

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service HMICFRS Action Plan - November 2020 update

Inspection theme	Area for improvement	Outcome/s required/evidence of success	Update November 2020	Update March 2021	RAG
Formal Areas for improvement					
<p>1 Protecting the Public through fire regulation</p>	<p>The Service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme</p>	<p>Numbers of competent protection officers increase (CRM records).</p> <p>Priority inspections are carried out in line with the strategy (Protection records, LPIs).</p>	<p>Our 2019/21 IRMP Supplement included a commitment to enhance our Protection capability.</p> <p>To date, internal development of staff has resulted in a total of 14 Fire Safety Inspectors and six Fire Safety Auditors within current budgetary limitations.</p> <p>We have also been able to secure an additional three Watch Managers as part of the investment proposed in the 2019 – 2021 IRMP Supplement.</p> <p>This has enabled us to resource our Risk Based Inspection Programme more fully.</p> <p>However, the loss of four fully qualified Fire Safety Inspectors, mainly to the Private Sector continues to be an adverse factor on resourcing the Department.</p> <p>Recruitment and selection of a Fire Engineer has been completed. The new post holder is a Level 5 qualified fire Inspector and recently enrolled on the Level 6 Fire Engineering Degree at UCLAN.</p> <p>Recruitment of a further six permanent fire safety inspectors is being delivered during the autumn period.</p> <p>Recruitment of a further two fixed term contract fire safety inspectors is being delivered during the same period.</p> <p>Three fire safety auditors have recently successfully moved into fire safety inspector positions.</p>	<p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Fire Safety Auditors have now progressed to Fire Safety Inspector Posts. • 6 new Fire Safety Auditors recruited • HMICFRS Return for 31 March 2021 recorded 32 Competent Staff dedicated to Protection with 5 in development. • Building Risk Review team now established to deliver inspections of High Rise Residential Buildings in line with government trajectory, team consists of 3 Fire Safety Inspectors, 1 Station Manager and Administration Officer, funded from Protection Grant. • CFRMIS go live date for 17 May 2021 to replace existing Sophtlogic Management Information System • Dedicated Additional temporary Group Manager post as project lead for CFRMIS • Dedicated additional temporary Group Manager for Grenfell Tower Inquiry Project <p>Prioritised Risk Based Inspection Programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premises Risk Model Review 4.3 Completed. Very High and High Risk premises identified with annual target of 1521 Inspections • Premises Risk Model strategic evaluation completed 	<p>GREEN</p>

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2	<p>Responding to fires and other emergencies</p>	<p>The service should ensure staff know how to command fire service assets assertively, effectively and safely at incidents. This should include regular assessment of command competence</p>	<p>Assessments meet the targets set (Preparedness records, LPIs)</p> <p>Assessment processes are robust and comprehensive (Preparedness and Response records)</p>	<p>Arrangements have been put in place to ensure the maintenance of Command Competence (ensuring Officers remain “in ticket”) is managed via the Operational Performance System (OPS) maintained by the Command Department and Training & Development Academy</p> <p>MFRS completed all Level 1 assessments with all relevant staff being in ticket following HMICFRS visit. There is a two-year frequency for assessment. This has been impacted due to COVID-19 but is being monitored and schedule adjusted</p> <p>Processes are evidenced, Policy and SI being finalised.</p>	<p>The revised Command Strategy was presented and endorsed at the Ops Board on 29 March 2021 with launch date set for the 1st April, 2021. All operational managers are within the two year assessment frequency set by NOG and competency is managed by the Command Department and TDA admin Team. Service Instruction has been published which outlines the revised command competency framework for all management levels.</p>	GREEN
3	<p>Promoting the right values and culture</p>	<p>The service should ensure its values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated by staff.</p>	<p>Feedback shows that staff understand the values and behaviours (staff survey 2020)</p> <p>Feedback shows that staff and managers believe that they and others are displaying the desired behaviours and demonstrating the values (staff survey 2020).</p>	<p>Work has taken place to review the Service’s Values which are due to be introduced in the new year.</p> <p>Values are embedded as part of our recruitment and appraisal processes.</p> <p>Work has taken place on establishing the MFRS Leadership Process and Message with outcomes also due early in the new year.</p> <p>Our Ground Rules were refreshed (following engagement with staff) and reissued in January 2020.</p> <p>ED& I Training is being delivered to all staff (50% complete), but delivery is currently limited due to the pandemic. Online training is being considered as an interim arrangement, but face to face is preferred because it encourages more interaction. Inclusive leadership coaching has also commenced and work is ongoing to ensure it is embedded in any future organisational approach to coaching.</p> <p>Unconscious Bias training took place virtually during the pandemic and work is ongoing to determine whether we can introduce a collaborative approach to Unconscious Bias training with the Police.</p> <p>Reward and Recognition programmes are being considered that also include improved insight through “pulse” surveys.</p>	<p>A new mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion LearnPro module has been developed for launch in May. It will complement the face to face training.</p> <p>An Audit of ED&I provision in MFRS has been completed with the report delivered in April. SLT and Network Chairs will meet to discuss the outcomes in May.</p> <p>A review of the Equality Impact Assessment process is underway.</p> <p>The Networks continue to flourish and Network Chairs are embedded in the Strategy and Performance ED&I Board</p> <p>Face to face training has been curtailed during the pandemic but due to start again in May.</p> <p>Several opportunities for online ED&I learning and awareness have been created during the past year that have attracted a much wider variety of staff than would have been possible if these had been held in person.</p> <p>The staff survey was completed in November and December with significant improvements in staff engagement taking us from the lowest quartile in 2014 to the highest in 2020.</p>	GREEN

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				<p>We have launched three staff networks (Gender, BAME and LGBT) with all of Strategic Leadership Team taking a Strategic Sponsor roll. Network chairs attend the ED&I Strategic Board and are included in engagement relating to key change and decision making including the response to the pandemic.</p> <p>Our bi-annual staff survey was due to take place in June/July 2020, but was postponed due to the pandemic. It is now taking place in November/December.</p>	<p>Staff-led work to revise our Values and leadership message has been completed and further engagement and launch is being planned.</p>	
4	<p>Getting the right people with the right skills</p>	<p>The service needs to assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained for their role. It needs to ensure all staff keep their skills up to date and have a consistent method of recording when they have received training.</p>	<p>Training needs are assessed for all staff and training provided accordingly (POD and Preparedness records).</p> <p>Similar/equivalent methods of recording skills acquisition and training are used for all staff.</p>	<p>An Operational Training Needs Assessment has been completed and is reviewed annually for uniformed personnel. This is also presented annually at the Operations Board.</p> <p>A similar Organisational (non-uniformed) Training Needs Assessment has been completed and both are in the process of being implemented.</p> <p>Training will be allocated based on a role and also as a result of appraisals where appropriate.</p> <p>Resource link records all training including that initially recorded in the Operational Performance System (OPS), ensuring a complete set of records for all employees.</p> <p>OPS records internal training including core and non-core training, and is now used to record internal training for both uniformed and non-uniformed personnel. An upgrade of the OPS system is required over the next year.</p> <p>A team was put together in November 2019 to review of the LearnPro online training system, this has taken place and improvements to e-learning packages have been made in consultation with staff. The next stage is to ensure all staff use LearnPro for corporate training. This phase is ongoing with the aim of standardising the Learn pro across the organisation.</p>	<p>Considerable work has been undertaken to update the training systems used and the reporting processes.</p> <p>The functionality of OPS (Operational Performance System) is being reviewed but over the last 12 months the process of managing operational competency across all roles has been reviewed and more efficient and robust system put in place. Management of the process has moved to the TDA to reduce communication links and ensure training days are maximised and targeted to the individuals who require it.</p> <p>Learn pro is being developed and there is a standard ELearning template with monthly programme of modules and an induction section. This standard will be available for non-ops, MRU and Fire Control.</p> <p>Senior officers now have own training planner which is bespoke to the role. Further development areas will take place over the coming year to provide consistency to the look and use of the software.</p>	GREEN
5	<p>Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity</p>	<p>To identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity, and make its workforce more representative, the service should ensure diversity and</p>	<p>Staff from protected and underrepresented groups feel more positive about</p>	<p>The responses to 3 above are also relevant to this action.</p> <p>In addition, the Service continues to use Positive Action to encourage people from underrepresented groups to apply</p>	<p>The responses to 3 above are also relevant to this action.</p> <p>Positive action comments in the November update still apply.</p>	GREEN

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		<p>inclusion are well understood and become important values of the service.</p>	<p>working for MFRS (Staff survey 2020).</p> <p>Staff from underrepresented groups are more likely to seek promotion (POD records, PSED report)</p> <p>Positive action recruitment continues to result in a more diverse workforce (POD records, PSED report)</p> <p>Staff have received ED&I training which they have understood and feel able to apply in their work (Training records, Staff survey 2020).</p>	<p>for firefighter and Control positions. A team continues to work on this, including Staff Network representatives.</p> <p>As an example, to encourage more BAME people to apply for firefighter roles we have the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have-a-Go days (specifically for FF roles (which are now part of an apprenticeship)). Candidates are given the opportunity to 'have a go' at the selection assessments and learn more about the FF selection process so that they can prepare prior to an advert going live. • Use social media to demonstrate information on selection processes and to capture the stories of BAME role models within the Service. • Promote our apprenticeships and vacancies to our community groups who represent BAME interests within Merseyside. • Distribute promotional materials which showcase the diverse range of careers at MFRS to our community groups. • Attend school / colleges / university careers events to promote our apprenticeship and vacancy opportunities. • Work with our BAME staff network to promote our vacancies / apprenticeship opportunities. <p>This approach is being extended to progression.</p>	<p>Since the beginning of 2018 we have recruited 157 firefighters of whom:</p> <p>17.83% are women</p> <p>7.64% are BAME (local BAME population is 5.5%)</p>	
6	<p>Managing performance and developing leaders</p>	<p>The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.</p>	<p>Process is produced (SI, strategy or Policy published)</p>	<p>As mentioned in 3 above work has taken place on establishing the MFRS Leadership Process and Message with outcomes due soon.</p> <p>Our Gateway (progression) process has been reviewed and was relaunched in April and now encompasses all staff groups. It explains to staff the support they can receive to assist them in future progression.</p>	<p>Staff-led work to revise our Values and leadership message has been completed and further engagement and launch is being planned in 2021/22.</p> <p>An accelerated Leadership Programme is being developed and has been presented to People Board.</p>	<p>AMBER</p>

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Other areas identified in the report					
7 Responding to fires and other emergencies	The service's operational policy reflects national guidance. But staff have an inconsistent understanding of what recording process they would follow if required to step outside policy. They were also not always sure how to log significant decisions	Staff understanding is improved and demonstrated	Incident logging has been established and Operational Discretion is now included in the relevant policy documents. Instructions have been issued on how to do this and work will take place to reinforce this including sampling to ensure staff understand.	As previous update. Decision Logging ELearning package also in place. Completed	GREEN
8 Responding to fires and other emergencies	Although we found the debrief process led by the operational assurance team to be robust, we found that operational crews took an inconsistent approach to debriefing smaller incidents.	Operational crews demonstrate a more consistent approach to debriefing smaller incidents (Response records).	The following work has been undertaken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hot debriefs taking place at stations. Smaller incident debriefs are easier to undertake at the incident ground. Work is ongoing to develop the process around larger incidents. Automating these processes is a priority. 	A new 'Hot Debrief' process has been introduced to address the capture of learning from smaller incidents. This uses the Microsoft Forms platform and is easily accessible from the Portal. This has seen great success and is becoming widely used by crews. The introduction of the process led to an overhaul of the whole debrief process and this led to the revised SI 0069 'incident debriefs'.	GREEN
9 Responding to national risks	We saw that the information the service holds on the risks in surrounding services isn't as accessible as its own risk information. But we noted that while we were inspecting, the service was upgrading the computers it has on fire engines, where this information will be made available.	Cross border risk information is more accessible to crews (Preparedness records).	Cross border risk information has now been delivered and was initially only available through Resilience Direct. To improve accessibility all available risk information is now available to operational staff via appliance Mobile Data Terminals and intranet Portal pages. Longer term solutions are still being considered.	Longer term solutions are still being considered as part CFSMIS Solution.	GREEN
10 Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	We found that the service has various inefficient paper-based systems. However, it has invested in a team to develop a range of online applications with the intention of modernising these systems.	More paper based processes are replaced by applications (S&P records).	Applications development has continued through this period and processes also continued to be streamlined through the use of InfoPath forms and processes on the SharePoint Portal. The new SSRI application, SIRAH, is being rolled out, but the Service is now aware that a commercial off the shelf package is available, that was not available when internal application development commenced. The suitability of this for Prevention, Protection and SSRI purposes is under review as this may provide a suitable alternative.	Processes continue to be streamlined and automated using Microsoft Forms and InfoPath forms. 36 processes have been improved in this way since the last inspection. Finance have also automated previously paper-based processes such as virements. The CFRMIS system will provide a management information system for Protection, Prevention and Site Specific Risk Information. This has replaced in-house development. The Protection element went live in May. This has replaced the SIRAH application previously referred to.	AMBER

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					In-house development continues however for the application developed to manage National Resilience assets.	
1	How well does the service look after its people?	Staff don't always view the promotion process as open and fair. We didn't find this to be the case, but the service still has work to do to allay these workforce concerns.	Staff are more accepting that the promotion process is open and fair (Staff survey 2020).	The launch of the new Gateway process is hoped to reassure staff that the promotion process is open and fair and no complaints have been received. The response to the staff survey (taking place Nov/December 2020) will provide more supporting evidence.	An accelerated Leadership Programme is being developed and has been presented to People Board	GREEN
1	Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	The service has made a commitment to the public to improve a range of equality and diversity issues in its IRMP...but we observed a difference between how management think these commitments have been accepted across its workforce and the frontline reality.	Staff understand the equality, diversity and inclusion objectives (Staff survey 2020) Staff have received ED&I training which they have understood and feel able to apply in their work (Training records, Staff survey 2020).	Prior to the pandemic, ED&I Essentials training had been rolled out to half the staff and was very well received. Some face to face training resumed between the two lockdowns and online training has commenced. The aim is to reinstate face to face training as this is believed most effective. Unconscious Bias training took place virtually during lockdown for approximately 70 staff who are in management positions or involved in recruitment, performance management etc. Work is ongoing to determine how future unconscious bias training will take place. Staff networks have continued during the pandemic and the network chairs have been directly engaged with about the pandemic and are also involved in the quarterly ED&I strategic boards enabling them to engage directly with strategic leaders and contribute to ED&I outcomes.	The 2020 staff survey showed a marked improvement in the level of staff engagement in MFRS with 88% of the workforce engaged. This is an excellent result and demonstrates the positive impact of organisational changes made since 2018. This result includes 96% of staff saying they care about the future of MFRS, 81% saying they would recommend MFRS as a good place to work (up from 47% in 2018) and 90% saying they are proud to work for MFRS. The need to curtail face training during the pandemic has impacted on the roll-out, but the creation and launch of a new LearnPro module, the embedding and increased involvement of Staff Networks and opportunities for online ED&I training that have been presented to all staff (e.g. Ramadan awareness) have been well received and had a positive impact.	GREEN
1	Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	The service doesn't fully reflect the communities it serves	Future recruitment shows continued improvements in diversity (POD records, PSED report)	See 5 above.	See 5 above.	GREEN

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1 4	Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Staff from all groups felt that middle and senior managers could make more of an effort to respond to their concerns and challenge inappropriate and exclusionary language	Staff feel these managers make an effort to respond to their concerns (Staff Survey 2020)	<p>Work has been undertaken in 2020 to review the organisation's leadership message and values with the outcomes due in early 2021. Numerous staff from throughout MFRS were interviewed to allow them share their experiences of leadership and what they would like leadership in MFRS to look like in the future.</p> <p>This work has incorporated a review of the organisational values which will be relaunched at the same time.</p> <p>Increasing work with the Staff Networks will support improvement in this area.</p> <p>Area Manager visits reinforce our values and behaviours.</p> <p>This extensive piece of work is expected to address these concerns from staff.</p>	<p>The staff survey results included specific references to improvements in this area, particularly around the visibility of senior staff and improved communications.</p> <p>The CFO sent out a very clear message after the 2018 inspection that undermining behaviours would not be tolerated, soon after that, the Ground Rules were refreshed in consultation with staff and other activities outlined in the updates to previous sections (particularly 3 and 5) demonstrate that a considerable amount of work has taken place since.</p>	GREEN
1 5	Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	[in the HMICFRS staff survey – 92 respondents] 26 reported feeling bullied or harassed at work and 26 reported feeling discriminated against at work, in the last 12 months. In both cases, respondents indicated this was most likely to be by someone more senior than themselves and industrial action was often cited as the reason behind bullying/harassment.	Fewer people report feeling bullied or harassed at work (2020 survey compared to 2018 staff survey not HMICFRS survey)	<p>2017 -18 - There was a total of 33 disciplinary cases. Three cases were recorded as bullying and harassment.</p> <p>2018-19 - There was a total of 20 disciplinary cases. One case was recorded as bullying and harassment.</p> <p>2019-20 - There was a total of 18 disciplinary cases. None were recorded as bullying and harassment</p> <p>The 4 disciplinary cases which have been recorded as bullying and harassment during the last 3 years were all relating to male members of staff.</p>	<p>The 2020 staff survey shows that over 80% of staff believe bullying and harassment is not tolerated in MFRS and have also not experienced it themselves (improved from under 50% in 2014)</p> <p>Discipline cases relating to B&H have reduced to zero in 2019-20 from three in 2017-18</p> <p>This is testament to our concerted efforts to improve our organisational culture, educate and listen to our staff</p>	GREEN
1 6	Managing performance and developing leaders	The way the service assesses candidates [for promotion] is open and honest. However, we were disappointed that assessors haven't undertaken unconscious bias training. The Service recognises this gap and plans to introduce relevant training	General Unconscious bias training has been delivered to staff as part of ED&I training and specific applied training has been delivered to staff carrying out selection processes.	<p>Unconscious Bias training was delivered during lockdown to managers and others responsible for recruitment, performance management etc.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to deliver more training in this area including the potential for collaboration with the Police.</p>	No change since the November update. This work is ongoing.	GREEN