



DEVON &
SOMERSET
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

People Strategy Progress Report

This report gives an overview of progress against every area of focus outlined in the People Strategy at May 2021.

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1 About this report

1.1 The People Strategy was published in 2019, following extensive evidence collection and engagement with staff. Staff described the workplace they wanted, through themed statements that form the aspirational objectives. Underpinning these objectives are identified 'areas of focus' which were then developed into service plan actions, and a People Development Project in the Safer Together Programme.

1.2 The update gives an overview of the progress on work against these areas of focus under each theme. Only three of the areas of focus have not progressed, these are reported on as to why. Approximately 80% of the work to address the areas of focus – new policies, procedures and interventions are operating, however few are able to be fully evaluated as yet. Many interventions will take time to demonstrate the difference they are making.

1.3 The People Strategy is due to be implemented by 2022, and to align with the planning framework the 2022 – 2026 Strategy will begin to be developed later this year based on the CRMP, further evidence collection, engagement and evaluation of progress to date.

1.4 The theme aims are written here as statements of 'here and now', to shift thinking from aspirations to Service commitments in terms of a workplace environment and culture. It leads us to say 'we are' rather than 'we will'. This enables us to hold ourselves to account on what we should be doing right now, to gain traction and expectation and make change quickly.

1.5 Many of the areas of focus will require long term attention and will be subject to continuous improvement to make a measurable difference. Much of this work does not end, it only evolves and improves based on measured performance and outcomes.

2 **Leadership**

2.1 **Going forward together**

Our leaders communicate a clear vision, take decisions and empower people to make change and improvement happen.

They are visible leaders with a diversity of backgrounds, skills and experiences who demonstrate open and honest listening and communication, and are united in living our values.

Our leaders at all levels are developed and prepared to take us into the future.

2.2 The work necessary to meet the People Strategy outcomes around leadership and non-technical learning and development were addressed through the People Development Project.

2.3 Leadership behavioural competencies have been set out in an NFCC national framework which we contributed to the development of in 2019. Building on our strengths, we have developed an 'Inspiring Leadership' document which incorporates this framework and sets out the required DSFRS leadership styles and behaviours.

2.4 The NFCC national framework was also used to map the DSFRS leadership and management skills matrix, supported by with a comprehensive leadership development programme for each level in the organisation. The programme utilises a range of new learning opportunities, including qualifications, apprenticeships, internal expert interactive seminars and self-directed learning platforms for development and self-awareness.

2.5 We committed to developing our leaders and to ensuring they are ready for the next step in progression. A new progression policy is operating, which will in time reduce the number of temporary management posts.

2.6 Each people process for recruitment, development and progression tests and promotes our values, actively looking for evidence of how those values are being demonstrated. The FRS Core Code of Ethics will now be integrated into this and other processes. Additional evaluation is being developed to measure customer experience of these processes.

2.7 To support leadership accountability, a new approach to Performance Management with our values and inclusion at its core has been developed and communicated. This includes a suite of supporting policies and toolkits for Performance conversations, capability and a new approach to investigation and discipline underpinned by the FAIR model, where interventions match intentions to promote a learning culture.

2.8 In addition, a new Performance Framework for the operation of the entire Service has been designed which will provide greater clarity and accountability, and enable our work to be outcome focussed and measured through to individual contributions.

2.9 In addition to embedding a Just Culture throughout performance and investigation frameworks, a decision making model underpinned by our values has been developed, this has been adopted by EB, and the Silver Command Response to Covid, and integrated into Leadership Development.

2.10 To develop greater clarity needed to support effective leadership, a one pager approach to strategy and operations was adapted and adopted as a complementary planning tool.

2.11 Positive leadership experiences resulting from this new approach to development and selection is a longer term measure that will be captured through staff survey, staff engagement, feedback from our staff networks and unions and a positive trend in other People measures in relation to performance and wellbeing. Staff survey questions have been refined to measure the desired outcomes directly and include:

3 Inclusion

Feeling valued and involved with a true sense of belonging

3.1 *We benefit from a workforce that is representative of our communities at every level when everyone can be themselves and work together as one organisation, regardless of role or workplace.*

We recognise and utilise both diversity of thought and experience in the organisation or better decision making.

We develop better solutions by engaging and involving employees in planning, idea generation and decision making.

We work ever closer with our trade unions and staff networks for the benefit of our staff

3.2 We committed to enable people to share information and connect more easily to promote collaborative working and inclusion. Due to the recent working restrictions our virtual connections have necessarily improved to support remote working, as has our use of internal social media for staff to share experiences, campaigns, news and information. Apps have been added to the workbench to improve accessibility of information relating to skills competency, sickness absence, availability and safety event reporting. A new DSFRS website has been developed.

3.3 Early in 2020 we worked to identify the cultural conditions we need in the organisation to support our workplace environment aspirations. We extended our knowledge around psychological safety and inclusion. It was identified as the key social condition required for high performance in every area, and the foundation for the success of the People Strategy under every theme.

3.4 This is now the key to a range of interventions underway in leadership learning, supporting the Fairness and Respect policy developed in 2019 and underpinning an engaged safety culture. (More on this is in the Health, Safety and Wellbeing section). This also includes new supported approaches to performance management and capability.

3.5 A new Fairness and Respect policy has been in operation since 2019. In addition, a new toolkit to support anyone experiencing, witnessing or managing hostile behaviour, bullying and harassment is about to be launched.

3.6 To extend a resolution approach, a Resolution policy to support early intervention and resolution of conflict and grievance is in development and will be live by August 2021.

3.7 To support inclusive change and improvement, the People by Design planning tool (also known as People Impact Assessment) is fully embedded in the project development process, and has led to more considered outcomes in developing new ways of working. It is also used in the development of new policy. This process supports mandatory learning for managers in understanding and acting on equality and diversity considerations.

3.8 An engagement framework has been developed which sets out how we will engage with our staff, partners and communities. The framework sits under the Communication and Engagement Strategy and aims to bring all the engagement activity happening across the Service together under a set of principles and practices so that we can get the most out of our interactions with various stakeholder groups. As part of the framework, the first 'Leading Conversations' engagement event for managers is planned for the end of July.

3.9 To support women in progression, the Service worked with Devon and Cornwall and Dorset Police to introduce the 'Our Time' sponsorship scheme to support women to progress to middle and senior management positions. This programme of development and mentoring began in September 2020 and will continue for 12 months and will be evaluated.

3.10 Our Wholetime recruitment approach has changed to an 'always open' system to allow for better workforce planning and for consistent positive action to support workforce diversity. Work around supporting women in recruitment and retention, such as positive action evenings, continues albeit affected greatly during the Pandemic in recruitment, however existing staff continued to be supported through virtual means.

3.11 Due to the level of work needed to develop the leadership and management development offering and processes, direct entry in DSFRS has not yet been addressed.

3.12 Key findings are identified in the latest diversity report and reported separately to the People Committee.

4 Ways of Working

Meeting modern expectations

4.1 Our employees are empowered and trusted, with performance measured on productivity and outcomes.

We will offer a range of flexile options that will improve inclusion, attract and retain a diverse workforce and enable us to match our resources to risk.

Our technology and communications is better and barriers to improving ways of working removed, with things that need doing quickly getting done.

We work together, as one organisation towards our vision and we recognise and celebrate collective successes.

4.2 Flexible on-call contracts have been introduced following extensive involvement and engagement with staff, beginning with asking them how they would like to work. The Pay for Availability (P4A) scheme was developed, and is operating on a voluntary basis in some on-call stations. The Service is engaged in an NFCC project developing national best practice in evaluating shift patterns in terms of their performance in elation to effectiveness, efficiency and people.

4.3 Work has not progressed on Flexible Wholetime shift patterns.

4.4 A new, robust strategic workforce planning approach is being developed by HROD with socialisation beginning July 2021. The focus for the next 12 months is operational recruitment and succession planning. When mature, this approach will ensure people capability and capacity is an integral part of business planning.

4.5 During the pandemic enforced home working for some of our staff has escalated our ambition for a more flexible and smarter blended working approach. Through engagement with staff we have developed a vision for smarter working in relation to people, estates and technology that underpins a 'New ways of working' Project.

4.6 A new flexible working policy, developed with staff before the Pandemic, is operating temporarily and currently being evaluated for long term application.

4.7 Through utilising the People by Design (People Impact Assessment) planning tool, preparations are being made for staff to now begin to spend more time in the workplace. This includes essential Health and Wellbeing conversations to support the transition.

4.8 A new Performance Management framework has been developed and is currently informing directorate statements. This begins the cascade of objectives through to individuals, and underpins a move to a focus on performance and outcomes. This is supported by new policies and guidance around managing personal performance and capability. Our Change Framework has been developed further into a Portfolio approach which improves accountability and helps to manage capacity.

5 Learning and Development

Getting better everyday

5.1 *Our learning culture provides consistency and opportunity to allow everyone to achieve their full potential.*

We are innovative and creative in offering various opportunities and career pathways for people to develop and to ensure they have the right skills for their role and for a rewarding and fulfilling career.

People benefit from regular performance conversations and development is easy to access and available throughout our careers.

5.2 The Resilience Department is building on the principles of Training for Competence and national best practice to deliver quality assured, risk based training to ensure we have a professional, safe and high performing workforce aligned to National Occupational Guidance. Our Framework aims to align our operational Policies, Procedures and Guidance against response capability requirements to ensure our Learning and Development and Training Academy products are quality assured and continually improved.

5.3 A range of new creative learning interventions have been curated and are operating currently for the development cohorts. This includes new platforms which support self-awareness, identification of development needs and develop capability in business tools and techniques. Other learning is being offered through bespoke internal sessions being delivered on, for example; inclusion, leading for performance and managing people, finance, continuous improvement and strategic awareness.

5.4 An external coaching network has been integrated, and an online self-directed coaching platform, Coaching Culture. Our internal coaches were given resilience coaching training during the first wave of the Pandemic to support managers. A new approach to mentoring is underway through the 'Our Time' sponsorship programme.

5.5 A provider has been agreed for Leadership and Management Apprenticeships and this is now being offered as an option, with expression of interest closing this month (May). A wider Apprenticeship strategy has been developed, and this will support a cohesive and sustainable approach to utilising levy spend and using apprenticeships to develop both new starters and existing staff.

5.6 With the exception of secondments to HMI, and Covid related collaboration with SWAST we have not been able to progress with a defined programme of external secondments to support experiential learning. Maturity in the current development delivery programme needs to be attained before this can be built into the system.

5.7 Our commitment to capturing and sharing lessons learned in all aspects of our work is being facilitated through the 'Safe To: Learn, Contribute and Challenge' programme of interventions.

6 Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Healthy, happy and safe at work

6.1 *We take a holistic approach to health, safety and wellbeing which supports our staff to remain fit, safe and healthy throughout their careers.*

We encourage and support employees by building a positive health, safety and wellbeing culture and an environment that supports work life balance and quality of working life.

A clear and supportive fitness policy helps keep staff safe and healthy and a greater integration of work, sports and social activities bring people together.

6.2 The intervention to develop psychological safety, 'Safe to: Learn, Contribute and Challenge', underpins the work being undertaken to develop an engaged safety culture. OD are supporting the service in developing all aspects required to improve health and safety culture. This is complex intervention which involves both hardwiring change into processes and systems, leadership and engagement to develop the required behavioural changes.

6.3 To ensure we always consider health, safety and wellbeing in new projects, policies and procedures, the People by Design process (sometimes referred to as the People Impact Assessment) is embedded in project management and is being adapted for all service improvements and new policy development through the portfolio office.

6.4 Oscar Kilo is the home of the National Police Wellbeing Service. It has been designed to be used by emergency services across the whole of the UK. It provides a framework of clear statements to ensure all aspects of wellbeing are fully developed. The Framework is used to ensure DSFRS has a robust and proactive wellbeing provision for its employees. A range of new actions has been captured and form part of the Health and Wellbeing strategy.

6.5 A new Wellness policy to support this work has been developed and is in consultation, and Managing Stress and Wellbeing are now mandatory e-learning courses for all managers. A Welfare Cell was set up to provide specific support for staff as part of the Covid Response phase. This team, which includes members of HROD, Health and Safety and Communications and Engagement teams has developed into a proactive Wellness strategy group and is driving change at pace in this area.

6.6 DSFRS will achieve the objective of having a fit, healthy and physically capable work force by ensuring compliance with nationally set fitness standards and fitness testing frequency. In order to achieve these two objectives, DSFRS will utilise both annual on station fitness assessments and a more holistic and detailed three yearly medical and fitness assessment.

6.7 In order to not only monitor the success of the DSFRS fitness strategy but also to ensure on going learning, staff engagement and targeted support to groups most in need, DSFRS will closely monitor key performance indicators (KPI's) on a monthly basis.

6.8 For the first time the ONS national survey questions around personal wellbeing were asked of staff in the March 2021 Covid Survey. The ONS recorded a drop in wellbeing overall this year, with much of this being attributed to the effects of the Pandemic such as isolation, uncertainty and hopelessness. The DSFRS evaluation in March reflected this. The work being planned and operating now with regard to positive wellbeing support, along with a blended working approach will help to support staff wellbeing at this time. The essential health and wellbeing conversation and new Wellbeing procedural guide also support this.