"Fire and rescue services are taking steps to recruit a more diverse workforce" - HMICFRS

Themes - Good or Outstanding:

- 1) Working to improve diversity
- 2) Trying to recruit more staff from diverse backgrounds

Themes – Require Improvement or Inadequate:

- 1) No clear policy for the recruitment of a more diverse mix of staff
- 2) Lack of understanding of the value of diversity in the workplace
- 3) Lack of engagement with underrepresented groups

Many of the services acknowledged the need for improvement in this area and had strategies in place.

DSFRS Position

- DSFRS Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee and dedicated staff to ensure we are following the right protocols and influencing strategic decisions.
- The recent DSFRS wholetime recruitment campaign resulted in 33% more women joining than in the previous recruitment.
- Positive action to target sporting clubs with large female memberships in advance of recruitment campaigns.
- Tackling barriers to equality of opportunity, making progress in improving fairness and diversity at across the organisation. More than 1,100 staff have completed unconscious bias training so far.
- Springboard development programme to women.
- The service makeup is 89% male across all role types which is above the 84% average for fire services in England. Breaking down the data into specific role types follows a similar pattern.
 - 95% of the Wholetime workforce is male, the English average is 94%
 - 95% of the Retained workforce is male, the English average is 95%
 - 24% of the Fire Control workforce is male, the English average is 25%
 - 55% of the Support workforce is male, the English average is 47%.
- The ethnicity makeup of the service is 1% BAME, the average across English fire services is 5% BAME. The proportion of BAME in Devon population is around 5% and Somerset is around 2%, nationally the proportion of BAME is over just under 14%.

2.4 Section: How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability?

Outstanding	Good	Require Improvement	Inadequate
0	3	11	0

"Most services need to be better at performance management" - HMICFRS

Themes – Good or Outstanding

- 1) Well-developed performance management process is in place
- 2) Staff view the appraisal process positively and recognise the benefits
- 3) Links to organisational values

Themes - Require Improvement or Inadequate:

- 1) Ineffective appraisal system in place
- 2) Lack of engagement and confidence in appraisal process from staff
- 3) No link to identification of high potential or talented staff

DSFRS Position

- Leadership development is a key part of Safer Together, the Service has a dedicated Leadership Manager
- A new leadership strategy, policy, framework and guiding principles are in development
- The Service has invested in accredited training for 30 coaches and mentors at middle and strategic level.
- A new in-house Appraisal solution is being developed and is due to launch in April.
- DSFRS is one of nine services that did not submit data for completion of performance development reviews (PDRs) as part of the HMICFRS Data Return.

"Promotions and selections are often deemed unfair by staff" - HMICFRS

Themes – Good or Outstanding:

- 1) Career management process in place

Themes – Require Improvement or Inadequate:

- 1) No formal talent management process in place to identify high potential personnel
- 2) Staff in more than half the fire and rescue services inspected saw the promotion and selection processes as unfair or not clear and open enough
- 3) Staff often feel the process and selection criteria are poorly communicated.
- 4) Lack of coaching or mentoring in place to develop leadership skills

Many of the FRS inspected saw staff that felt the promotion process was not fair or transparent enough. There was also a lack of formal processes for the identification of high potential personnel and a lack of opportunities available for development of these individuals.

DSFRS Position

- New promotion process incorporates future leadership requirements. Focus on leadership behaviours, positive management of people and ability to add value and energy to the work environment
- The People Development Project will refresh development programmes across all levels of the organisation.

- The Service has used the Middle Manager Talent Programme to identify potential leaders within the workforce. High potential identification and development is included in the People Development Project.