



workplace  
wellbeing  
CHARTER

# POST ASSESSMENT REPORT

## Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

Prepared by Suzanne Wootton

On behalf of Health at Work

Report date: 27/08/2024

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Methodology of Accreditation .....	4
The Post Assessment Report.....	5
Levels Awarded .....	6
Leadership Standards.....	7
Leadership Provision .....	8
Attendance Management Standards .....	11
Attendance Management Provision.....	12
Health and Safety Standards.....	14
Health & Safety Provision .....	15
Mental Health Standards .....	17
Mental Health Provision.....	18
Intoxicants Standards .....	21
Intoxicants Provision.....	22
Physical Health Standards.....	24
Physical Health Provision .....	25
Environment and Sustainability Standards.....	28
Environment and Sustainability Provision .....	29
Inclusion and Culture Standards .....	32
Inclusion and Culture Provision .....	33
Summary of Recommendations .....	35
Outcome .....	38

## Introduction

Congratulations on being reaccredited with the Workplace Wellbeing Charter. An award of the Workplace Wellbeing Charter demonstrates the organisation's commitment to proactively championing a healthy workplace culture.

A growing body of evidence on organisational health and wellbeing illustrates that a proactive focus on employee health can result in a range of organisation benefits – including reduced absenteeism, greater productivity, greater employee engagement and improved staff retention. As such, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service can expect to continually benefit from committing to employee health and wellbeing.

Having achieved The Workplace Charter reaccreditation, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service will now maintain their listed status on the National Wellbeing Charter, strengthening the organisation's brand as an employer of choice.

## Methodology of Accreditation

The Workplace Wellbeing Charter accreditation involves three stages:

### A review of evidence

A review of the evidence was carried out following the submission of evidence by the wellbeing leads. The wellbeing leads collated the evidence in digital format and categorised into the appropriate topics underpinned by the Workplace Wellbeing Charter standards.

This was assessed by consultant Suzanne Wootton and verified through the Health@Work auditory process.

### Organisational Wellbeing Assessment

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service presented a range of internal measurements as supporting evidence for a wellbeing assessment. These measurements underwent a thorough review by the assigned Health@Work consultant and were validated as a comprehensive analysis, fulfilling the necessary criteria for a representative sample of the Workplace Wellbeing Accreditation.

### Observational evidence

The organisation provided digital evidence to support different criteria. During this timeframe, observations were recorded regarding health and safety, organisational culture, staff welfare facilities, and how employees perceive Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service support for wellbeing in the workplace.

## The Post Assessment Report









The post assessment report delineates the organisation's achievements across the eight standards, based on the observations made by the assessor and auditors. The report presents a comprehensive breakdown of the organisation's performance within these standards, including a classification of criteria as fully met, partially met, not met, or non-applicable.

The awarded levels are determined after a thorough evaluation of the submitted evidence, the Organisational Wellbeing Assessment, and consultations with the wellbeing lead. Each standard receives an overall rating, denoted as commitment, achievement, or excellence.

Feedback and advisory points are provided to encourage the organisation to contemplate and explore potential future wellbeing interventions that can complement the existing wellbeing offerings. Furthermore, the report serves as a valuable resource for gaining insights into the efficacy of the current wellbeing programme, identifying patterns in employee culture, and assisting in shaping the broader wellbeing strategy.

## Levels Awarded

Following reaccreditation, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service receives the following levels:

01	Leadership – Current Level:	Excellence	
02	Attendance Management – Current Level:	Excellence	
03	Health & Safety – Current Level:	Excellence	
04	Mental Health – Current Level:	Excellence	
05	Intoxicants – Current Level:	Achievement	
06	Physical Health – Current Level:	Excellence	
07	Environment & Sustainability – Current Level:	Commitment	
08	Inclusion & Culture – Current Level:	Excellence	

The Charter does not provide an overarching accreditation rating; the levels serve the purpose of internal benchmarking. These levels are designated to aid in your organisation's internal evaluations.

The standards outlined in the Charter offer a structured framework that allows organisations to evaluate their wellbeing practices and operational procedures against the best practice guidelines aligned with the most current health and wellbeing research findings.



Organisations can leverage these attained levels to acknowledge their dedication to enhancing employee wellbeing and establish a reference to measure progress towards future wellbeing objectives.

## Rationale for Levels Awarded

# Leadership Standards

### 01 Leadership – Current Level: Excellence



	Commitment	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
L1	The organisation has assessed its needs and priorities around health and work.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L2	Management proactively engages with employees or representatives on relevant workplace wellbeing challenges and initiatives.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L3	The organisation can demonstrate that managers have been informed of the significance of their involvement in promoting a healthy work environment.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L4	The organisation promotes equality and diversity and ensures all employees have access to equal opportunities and resources.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L5	An effective communications policy is in place, underpinning the principles of employee health and wellbeing and in support of work-life balance.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L6	Policies and guidance are in place to manage bullying and harassment cases.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L7	Clear guidance is provided to employees on how to request leave or different working patterns due to a change in circumstance	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L8	An effective policy or procedure is in place for worker protector disclosure.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L9	Policies or guidance is in place to manage disciplinary and grievance procedures.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Achievement	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
L10	Employee recognition is given to employees formally or informally for their efforts, appropriate behaviour or outstanding performances.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L11	Management practices allow for wellbeing related discussions within their teams and aid in helping them understand employee challenges and concerns.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L12	Both current managers and those recently promoted understand and support a culture of safe spaces and/or psychological safety and wellbeing within their teams. There is investment in training and development for leaders at all levels.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

E	Excellence	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
L13	There is an ongoing collaboration between stakeholders regarding health, safety and wellbeing initiatives, strategies and practices.	●	○	○	○
L14	Employees are offered learning and development opportunities to maximise their potential.	●	○	○	○
L15	Organisational changes are managed effectively to limit the risk of heightened employee stress.	●	○	○	○
L16	The organisation has a health, work, and wellbeing strategy, incorporating financial investment alongside a clearly defined action plan complete with objectives and measurable outcomes.	●	○	○	○
L17	There is a culture of internal mobility and cross-company progression.	●	○	○	○
L18	The company continuously evaluates the tools required for employees to effectively carry out their roles.	●	○	○	○

## Leadership Provision

### Leadership – Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

To fully meet the Excellence standards of the Charter for Leadership, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has demonstrated they are fully committed and dedicated in creating a workplace culture that is inclusive and healthy. An accompaniment of HR and family friendly policies filter across the organisation, to ensure employees follow robust health, wellbeing and safety procedures. A comprehensive induction highlights the organisational core principles, policies, systems, and processes, to ensure employees know how to access multiple avenues of internal and external support.

A culture of openness and transparency is clearly demonstrated across the organisation. This culture is rooted in the dissemination of information which filters down from CFO Phil Garrigan and the senior leadership team. The People Plan 2024-27 is the underpinning foundation for a strong and positive working environment. A set of values, behaviours and actions outlines Merseyside Fire & Rescue Services' plans to promote employee wellbeing, to create an inclusive and healthy environment, each enhancing the success of the business. Objectives are aligned with employee attraction and retention, exceptional leadership, holistic health and wellbeing, outstanding organisational performance to maintain sector leadership, and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion. The People and Organisational Development Plan, Code of Ethics, and a plethora of organisational



committees disseminate strategic reports and action plans, organisational updates, and emails regarding the development of systems and processes. The quarterly newsletter 'Hot News' cascades a wealth of updates and information across the organisation. This highlights fire and rescue incidents, staff network news, organisational updates, staff celebrations, employee spotlight, charity work and numerous health and wellbeing topics. A dedicated Occupational Health and Wellbeing Board passionately drive communication across the organisation and a schedule of awareness and celebration events.

Achieving the Workplace Wellbeing Charter reaccreditation, along with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HNICFRS) award 'Outstanding' in 3 key areas and 'Good' in 5 further key areas, Ofsted's commendation and Defence Employer Recognitions Scheme Gold award demonstrates good leadership and helps build a workplace environment that positively impacts employee wellbeing. Where challenges have been highlighted within different regions, a focus on increased cross-sharing of best practices and solutions is driving Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service reputation in being leaders in the sector.

CFO Phil Garrigan deeply values the unwavering dedication of all employees, cadets, Princes Trust participants and hero dogs within the service, regularly expressing heartfelt gratitude through emails, personal acknowledgments, "In the Spotlight" and the 'Final Word'. Annual recognition ceremonies serve to honour exceptional contributions with a wide array of commendations, gallantry awards, and accolades for long service. Employees are afforded an extensive benefits package includes Occupational Health Services, Employee Assistance Programs, health screenings, physiotherapy, private healthcare, flu vaccinations, and access to nutritionists and personal trainers, ensuring employees feel supported, appreciated, and valued.

The organisation prioritises continuous learning and development, empowering employees to reach their full potential. Learn Pro Fire comprehensive library of mandatory training, wellbeing courses, podcasts, webinars and professional development resources supports employees to excel at "Leading Yourself". Additionally, a range of CMI Level 3–5 supervisory, middle, and executive leadership programs encompass "Leading Others," "Leading the Function," and "Leading the Service' provide a wide range of competencies to ensure managers are equipped guide their teams, conduct appraisals, and resolve any

issues to help promote a productive work environment. The High Potential Programme helps develop and nurture future leaders.

Employees are incentivised to participate in annual engagement surveys with every participant raising a donation to the Fighter Fighters Charity, an organisation that supports the wellbeing of current and former fire fighters, and their families. Outcomes indicate that employees perceive their overall job satisfaction to be good and reported they are satisfied with their role, feel supported by managers and colleagues alike, can bring their authentic self to work and feel proud to work for Merseyside Fire & Rescue.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has experienced significant organisational change, an area identified as requiring improvement. Extensive efforts have been made to help manage these transitions effectively, with a particular focus on supporting employees affected by structural changes and the conclusion of fixed-term contracts. The Outplacement Service and Resourcing Team offer comprehensive resources and guidance for employees navigating job searches, including assistance with CVs, application forms, cover letters, and interview techniques. Additionally, employees unable to secure redeployment within the service are referred to Connexions Career Service for further career advice and support.

### Leadership – Areas for Improvement



Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service was awarded **Excellence** in the Leadership standard. No concerns were raised during the assessment, highlighting the effectiveness and commitment of the leadership team in promoting and supporting employee wellbeing. Consider implementing the following recommendations to enhance the leadership pillar:

- ✓ Continue to evaluate wellbeing metrics against benchmarks to ensure continuous improvement and effectiveness of health and wellbeing initiatives.
- ✓ Consider adding a wellbeing KPI to increase accountability for managers, encouraging them to be more proactive in supporting their team's health and wellbeing.
- ✓ Ensure those tasked with employee wellbeing initiatives are allocated time to optimise resources and prevent burnout, allowing for sustained engagement in wellness promotion.

# Attendance Management Standards

## 02 Attendance Management – Current Level: Excellence



		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
	<b>Commitment</b>				
AM1	A clear attendance management policy or similar is in place, and procedures are known to employees.	●	○	○	○
AM2	Appropriate contact and support are provided to employees to transition back to the workplace following an absence.	●	○	○	○
AM3	Documented return to work procedures are in place and followed.	●	○	○	○
AM4	Return to work interviews are conducted and recorded with relevant support provided where appropriate.	●	○	○	○
AM5	Individual risk assessments for individuals are conducted if necessary.	●	○	○	○
AM6	Reasonable adjustments are available to employees in line with recommendations made in a Statement of Fitness for Work.	●	○	○	○
	<b>Achievement</b>				
AM7	Absence rates and causes are collected and monitored.	●	○	○	○
AM8	Interventions are taken on an individual and organisational level where attendance data indicates an increased risk.	●	○	○	○
AM9	Appropriate absence management training has been delivered on how to handle sensitive short and long-term absences.	●	○	○	○
	<b>Excellence</b>				
AM10	Effective controls are in place to limit the risk of presenteeism.	●	○	○	○
AM11	Attendance management policies and procedures are reviewed with employee representatives or employee forum groups at a minimum, annually.	●	○	○	○
AM12	A clear and detailed management procedure is in place to manage employees on long-term leave that supports a safe return to the workplace.	●	○	○	○

# Attendance Management Provision

## Attendance Management – Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

To fully meet the Excellence standards of the Charter, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service have evidenced policy is in place. Absence and Attendance, Capability, and Reasonable Adjustments guidance is available, outlining clear processes for managing employees who are on short or long-term sick leave, and details how contact is maintained with employees during their absence. These are accessible via the intranet home page, where all HR policies and guidance are stored. Additionally, Z cards have been cascaded ensuring that both employees and managers have easy access to essential information.

In addition to policy, formal processes such as absence and capability review meetings are supported with structured documentation, including invitation and outcome letters. Managers are also guided in conducting return to work interviews and return to work arrangements are recorded. Risk assessments tailored to everyday risks, such as maternity and individual stress, are readily available, alongside risk assessment guidance for a standardised approach for other risks.

A robust Reasonable Adjustments Policy, practical guidance, risk assessments and Occupational Health Service help inform and facilitate the implementation of reasonable adjustments. These include flexible working opportunities, shift swaps, utilisation of family friendly policies, phased returns, additional short breaks and support for colleagues from Mental Health First Aiders, staff inclusion networks, The Fire Fighters Charity, EAP, Occupational Health Service, Critical Incident Stress Management defusing and debriefing support sessions, CBT, Family Liaison Officers and the Chaplaincy. The impact of these interventions are monitored. External services and wellbeing advice are also signposted and supportive follow-up support meetings are scheduled to ensure a safe and successful return to the workplace.

Organisational absence data is well managed by the people and organisational development department and monthly reports are produced and disseminated to the performance management group. Managers oversee and report on national data. The Scrutiny Committee conduct data analysis of the causes of absence including metrics such as MSK

shifts lost, actual and predicted financial costs and outline the reasonable adjustments put in place. In response to absence trends and to mitigate risks, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service produces corporate risk assessments and monthly campaigns, such as the Brew Monday, Time to talk Day, Alcohol Awareness, Stress Awareness Month, and a monthly schedule of wellbeing articles disseminated via Hot News.

Training is a key component of the attendance management strategy. Modules cover Attendance Management, Return to Work Interviews, Questioning Techniques, Listening Skills, Body Language, Capability Stages, Appeals Process and Decision Making. Additionally, Family Friendly Policies, Flexible and Hybrid Working, Work-Life Balance and Unpaid Leave are in place to mitigate risks such as presenteeism. The recent change from a punitive disciplinary approach to a supportive capability process to effectively manage absences has been communicated across the organisation, demonstrating Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service's commitment to continuous improvement in managing long term attendance.

### **Attendance Management– Areas for Improvement**




Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has attained **Excellence** in its Attendance Management provision. Consider implementing the following recommendation to enhance this provision:

- ✓ Consider integrating validated presenteeism tools, such as the Stanford Presenteeism Scale or Work Limitations Questionnaire (WLQ) in future organisation assessments, these tools provide insights into productivity challenges and employee wellbeing allowing for more tailored interventions to the employee needs.
- ✓ Consider establishing a feedback mechanism where employees can anonymously provide insights on their experiences with attendance management policies and practices. This feedback can offer valuable perspectives for refining existing strategies and identifying areas for improvement to further enhance the effectiveness of attendance management initiatives.

# Health and Safety Standards

## 03 Health & Safety – Current Level: Excellence



 <b>Commitment</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
HS1	The organisation can demonstrate an awareness of legal obligations in relation to health and safety.	●	○	○	○
HS2	Relevant health and safety policies and procedures are in place to demonstrate compliance with health and safety legislation.	●	○	○	○
HS3	A risk assessment programme has been implemented and all staff are informed of the workplace hazards and risks that relate to them, and control measures are in place.	●	○	○	○
HS4	The workplace environment is conducive to health and employee welfare should be addressed – drinking water, washing facilities, clean toilets, eating facilities etc.	●	○	○	○
HS5	The organisation provides systems of work and a working environment which are, as far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risk to health.	●	○	○	○
 <b>Achievement</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
HS6	Systems are in place for staff to raise and resolve health and safety issues.	●	○	○	○
HS7	Regular health and safety meetings are held and recorded.	●	○	○	○
HS8	Safe systems of work and workplace activities are regularly reviewed for new hazards, with additional control measures introduced if applicable.	●	○	○	○
HS9	Appropriate health and safety training has been delivered to senior managers, directors or anyone responsible for managing people.	●	○	○	○
 <b>Excellence</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
HS10	There are identified health and safety representatives. (Trade union and/or company representatives).	●	○	○	○
HS11	Staff representatives have been involved in the development and/or evaluation of health and safety policies.	●	○	○	○
HS12	There is a clear emphasis on prevention of ill health across all health and safety policies.	●	○	○	○
HS13	The organisation has undergone a Health & Safety assessment by a third-party conformity scheme and/or attained certification to a verified OSH management system.	●	○	○	○

# Health & Safety Provision

## Health and Safety – Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

To fully meet the Excellence standards of the Charter for Health and Safety, Mersey Fire and Rescue Service has provided evidence that the organisation is fully compliant with workplace health and safety legislation and systems are in place to ensure the working environment is safe for all staff.

Mersey Fire & Rescue Service health and safety principle ‘Safer Stronger Communities; Safe Effective Firefighters’ is widely publicised demonstrating a preventative culture is at the organisation's core. Merseyside Fire & Rescue have showcased a comprehensive framework, starting with the Health and Safety Policy and its associated standards for risk assessment, reporting, and investigations demonstrating the seriousness in which safety is treated.

Health and Safety legislation, and extensive health and safety policies are available. Nominated, trained health and safety representatives including fire marshalls, first aiders, IOSH, NEBOSH managers, Mental Health First Aiders, risk assessors, DSE assessors, and auditors are promoted and accessible. The working environment is conducive to health, safety and wellbeing, and is regularly inspected. Risk assessments and control measures are in place to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of employees in respect of their roles, responsibilities, and areas of work. Specific operational risks, particularly for frontline workers, receive focused attention, ensuring tailored safety measures.

A library of mandatory and optional health and safety e-learning is available via Learn Pro Fire. This includes accident investigation, near misses, fatigue management, and manual handling for operational staff and non-operational staff.

OSHENS Health and Safety dashboard is central to managing training records, risk assessing, station manager health and safety inspections, auditing schedules, and the reporting of health and safety maintenance issues, near misses, incidents and accidents. Health and Safety Flashes are utilised to raise awareness of health and safety issues following incident and near miss reporting and inspections. These include ladder use, severe hot and cold weather, PPE, and stowing equipment. Health and Safety bulletins and ‘Road

Risk Spotlight On' are utilised to disseminates health and safety topics and procedural reviews.

Collaborative Health, Safety and Welfare meetings are held with named health and safety representatives including Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Occupational Health and Welfare Committee, The Fire Brigade Union, Mersey Fire & Rescue Service Authority, Fire Officers Association, Unite and Unison. These provide platforms to ensure that policy, procedures and practices are regularly reviewed for continuous improvement, catering to frontline service and non-operational staff needs. Collaborative efforts with trade union representatives ensure alignment with employee interests. Communication efforts, including strategy statements, staff updates, reinforce a safety and wellbeing culture.

### **Health and Safety – Areas for Improvement**

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service received **Excellence** in the Health and Safety provision. No recommendations have been made for this provision.



# Mental Health Standards

## 04 Mental Health – Current Level: Excellence



 <b>Commitment</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
<b>MH1</b>	The organisation encourages a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH2</b>	The organisation implements clear procedures, roles, and responsibilities as a necessary part of mitigating mental wellbeing challenges in the workplace.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH3</b>	The organisation has implemented mental health guidance that follows the principles of the Health and Safety Executives Management Standards for Stress.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH4</b>	The organisation ensures that access to mental health support is readily available and accessible.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 <b>Achievement</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
<b>MH5</b>	Resources are available to guide management on best practices in supporting mental health-related challenges in the workplace.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH6</b>	The organisation has built-in processes in the workplace which assist in the detection of both individual and organisational stress.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH7</b>	Education and development opportunities are readily available for managers and employees to enhance their skills and knowledge to safeguard their mental health.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH8</b>	Mental health awareness training is available for all employees, and it has been delivered to the majority (<75%).	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH9</b>	The organisation provides appropriate avenues of communication and support to keep all personnel informed of changes to mitigate psychological stress.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 <b>Excellence</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
<b>MH10</b>	The organisation provides a confidential support service in-house or externally to individuals who want to seek mental health support anonymously.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH11</b>	A mental health and wellbeing or stress prevention strategy is available, with measured outcomes and subsequent action plans to address any identified challenges.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH12</b>	Regular reviews are conducted that provide insight on the effectiveness of mental health initiatives in the workplace.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>MH13</b>	The organisation has a network of trained mental health or wellbeing champions. There is a programme in place to ensure these individuals are appropriately supported.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Mental Health Provision

## Mental Health – Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

To fully meet the Excellence standards of the Charter for Mental Health, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has provided evidence that shows the organisation has implemented steps to create a safe working environment and are to be congratulated for all their efforts in championing mental health. An array of guidance supports the identification of employee mental ill health, how to hold supportive conversations and the signposting of employees to internal and external support pathways. An accompaniment of family friendly policies are designed to support employees to balance their work responsibilities with their family and personal life.

Destigmatising mental ill health begins with communications from CFO Phil Garrigan who regularly communicates his appreciation for the 'hurt' that the role of a firefighter incurs, offering an open door to anyone who would like to personally reach out to him for help. Employees are encouraged to share the challenges their role brings and the negative impact this has on their mental health and lifestyle behaviours. Sharing challenging and traumatic experiences is an effective way to show understanding towards others who are going through similar situations. This can help create an open culture and empower colleagues who are facing any mental ill health challenges with the confidence to reach out for help. This further amplifies Mersey Fire & Rescue Services' innovative and proactive approach to raising mental health awareness.

The mental health and wellbeing portal provides access to a library of mental health guidance and resources including, MIND and Blue Light videos, newsletters, personal stories, and links to websites. For example The Fire Fighter's Charity, Andy's Man Club, The Samaritans and FRANK. Internal support services include an EAP, Occupational Health Service, fast track counselling, CBT, Critical Incident Stress Management procedures, family liaison officers and Chaplaincy support.

Mental Health First Aid training is mandatory for new starters and 34 staff volunteers are trained as Blue Light Champions, who are also on hand to offer support. Youth Mental health First Aiders are available to support young people engaged with the Princes Trust and Cadet programmes. Partnerships with Wirral MIND and Merseyside Police have facilitated mental

health conferences and further collaborations with Northwest Ambulance Service and RNLI have helped develop Mental Health Strategy for Blue Light Services. Additional partnerships with Liverpool City Region Public Health Live Well Services help support employee wellbeing.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service have demonstrated commendable efforts in the provision of mental health support, with a particular emphasis on the psychological stress faced by frontline firefighters. These individuals are often first on the scene to major incidents, routinely confront traumatic events, including large-scale fires, complex and challenging rescues, and road traffic collisions, while open to daily personal health and safety risk. The Critical Incident Stress Management procedures have been established to provide early intervention to help mitigate the risk of mental ill health of affected employees. Named station, control staff and watch managers, are trained in the role of defusing officers and a further 24 employees are trained as critical incident debriefing officers. These roles provide employees with a safe and supportive environment in which to tell their story and process their thoughts and feelings. To date, 395 critical incidents have been declared, over 1000 defusing sessions have been delivered offering immediate post incident support and 40 post incident debriefing sessions have been conducted.

Focussing on this area of mental health is integral to maintaining the wellbeing of these employees who operate under such demanding and hazardous conditions. This has been recognised by The National Police Wellbeing Service, Oscar Kilo accreditation, winning the National Positive Practice in Mental Health Award for staff wellbeing and special recognition award. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service are proud to be the only non-police organisation to have been awarded such an accolade. In addition to this Merseyside Fire & Rescue are accredited with Mindful Employer certification.

Being approached by organisations for guidance confirms the organisation's exemplary reputation and influence, particularly within the blue light and health sectors. This signifies that Mersey Fire & Rescue Service is recognised as a leader in promoting employee health and wellness, demonstrating good leadership, innovation, and a commitment to setting high standards in employee care. This recognition not only boosts credibility but also contributes to the broader advancement of wellbeing initiatives across similar industries.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service continue to monitor engagement and impact of Critical Incident Stress Management procedures, engagement in EAP, access to counselling, CBT, EDMR, and medical appointments. This data provides insights into the prevalence of mental health issues and the effectiveness of support services. Tracking engagement helps evaluate the impact of these interventions, identify trends, and adjust resources to better meet employee needs. It also highlights the organisation's commitment to mental health, helping to ensure that support systems are continuously improved for the benefit of the workforce.

A flexible retirement policy and e-learning is available to support employees transition into the next phase of their lives at a pace that suits their needs. Redundancy guidance is available along with support from The Outplacement Service and Resourcing Team who can offer support for employees navigating job searches, CV writing, completing application forms, cover letters, and interview techniques. Employees are also referred to Connexions Career Service for further career advice and support if required.

Additionally, mental health training is tracked to ensure skills are updated and gaps addressed, reinforcing the organisation's dedication to supporting employee wellbeing at all levels.

### **Mental Health – Areas for Improvement**

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service received **Excellence** in the Mental Health provision. The following guidance is provided as a recommendation:

- ✓ Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of mental health support intervention to ensure tailoring support meets the unique needs of the workforce.
- ✓ Continue to emphasise the importance of visible leadership for mental health by encouraging all senior executives and managers to actively demonstrate their commitment to employee wellbeing through their actions, policies, and communication. Visible leadership includes openly discussing mental health topics, participating in mental health initiatives, and actively prioritising self-care practices.

# Intoxicants Standards

## 05 Intoxicants – Current Level: Achievement



 <b>Commitment</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
IN1	The organisation is aware of its duties under Intoxicant Legislation (smoking, drugs and alcohol) and are in compliance.	●	○	○	○
IN2	Employees have been made aware of Intoxicant control laws and how they are applied in their workplace.	●	○	○	○
IN3	Sources of further information and support are readily available to treat intoxicant misuse.	●	○	○	○
IN4	The onboarding of new employees includes information on how to access relevant policies and support services in relation to intoxicants.	●	○	○	○
 <b>Achievement</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
IN5	A working smoke-free policy is in place and extends to all smoking habits, including electronic cigarettes.	●	○	○	○
IN6	The organisation actively promotes 'stop-smoking services' and employees are afforded flexibility to attend.	●	○	○	○
IN7	All open areas (outdoor) are clearly signposted as smoke-free and steps are taken to prevent smoking in these areas.	●	○	○	○
IN8	A working Intoxicant policy is in place, regarding the use of intoxicants in the workplace and where appropriate includes guidelines on business functions where alcohol is available.	●	○	○	○
 <b>Excellence</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
IN9	The organisational code of conduct and expected behaviour in relation to intoxicants has been well established and well publicised to ensure understanding from employees.	●	○	○	○
IN10	Employees are made aware of link between intoxicant misuse and mental health in the workplace.	●	○	○	○
IN11	Managers have access to information on how to identify the signs of intoxicants misuse and are aware of where to obtain support or how to signpost employees with a problem.	●	○	○	○
IN12	Employees have access to intoxicants awareness training, and it has been delivered to the majority of the employees.	○	●	○	○

# Intoxicants Provision

## Intoxicants – Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

To fully meet the Achievement standards of the Charter for Intoxicants, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has demonstrated that this area has been addressed with a framework to help create a healthy workplace environment. The Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Misuse policy provides a comprehensive framework for maintaining a safe and healthy work environment. Guidance includes the organisation's expectations, and the responsibilities of managers and employees regarding alcohol, drugs, prescription and over the counter medication.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has demonstrated its commitment to managing substance use by implementing comprehensive policies and guidelines. The organisation's Alcohol, Drugs, and Substance Misuse Policy, along with the With Cause/Post-Accident Drug and Alcohol Testing Guidance and the newly introduced Alcohol/Substance Abuse Pathway of Care Guidance, provides detailed procedures for intervention when there is reasonable suspicion that an employee's work performance is compromised due to intoxication. These documents outline the responsibilities of managers, intoxicant testing protocols, and establish procedures for initiating appropriate support pathways for affected employees.

Included in this guidance is the rehabilitation support available to employees, directing them to related HR policies, Occupational Health Service, Employee Assistance Programme, Counselling Services, Mental Health First Aiders, Defuse and Debrief officers, Chaplaincy and Trade Union representatives. External services include Tom Harrison House, Addaction, SHARP Liverpool and an array of national helplines. This accessibility ensures that essential information on drugs, alcohol, and trauma support is readily available, promoting equal access to health and wellbeing resources. A comprehensive onboarding system ensures that newly appointed employees know how to access guidance and support from the outset.

The Smoke-Free Policy, reviewed in 2024, makes reference to related legislation, statistics and the health risks associated with direct and passive smoking of tobacco and vapes. Policy mandates that smoking of tobacco and vapes is not permitted during working hours,

except for official welfare breaks and lunch. It is the responsibility of the estates manager at SHQ, and the station manager of stations to identify suitable smoking areas. Smoking areas are not provided for firefighters on operational duties; however, a protocol exists for smoking and vaping during official welfare breaks which is strictly at the OIC's discretion.

The promotion of smoking cessation services is effectively managed through Occupational Health Service and Hot News. This is reinforced by visible no-smoking signage across all Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service locations, ensuring consistent reminders.

The evidence submitted demonstrates a supportive approach towards intoxicant misuse. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service should be commended for promoting a culture of openness and support, as exemplified by a colleague sharing his story of the challenges of the role and subsequent impact on health and wellbeing.

### **Intoxicants – Areas for Improvement**




Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service received **Achievement** in this pillar. The provision can be further embedded with the following recommendations:

- ✓ IN12 criteria: Employees have access to intoxicant awareness training, and it has been delivered to the majority of employees has been marked as 'partially met'. CGL training and the internal health and wellbeing course is available. To further align with this standard, it is essential to demonstrate that this training has been delivered to the majority of employees, helping to further raise awareness of intoxicant related issues across the organisation.
- ✓ Consider providing employees anonymous self-assessment tools to evaluate their substance use and understand the risks. This can help identify potential issues early and encourage individuals to seek support without fear of stigma.

# Physical Health Standards

## 06 Physical Health – Current Level: Excellence



 <b>Commitment</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
PH1	The organisation is committed to promoting physical wellness in the workplace.	●	○	○	○
PH2	Information is provided on the positives of preserving or enhancing optimal physical wellbeing.	●	○	○	○
PH3	The terms of employment and work schedules include regularly scheduled breaks and lunch periods in accordance with applicable legislative guidelines.	●	○	○	○
 <b>Achievement</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
PH4	Facilities including but not limited to beverage areas, gyms, breakout areas, kitchens, and similar, are functioning properly and adhere to established standards of cleanliness.	●	○	○	○
PH5	The physical environment provides active encouragement and support for physical activity in the workplace.	●	○	○	○
PH6	The organisation actively promotes physical activity opportunities to its employees and provides support for these efforts.	●	○	○	○
PH7	Any on-site catering facilities or vending machines actively promote the availability of healthier options in their offerings.	●	○	○	○
 <b>Excellence</b>		Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
PH8	The organisation has integrated physical health practices into benefits and compensation packages.	●	○	○	○
PH9	The organisation can demonstrate that physical health interventions have impacted at employee level.	●	○	○	○
PH10	Annual physical health appraisals are offered to employees, and interventions are introduced to mitigate any identified risks if identified.	●	○	○	○
PH11	There is a schedule of planned events to promote the importance of physical health, for onsite, hybrid and remote employees.	●	○	○	○



# Physical Health Provision

## Physical Health – Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

To fully meet Excellence standards of the Charter for physical health, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has demonstrated they have taken action to establish a healthy environment and a healthy workplace culture.

The online portal provides resources, wellbeing information and financial advice. A library of recipes, webinars, podcasts and physical activity resources are available. Employees are also afforded private health care, MRI scans, Medicash, EAP, Occupational Health Service, counselling, health screenings, asbestos screenings, eye care, fast track physiotherapy services, nutritionist, personal trainers, onsite gyms, Critical Incident Stress Management defusing and debriefing officers, MHFAs menopause lounges and volunteering days. These benefits not only provide valuable resources and support but also ensure that all employees have access to essential wellbeing services. The recent exploration of Vivup benefits plan and their corporate cycle to work scheme, gym, retail and leisure discounts and salary sacrifice schemes demonstrates Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service intention to enhance employee wellbeing and participation in physical activity.

Physical fitness is essential for firefighters to effectively perform their operational duties. Firefighter fitness standards guidance, physical fitness tests, firefighters exercise programme and a team of personal trainers help firefighters maintain the standard fitness level required for the role. A team of physical training instructors provide support not only to operational roles but also those in non-operational roles throughout the service. Female only gym sessions have been introduced to encourage greater female participation in exercise.

Advocating employee physical wellbeing begins with communications from CFO Phil Garrigan to “train like your life depends on it”. The Occupational Health and Wellbeing Committee and staff networks are also in a prime position to raise awareness of physical health and wellbeing across the organisation. The awareness and wellbeing calendar highlight numerous campaigns and events ensuring employees are encouraged to maintain an active lifestyle. ‘Hot News’ roundup newsletter is utilised to disseminate physical health information for example health screenings, public health campaigns and raise awareness of general health and wellbeing.

Physical activity is actively encouraged and celebrated, and recent events have included the British Firefighters Challenge involving stair accents, hose drags and casualty rescues. Non-operational employees are also encouraged to take part. The recent 3 Peaks Challenge raised funds for The Firefighters Charity and Wirral MIND. Additional events include Liverpool Santa Dash 5K, walk and talk up Moel Famau, PRIDE walks, donations to foodbank, Radio City Cash for Kids, and Christmas Presents to schools. These activities can proactively encourage and promote participation in exercise and not only promote physical health but enhance social health too. Working towards a common goal, along with a little healthy competition helps enhance morale, and drives a sense of belonging. These initiatives demonstrate the organisations commitment to supporting employee health and wellbeing.

Regular health and safety audits, cleaning rotas, and clear signage help maintain a clean and safe working environment. Onsite canteen supplies locally sourced produce and a menu of hot meals, healthy alternatives, fruit, salad and vegetarian options.

Tailored programmes and screenings are available via Occupational Health Service, nutritionists and personal trainers offer confidential support for various physical health needs, and these are actively promoted.

### Physical Health – Areas for Improvement

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service received **Excellence** in the Physical Health provision. To further embed physical activity, consider the following recommendations:

- ✓ Where possible highlight the correlation between individual physical wellbeing and the broader organisational wellbeing goals where possible, employees are more likely to see the value in actively participating in initiatives aimed at improving physical health. When individuals understand that their own wellbeing contributes to the overall success and vitality of the organisation, they tend to be more motivated to engage in such provisions. This alignment helps support a sense of shared purpose and encourages employees to take ownership of their health, often leading to higher participation rates and a more health-conscious workforce.




- ✓ Explore the possibility of integrating physical activity into current routines; for instance, conducting walking meetings, when taking phone calls, during recruitment interviews and one on one conversations. To encourage involvement, the active participation of senior leaders in such practices or similar ones can be beneficial.
- ✓ Use aggregated physical health data in future wellbeing reports to support tailored interventions and improve overall wellbeing initiatives.

# Environment & Sustainability Standards

07

## Environment & Sustainability – Current Level: Commitment



 <b>Commitment</b>	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
<b>ES1</b> The organisation is aware of its obligations under environmental regulations.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>ES2</b> The organisation has put in place measures to promote environmentally responsible behaviour.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>ES3</b> Senior management actively promotes environmentally responsible practices throughout the organisation.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>ES4</b> The organisation has implemented processes or practices to minimise waste generation.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 <b>Achievement</b>	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
<b>ES5</b> The organisation has evaluated its requirements to pinpoint areas that require enhancement in environmental practices.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>ES6</b> A designated individual has been selected as the environmental lead to implement critical messages and programs within the organisation.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>ES7</b> The organisation has established an environmentally conscious commuting program for its employees to travel to work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>ES8</b> The organisation promotes contributing to environmental and community-focused charities or volunteer initiatives through donations.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 <b>Excellence</b>	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
<b>ES9</b> The organisation has a carbon reduction plan with specific targets.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>ES10</b> Regular communications to employees promoting how they can support carbon offsetting practices or participate are encouraged by the organisation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>ES11</b> The organisation can demonstrate eco-friendly conscious decision-making when outsourcing services.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>ES12</b> The organisation has integrated environmental sustainability practices into its employee compensation and benefits.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Environment & Sustainability Provision

## Environment & Sustainability – Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

To fully meet the Commitment standards of the Charter for Environment and Sustainability, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service have demonstrated its compliance to environmental regulations with the development of several strategies. The Environment policy, Energy, Water Conservation policy, the Carbon Net Zero plan, help drive the pledge to be carbon positive by 2050. The IMPACT report 2022 encompasses objectives in responsible procurement, environmental and social responsibility, diversity and inclusion, ethics and health and safety. Pledges are to be net zero in scope 1 & 2 emissions in offices, fleet construction sites by 2030 and net zero in scope 3 emissions in travel, grey fleet, waste, water, service delivery and supply chain by 2045. The Equans Integrated Management System oversees these obligations, ensuring a structured approach to meeting and surpassing environmental targets. The integrated management system is certified ISO 14001:2015, ISO 9001:2015 and ISO45001 by BSI. BSI 15014001:2015 Platinum in Sustainable FM Index has been held since 2017. Equans has also achieved Ecovadis Gold Award.

Senior leaders actively promote environmental responsibilities through collaborative partnerships including Equans, The Supply Chain Sustainability School and IEMA. monthly senior sustainability champions calls provide an opportunity to share best practice to support the decarbonisation journey. Additional channels of communication include sustainability forums, conferences, annual reports, intranet pages, webinars, training and blogs, ensuring that all employees know and engage with Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Environmental Strategy.

Named Net Zero Implementation group and Environmental Champions have been established and a wide range of eco-friendly initiatives have been embedded into daily operations. Key messages in the themes of Prevention, Re-Use, Recycling, Recovery and Disposal remind employees to switch off, recycle and upcycle where possible. This drives energy, water and landfill waste reduction across the organisation. Merseyside Fire and Rescue have also evidenced they are also taking responsibility in the community participating in 'litter picking' and community clean up with the HIVE Youth Zone and Wirral

Local Authority, the 100-tree planting scheme, seeding wildflower gardens and a new wildlife pond.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue have taken steps to reduce carbon footprint making electric vehicles available to senior leaders, installed solar panels and sourcing air source heat pumps at stations, switching to green electricity tariff, and rolling out biodegradable takeaway trays and reusable cleaning bottles. Work has been undertaken to develop a sustainable food policy and catering policy to ensure produce is sourced locally. A sustainable procurement points system has been utilised to select solar panels and catering suppliers with low carbon supply chains. There are plans for further sustainable procurement across the business.

Net Zero Route Map assessed and identified areas of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and action plans include double glazing, replacement motion sensor lighting, renewable generation and storage, sustainable procurement, increased fleet hybrid vehicles and EV charging points, replacement of gas boilers with energy efficient air/ground source heat pumps, increased upcycling and recycling opportunities including old uniforms, water fire hoses and office furniture, and purchasing reusable goods.

Eco-friendly commuting is currently being explored including incentivised use of public transport and cycling to work, reducing travel, and increased remote working. The possible sign up to Vivup benefits will provide employees with a cycle to work scheme and electric vehicles and energy efficient home appliance salary sacrifice schemes, and discounted leisure and retail vouchers, all which will encourage participation in slowing climate change.

## Environment & Sustainability – Areas for Improvement

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service received **Commitment** in the Environment and Sustainability provision. To further embed this pillar, consider the following recommendation:




- ✓ ES07: Criteria: The organisation has established environmentally conscious commuting programme for its employees to travel to work has been marked as ‘partially met’. Onsite bike racks have been made available. Take advantage of

'Earth Day', 'Bike Week', 'Cycle to Work Day', 'Walk to Work Week', 'National Walking Month' and 'Walk this May' campaigns to raise awareness of environmentally friendlier commuting methods. Signing up to Vivup and providing access to cycle to work and car salary sacrifice schemes and recording engagement will help improve in this area.

- ✓ ES10: Criteria: Regular communications to employees promoting how they can support carbon offsetting practices or participate are encouraged by the organisation has been marked as 'partially met'. While signage can effectively prompt employees to recycle waste and 'switch off', the provision of environment and sustainability training opportunities can encourage greener practices in the workplace and at home. Utilising 'Hot News' to promote awareness of climate change and deliver eco-friendly information and updates will further align with this standard.
  
- ✓ ES12: Criteria: The organisation has integrated environmentally sustainability practices into its employee compensation and benefits has been marked as 'partially met'. POD team have taken steps to explore the cost:benefit of appropriate company benefits schemes. Vivup benefits scheme is currently awaiting approval from the Strategic Leadership Team. To comprehensively meet this standard, it would be advantageous to provide detailed insights into how employee benefits directly align with environmentally sustainable practices, how these benefits specifically encourage, incentivise, and reward employees who actively participate in eco-friendly behaviours to promote environmental sustainability. One such example is a green points bonus scheme.
  
- ✓ Acknowledge and reward employees and teams who contribute significantly to sustainability goals. Recognition can motivate continued efforts and support a sense of collective achievement.

# Inclusion & Culture Standards

## 08 Inclusion & Culture – Current Level: Excellence

 <b>Commitment</b>	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
<b>IC1</b> The organisation has made a clear commitment to promoting a culture that is supportive and inclusive.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC2</b> The organisation has assessed their needs to uncover any opportunities and challenges regarding inclusion and cultural practices.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC3</b> The organisation has established policies that promote and support inclusion.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC4</b> The organisation participates in campaigns or initiatives that demonstrate its commitment to supporting individuals and groups from various communities and backgrounds.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 <b>Achievement</b>	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
<b>IC5</b> Employees have access to inclusive education and professional development opportunities.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC6</b> Psychological safety practices have been implemented to help foster a culture of inclusion, equality and diversity.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC7</b> The leadership and management team has undergone inclusive management training to reinforce their role in supporting diversity and inclusion.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC8</b> Employees have received foundational training in diversity and inclusion.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 <b>Excellence</b>	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A
<b>IC9</b> The organisation has employee resource groups to champion matters concerning inclusion.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC10</b> Supportive Inclusion representation is evident across the organisation's public communication agenda.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC11</b> Programmes or initiatives are in place to encourage greater representation from underrepresented groups where identified in the organisation.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC12</b> The organisation monitors the effectiveness of its inclusion practices and initiatives.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>IC13</b> The organisation can holistically demonstrate that inclusion is embedded across all aspects of the work environment and the business processes and practices.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



# Inclusion & Culture Provision

## Inclusion & Culture – Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

To fully meet the Excellence standards of the Charter for Inclusion and Culture Provision, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has evidenced they are striving to create a safe and inclusive culture across the organisation. EDI policy and various family friendly policies such as IVF, Maternity, Paternity, Neo-Natal Care, Adoption, Flexible Working, Agile, Hybrid, Special Leave and Carers Break Policy, and Family Friendly Policy ensure a respectful and inclusive workplace and support employees balance their professional and personal lives.

The EDI draft action plan, The Culture and Transformation plan 2024/27 outlines a set of objectives in the areas of values and culture, fairness and diversity, leadership, ethical behaviours and capability, employment and training. Cultural action plan includes detailed accounts of its timed objectives and EDI qualitative and quantitative monitoring data, reflecting the evolving needs of the workforce, and a commitment to transparency and continuous improvement.

Whistle blowing policy and bullying and harassment procedures are in place. To ensure all unsafe practices and unacceptable behaviour incidents are reported Safecall anonymous reporting system has been established. This is an avenue for those who do not feel comfortable using traditional line management channels to raise concerns. Reports made through this system are escalated to People and Organisational Development department for appropriate action. Utilisation rates and impact of these measures are currently under review and there are plans to support employees who raise a concern. The public may raise any complaints regarding employee conduct via Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service website.

There has been a concerted effort to enhance psychological safety throughout the development, and implementation, of the 'Just Culture' informal resolution and managing workplace discipline policy. This process aims to filter, and address, human error, at risk behaviour and reckless actions, in a fair and timely manner. As a result, staff are encouraged to raise concerns and report errors without fear of retribution. This initiative has been widely disseminated across the organisation and effectively utilised to help learn from mistakes, reduce blame culture, enhance training opportunities, address systemic issues, and drive out unacceptable behaviour.

The Positive Workforce Action, Attraction Strategy and Tactical Delivery Plan outline a set of objectives to provide opportunities to diverse groups and attract greater numbers of females into the fire service. The Attractions Team and Positive Action Working Group explore and implement targeted interventions to ensure successful adherence to these strategic goals. These include forming positive relationships with key Merseyside stakeholders and agile working in prominent buildings in marginalised areas. This will help integrate deeper into these communities and provide opportunities to under-represented groups. Recruitment days, online recruitment courses and fitness tests are also planned. Visits to mixed and all girls schools, colleges, university and apprenticeship fairs, 'She Inspires' football tournament, and Everton FCs 'Inspirational women and girls networking day, and attending events such as PRIDE Liverpool, Europa PRIDE, Africa Oye, Taste Ramadan and Chinese New Year festivals, also help to enhance a sense of belonging, develop good relationships, raise interest in Mersey Fire careers and open the door to opportunities for diverse groups.

A study conducted in collaboration with the University of Liverpool sought to identify perceived barriers faced by women in pursuing a career within the fire services. Thirteen female firefighters participated, highlighting challenges such as access to suitable facilities, flexible working arrangements, and recruitment processes. Additional collaborative efforts with Race Equality and Cultural Heritage and gender networks will gain further insight into reducing barriers to entry into the fire service.

Equality Impact Analysis reports are also conducted as part of change management processes. National statistics, regional demographics, organisational data, survey outcomes, and staff consultation reports are utilised to ensure inclusivity. Action plans are devised to mitigate any impacts identified during the review.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service provides a library of employee and manager training EDI training with modules covering EDI, unconscious bias, race awareness, and allyship helping to promote an inclusive work environment.

Employees are supported by a variety of staff network groups including Health and Wellbeing, Socio-Economic Disadvantage, BAME, Gender, LGBTQ, Fire PRIDE, Disability, Neurodiversity, and Religion and Belief. These networks are a platform for employees to voice concerns, share experiences, and influence organisational policies. Helping

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service reach its aims of 'Being Recognised', 'Being Valued', 'Being Who You Are', and 'Getting Your Voice Heard'. These principles empower employees, ensure equitable treatment, ultimately enhancing engagement, satisfaction, and overall workplace harmony. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service actively participates in key campaigns including International Women's Day, Menopause Awareness Week, Ramadan, World Food Week, Black History Month, Neurodiversity week, International day against Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service leverages external partnerships and initiatives such as National Fire Chiefs Council, Asian Fire Service Association to enhance diversity and support EDI progression. Merseyside Fire & rescue Service have partnered with Suzy Lamplugh Trust who have delivered their Stand Up Against Harassment course to upskill employees with the confidence and techniques to challenge unacceptable behaviour. Have also signed up to White Ribbon UK accreditation which campaigns to end violence to women and girls and established a steering group to implement an action plan to bring about change. Merseyside Fire and Rescue are also monitoring raising concerns and disciplinary data from 9 protected characteristics and have been awarded Aspiring Level in the Fair Employment Charter and accredited with Disability Confident Employer.

### **Inclusion & Culture – Areas for Improvement**

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service received **Excellence** in the Inclusion and Culture provision. This recognition is well deserved; as such, no recommendations are advised.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

A summary of the recommendations provided in this report is provided below.

### **Leadership**

- Continuously assess wellbeing metrics against benchmarks to enhance the effectiveness of health and wellbeing initiatives.
- Introduce a wellbeing KPI to increase managerial accountability and proactive support for their team's health and wellbeing.
- Allocate sufficient time for those managing employee wellbeing initiatives to optimise resources and prevent burnout, ensuring sustained engagement.

## Attendance Management

- Consider integrating validated presenteeism tools, such as the Stanford Presenteeism Scale or Work Limitations Questionnaire (WLQ), in future organisation assessments to gain insights into productivity challenges and employee wellbeing, allowing for more tailored interventions.
- Establish an anonymous feedback mechanism for employees to share their experiences with attendance management policies and practices, providing valuable perspectives for refining strategies and improving the effectiveness of attendance management initiatives.

## Health and Safety

- No recommendations have been made for this provision.

## Mental Health

- Continuously assess the effectiveness of mental health support interventions to ensure they meet the workforce's unique needs.
- Encourage senior executives and managers to lead by example by engaging in initiatives and self-care practices to visibly demonstrate their commitment to mental health

## Intoxicants

- Implement a robust system to record employee engagement in intoxicant awareness training
- Provide employees with anonymous self-assessment tools for substance use to identify potential issues early and encourage seeking support without fear of stigma.

## Physical Health

- Integrate physical activity into daily routines, such as walking meetings, and encourage senior leaders to participate to boost involvement actively.
- Highlight the correlation between individual physical wellbeing and broader organisational goals to motivate employees to participate in health initiatives by showing how their wellbeing contributes to organisational success

- Use aggregated physical health data in future wellbeing reports to support tailored interventions and improve overall wellbeing initiatives.

## **Inclusion & Culture**

- There are no recommendations put forward for this provision

## **Environment & Sustainability**

- Consider the corporate signing up to Vivup benefits for provision of cycle to work scheme and hybrid car purchase salary sacrifice schemes.
- Utilise awareness days such as Earth Day, Cycle to Work Day and Bike Week as an avenue to promote eco-friendly commuting and the implementation of targeted interventions.
- Utilise Hot News to raise greater awareness of climate change and as a tool to promote how employees can support carbon off setting practices.
- Integrate environment and sustainable practices into company benefits and reward employees and teams who significantly contribute to sustainability goals.

## Outcome

The Charter reaccreditation underscores a strong commitment to employee health and wellbeing, as substantiated by the research findings, the implementation of initiatives, and the involvement of senior stakeholders.

To achieve continued success, it is imperative to identify initiatives that align with the evolving needs of current and future employees. Regular evaluations and adjustments, where necessary, are essential to meet the ever-changing requirements of employee health and wellbeing.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service is awarded The Workplace Wellbeing Charter reaccreditation on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2024. The Workplace Wellbeing Charter is due for reaccreditation in August 2026.

**Assessor Signature:** *Suzanne Wootton*