



**Your Service Your Voice;
A Response to the MFRA Staff Survey**

**Report Number 1:
Engagement Commitments-Think People**

Staff Version April 2015



Introduction

1. Following the Staff Survey: ***Your Service Your Voice*** results, released in October 2014, 35 focus engagement groups and stakeholder meetings took place from November 2014 to January 2015. A total of 134 (59 Uniformed, 44 Support) members of staff volunteered to attend and discuss their views and ideas on the key areas of concern from the Survey. Those staff who attended the meetings represented many of the different staff groups across the organisation including different roles, different levels and different working patterns.
2. Strategic Management Group (SMG) members were also encouraged to meet with their teams to share the results of their survey for their own functions and with their managers to discuss any possible actions that may help to improve staff engagement.
3. The focus groups were delivered using appreciative enquiry methods. A standard set of questions were developed to help manage the meetings, to encourage open feedback and to help staff provide solutions and ideas to fix the big problems the survey raised.
4. SMG met to discuss the outcomes from these meetings and this report provides the staff with the Engagement Commitments and Principles that arose from the meetings.

Positive Engagement for MFRA staff means

5. The MFRA staff survey and focus group discussions have helped to summarise what Engagement means to our staff, what matters to them and how they see Positive Engagement going forward, staff told us that :
- ✓ Employee engagement is a two way communication
 - ✓ Employee engagement is about open, honest, free flowing information
 - ✓ Engaged staff feel involved and contribute positively to all aspects of their working life
 - ✓ Engaged staff feel recognised, confident, worthwhile and valued
 - ✓ Engaged staff are interested and want to know what is going on in the organisation: they ask meaningful questions and provide opinions and solutions
 - ✓ Engaged staff are willing to put in extra effort without having to be asked to do so
 - ✓ Engaged staff show a willingness to be flexible
 - ✓ Engaged staff feel confident to offer suggestions and ideas
 - ✓ Engaged staff demonstrate positivity and focus on what's good about MFRA
 - ✓ Engaged staff want to do a good job and be the best they can be
 - ✓ Engaged staff feel enabled to influence the direction of the organisation on a day to day level; they feel they can get involved

Engagement Principles

6. The Survey and focus groups and stakeholder meetings have helped to define some key principles that can explain what Positive Engagement looks like. These are expressed in the following seven statements, which we have now adopted as our Engagement Principles:
 - **Staff feeling valued and recognised** – as individuals and for the job that they do
 - **Great Management and Leadership** – leaders at all levels being visible, open and accountable with two way communication channels from PO's and Managers through to staff.
 - **Innovation and Transformation** – having mechanisms for all staff to share, learn, put into action good ideas and make a real contribution to the way are services are delivered.
 - **Involvement in decision making** – ensuring staff are properly engaged and consulted on the future direction of the organisation and the way things are done.
 - **Development and Training for all** – providing opportunities for teams to grow and learn and achieve high quality outcomes and satisfaction levels.
 - **A healthy and safe work environment** – where staff can deliver high quality and services safely and operate to the best of their ability.
 - **Being positive about Diversity and Equality** – valuing people, differences and respecting each other. Understanding that difference is healthy and enables us to deliver services to our diverse communities.

Think People.....

7. In its simplest form, employee engagement is about employees feeling that they belong to something they believe in, that they are valued for what they do and feel that what they do is of value.
8. Engaged employees are motivated and are able to give their best to help the organisation succeed. This process represents a cycle of benefit, where employee commitment delivers improved outcomes and services which assist the organisation in maintaining, demonstrating and improving its engagement with and commitment to staff
9. There is no one agreed definition of employee engagement – some say it's a more about attitude (e.g. staff want to do a good job): behaviours (staff putting in extra effort and care) or and outcome (innovation borne out of staff sharing suggestions and ideas). It is about the quality of working relationships at all levels across all departments and about the quality of relationship between employee and employer. Above all it's about **taking the time to think about people.**
10. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will make the principles of good engagement work for our staff in the context of the staff survey outcomes. The Engagement Principles expressed in paragraph 6 introduce the concept of **“Think People”**; ensuring that considerations about people are at the heart of everything we do, are real and embedded in day to day management and business. The following sections explain how we will put “Think People” into practice.

MFRA Engagement Commitments

11. The following Engagement commitments are introduced as a result of listening to the views of staff expressed in the Your Service Your Voice, staff engagement survey and the recent staff engagement focus groups. These commitments are designed to help develop better engagement across all areas of the Service and will embed staff engagement in to our everyday business.

Commitment 1: We will conduct a staff survey every two years to engage with staff on matters that are important to them and to the organisation. The survey will monitor progress with our Engagement Commitments and Principles.

Commitment 2: We will continue to use staff forums and stakeholder meetings (including the four representative bodies) to focus on areas for change and development between the surveys and to gather feedback and views (e.g. Watch Manager forums and Female FF forum)

Commitment 3: We will increase the visibility and accessibility of the Authority Members, Principal Officers and Strategic Management Group through extending some existing practices and the introduction of new engagement activities that could include:

1. Breakfast with the Chief
2. Joint staff involvement days working on specific operational activities, shared experience days (e.g. Older persons day HFSC's)
3. Inviting operational staff into SHQ and vice versa to see how the service works; to gain a better understanding of the work that's goes on behind the scenes and share experience.
4. Involve staff in the development of organisational plans.
5. Learning Exchanges - getting to know teams and their role at MFRA –including Learning Lunches
6. SMG surgery days (open door policy to access SMG members to chat)
7. SMG meeting staff to discuss important matters, changes or deliver briefings across different themes with smaller groups – allowing information to flow back up to SMG and inform decision making.
8. Authority members will continue to visit all stations and teams across MFRA, holding Q and A sessions on specific themes or areas of priority and providing more information about their roles

Commitment 4: We will value and recognise staff for the good work they do through non-financial recognition and reward which managers will be empowered to use. This could include

1. Celebratory Awards - Team/idea of the month year
2. Improvement Scheme - re launch
3. Recognition from P.O's and the Chair of Authority for outstanding work
4. Other approaches to thanking staff, showing we appreciate them going the extra mile
5. Developing other non-financial rewards strategies that all managers can utilise to demonstrate their recognition and value of the work their teams do
6. Consolidate and re communicate what we already have as benefits to working for MFRS

Commitment 5: Staff engagement will be an important part of the SMG agenda at every meeting; considerations for all proposals, policies, decisions and actions will involve thinking about the impact it has on our people and the engagement required before decisions are made.

Commitment 6: We will enable and support all managers across the organisation to engage effectively and confidently with their staff on a regular basis and to feed into decision making processes at all levels.

Staff Engagement - Long Term Areas for Development

12. The Survey identified some complex cultural issues which are long term priorities for change, We are keen to explore these further as part of a series of separate dedicated SMG meetings:

1. **Build stronger management teams**, engaging with managers collectively to build a strong management teams at all levels to take ownership of their roles and responsibilities and importance of communicating positively with their teams on corporate messages/projects/themes.
2. **Improve communication** methods to reach all staff. We have complex structures and it is not easy to bring everyone together to receive a consistent message. So we will consider a number of communication approaches to reach all groups of staff.
3. **Improve working relationships** between different groups of staff and senior management to engender trust and transparency around areas including performance management and progression.
4. **Constructively challenge performance, attitudes and behaviours**, clearly and consistently at all levels, utilising the Conduct and Capability procedures.
5. **Develop a greater acceptance of change across the organisation, and improve how we manage change** - Change is going to be constant to meet the changing landscape of the FRS and the budget reductions. MFRA will look at ways to improve communication of change and how the organisation will manage people who won't engage with change?
6. **Agree what success will look like** – It is vital that SMG agree what success will look like at an early stage, to ensure the commitments achieve positive outcomes.

Next Steps

By End of May 2015

- Engagement portal to be developed to provide a central source of Information to keep Staff and Managers updated
- Engagement with the 4 Representative Bodies to communicate our commitments and discuss their ongoing support for the survey and its outcomes
- Launch the Principles and Commitments with staff by 31st May using a variety of communication methods (will continue on in to June and periodically throughout the project)

June 2015 onwards

- Implementation of the short term commitments 1 to 6 commences
- Evaluate progress with the Engagement Principles and Commitments, regularly communicating with staff (Hot News, posters, briefings and Portal)
- SMG to review and develop strategies on longer term and complex issues and communicate with Staff
- Report on progress to Authority at the meeting on 30th June 2015 and 6 monthly thereafter

2016

- Staff Survey Number 2 is delivered in the Spring