



## NFCC Draft Culture Action Plan

Our fire and rescue services serve and protect the public, and our people are at the heart of it. Our Core Code of Ethics sets out our commitment to putting our communities first, with dignity and respect, equality, diversity and inclusion, integrity and ethical leadership at the centre of everything we do.

The NFCC is committed to working with fire and rescue services to deliver a positive working culture by inspiring leadership, embedding equality, diversity and inclusion, finding and nurturing diverse talent, and supporting the health and wellbeing of all our staff.

The NFCC recognises that fire and rescue services have fallen short of this commitment. We have rightly received criticism for not doing enough to tackle discrimination and abuse or to ensure that a positive working culture is the reality for all those who serve within fire and rescue services. We know that this has had a negative impact on public trust and confidence. Critical reviews and inspections into fire service culture going back to at least 1999 have called for substantial culture change. <sup>(1)</sup> And whilst much work has been done, much more is needed to deliver the step change that the public and our staff need and deserve. We must move forward, we must do so right now and with pace and renewed vigour to ensure all our fire and rescue services are open, inclusive and welcoming places to work.

Following the NFCC's Culture and Inclusion Conference on 27 and 28 March 2023 and the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) spotlight report entitled 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services', released on 30 March 2023, the NFCC has developed a draft Culture Action Plan for the next 18 months to address culture and inclusion within the fire and rescue sector. This will address recommendations made in the 2022 white paper 'Reforming our fire and rescue services' and realise the ambitions of Fit for the Future and the NFCC Member Strategy, in addition to the [suite of existing NFCC products developed for fire and rescue services](#).

This NFCC Culture Action Plan is our renewed call to action to improve culture and end misogyny, racism, bullying and harassment across UK fire and rescue services. Working together we can and must change our culture for the better.

We can only deliver on this action plan in partnership. The ongoing involvement and engagement of stakeholders is vital to ensure sustained progress towards our shared vision of a positive working culture which extends into the communities served by fire and rescue services.

Working with partners, the NFCC will continue to monitor and review progress against the plan, drawing on feedback and learning to ensure we deliver against our shared ambition.

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the appendix

## NFCC Culture Action Plan: Summary

All of our activity will support delivery against our Core Code of Ethics to ensure we are fit for the future



Putting our communities first



Dignity and respect



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



Integrity



Ethical leadership

	Short Term (Q1 2023-24)	Medium Term ( Q2-Q3 2023-24)	Long Term (Q4 2023-24 & 2024-25)
	Go live of <b>Direct Entry Programme</b> to quickly develop excellent candidates to leadership. Launch the <b>Positive Practice Portal</b> to champion innovative practice across the sector.	Research and report on options available to the sector regarding <b>investigations and hearings</b> and <b>professional standards</b> . Launch the <b>Organisational Learning Portal</b> to encourage cross-sector working for the benefit of all. Appoint <b>successful direct entrants</b> into FRSSs.	Supporting our staff to best protect the public by launching the <b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b> framework. Launch of <b>Direct Entry training programme</b> with the Capita Fire Service College, training new direct entrants to the highest calibre. Deliver on preferred options in relation to <b>investigations</b> and track impact.
	Publish our ground breaking research on <b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b> to support the sector to develop its offer. Establish independent <b>Challenge and Support Panel</b> to hold the programme to account on meeting it's ambitions around culture. Circulate our <b>Culture Action Plan</b> for peer review by the end of April 2023.	Put <b>professional standards</b> first and develop best practice for investigations and hearings across all levels of the sector. Evidence progress made on delivery against the recommendations from the <b>HMICFRS Spotlight report</b> . Communicate out progress across the sector. Develop <b>Challenging Behaviour Toolkit</b> for FRSSs.	Promote excellent standards by introducing and embedding the <b>Challenging Behaviour Toolkit</b> . Produce guidance to underpin <b>Fire Standards</b> relating to HMICFRS recommendations, if required.
	Further signposting relating to <b>independent reporting lines</b> . Strengthen involvement of key sector bodies such as <b>Women in the Fire Service, Asian Fire Service Association</b> and <b>The Fire Fighters Charity</b> in our work around culture and inclusion so they have input into the work. Expand our capacity and capability within NFCC to support the work on culture and inclusion, including bringing in <b>EDI expertise</b> .	Drawing on good practice across public sector, develop a <b>cultural dashboard methodology</b> to enable Fire and Rescue Services to track progress against key culture measures and benchmark practice.	Launch and support the implementation of a <b>cultural dashboard methodology</b> .
	Publish our <b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</b> sector report. Facilitate training sessions on <b>Equality Impact Assessments</b> for all Fire and Rescue Services. Continue our popular series of <b>Lunch &amp; Learn sessions</b> and <b>Strategic Masterclasses</b> on key cultural topics.	Building on our successful range of toolkits by delivering toolkits on <b>faith and disability</b> .	Host a follow-up <b>NFCC Culture &amp; Inclusion conference</b> to review progress and discuss future developments.
	Deliver <b>coaching &amp; mentoring</b> masterclass creating a coaching culture of inclusion over the next three months.	Put rounded development and feedback centre stage by publishing options available and best practice tools relating to <b>360-degree feedback</b> . Bring out the best in our workforce by creating an <b>interactive career pathway</b> . Develop the <b>Middle Leadership Programme</b> .	Develop our people to be the best they can by launching <b>Middle Leadership Programme</b> and reviewing our <b>Executive Leadership Programme</b> .

The NFCC Safeguarding Board will be discussing the creation of a similar visual to represent the work outlined in the list below at the next board meeting in early May.

### Short-term (by the end of May 2023)

In addition to the [suite of existing NFCC products provided to fire and rescue services](#), the NFCC has worked closely with suppliers of independent reporting lines and sent our [signposting information](#) to all fire and rescue services to enable them to establish independent reporting lines if they don't already have them.

Through our People, Culture and Leadership Programme, we will:

- Communicate out to all partners on the NFCC's response to the spotlight report and the Culture and Inclusion Conference including how we will deliver against recommendations
- Circulate our action plan for peer review by the end of April 2023
- Identify independent Chair and establish an independent Challenge and Support Panel, to offer scrutiny, oversight, challenge and support to NFCC in its delivery against the action plan
- Strengthen involvement of key sector bodies such as Women in the Fire Service, Asian Fire Service Association and The Fire Fighters Charity in our work around culture and inclusion so they have clear voice and input into the work
- Expand our capacity and capability within NFCC to support the work on culture and inclusion, including bringing in EDI expertise

- Deliver sessions on Equality Impact Assessments
- Launch recruitment process for the Direct Entry Programme
- Launch our Health and Wellbeing report and key priorities
- Publish our EDI Sector Report for UK Fire and Rescue Services
- Provide ongoing programme of Lunch and Learn sessions (such as Women in the Fire Service, Menopause, Bullying and Harassment)
- Deliver a coaching and mentoring masterclass on creating a coaching culture of inclusion
- Launch the Positive Practice Portal
- Continue delivery of a programme of strategic masterclasses (4 masterclasses already delivered)

Through the NFCC Safeguarding Board we will:

- Provide a ministerial pack, including draft guidance, to the Ministry of Justice which supports the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act business case (to enter the Houses of Parliament and Lords on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023)
- Produce and undertake stakeholder engagement consultation on NFCC Safeguarding Managing Allegations Guidance, including:
  - o Safeguarding Safe Share Initiative
  - o Additional reference for a joint guidance on the referral reporting route (flowchart) between HMICFRS and the Safeguarding Board to be produced to highlight the 'how'
  - o Commitment to the importance of safeguarding
- Produce and undertake stakeholder engagement consultation on Positive Disclosure Risk Assessment Guidance
- Produce and undertake stakeholder engagement consultation on Joint DBS & NFCC Guidance on levels of checks
- Produce NFCC Safeguarding Children and Adult Competency Framework 2022-25

Should Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) request this, the NFCC could undertake a supported procurement exercise with independent reporting lines.

### **Medium-term (by December 2023)**

Through the People, Culture and Leadership Programme, we will:

- Evidence progress made on delivery against the recommendations from the HMICFRS spotlight report. Communicate our progress across the sector
- Develop a Challenging Behaviour Toolkit to share with fire and rescue services
- Drawing on good practice examples, develop methodology for a Cultural Dashboard for FRSs
- Undertake research and report on options available to the sector regarding investigations and hearings, to include identification of options at individual service level, regional level and national level for potential professional standards function/s
- Create an interactive career pathway
- Appoint successful direct entrants into fire and rescue services
- Develop the Middle Leadership Programme
- Produce guidance on options available and best practice tools relating to 360-degree feedback
- Launch the Organisational Learning Portal
- Produce and launch further EDI toolkits (including disability and faith)

The NFCC, in conjunction with the Fire Standards Board, will also consider whether further guidance is needed in order to underpin Fire Standards addressing HMICFRS recommendations.

Through the NFCC Safeguarding Board, we will:

- Provide joint DBS and NFCC online workshops to support the DBS Guidance on levels of checks Provide NFCC Safeguarding Safer Recruitment and Managing Allegations continuing professional development (CPD) training (sector specific) and manual
- Review the Fire Standards Board's Safeguarding Fire Standard
- Provide an updated template letter to be provided to CFOs to submit to Chief Police Constables, upon legislative change
- Receive the request from the Home Office to support this amendment to the Police Act for the Safeguarding Board to research existing legislations to establish most appropriate route
- Review the Safeguarding Guidance and Self-Assessment
- Publish NFCC Safeguarding Managing Allegations Guidance
- Publish Positive Disclosure Risk Assessment Guidance
- Publish Joint DBS & NFCC Guidance on levels of checks
- Publish Safeguarding Children & Adult Competency Framework 2022-25

There is also an HMICFRS recommendation for national barred list holding details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct. This is being considered as part of the NFCC's work in the medium-term.

### **Longer-term (2024/5)**

In the longer-term, through the People, Culture and Leadership Programme we will:

- Launch and disseminate the Challenging Behaviour Toolkit/s, and track impact
- Launch the Cultural Dashboard methodology
- Deliver on preferred option/s in relation to investigations and hearings and professional standards
- Produce guidance required to underpin Fire Standards re. HMICFRS recommendations
- Commence the Direct Entry training programme with the Capita Fire Service College
- Develop and launch Middle Leadership Programme
- Review the Executive Leadership Programme to ensure it remains fit for purpose
- Develop and launch Health & Wellbeing Framework

Through the NFCC Safeguarding Board we will:

- Work with the People, Culture & Leadership Programme on conduct/performance procedures guidance relating to Safeguarding Managing Allegations procedures
- Request inclusion within the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The NFCC is also committed to hosting a follow-up Culture and Inclusion Conference to review progress and discuss future developments.

### **Governance:**

The NFCC People, Culture and Leadership Co-ordinating Committee will lead our work around culture and inclusion, supported by the NFCC Safeguarding Board and NFCC Organisational Learning.

In addition, the NFCC Council will review progress against the action plan. The NFCC Board of Trustees will provide strategic oversight and accountability.

The NFCC will work closely with the Fire Standards Board, HMICFRS, Home Office, LGA, National Employers and wider partners in ensuring that progress is made against the action plan, and we will report on progress at regular intervals.

Our independent Challenge and Support Panel will play a key role in providing scrutiny, advice, challenge and support to the NFCC in its delivery against the action plan.

## Appendix

Drivers relating to the need to improve the culture in fire and rescue services go back as far as 1999 and they continue until as recently as March 2023. In 1999 the previous fire inspectorate published Equality and Fairness in the Fire service Report which stated that “We [the inspectorate] are strongly of the opinion that substantial change is necessary in the management and culture of the service to achieve an environment where equality and fairness can be integrated into its whole operation and organisation”. This evidences that the measures that have been taken to improve culture over the years have been insufficient and have not been as effective as they needed to be.

A selection of these reports are as follows:

September 1999: Equality and fairness in the fire service: a thematic review by HM Fire Service Inspectorate

May 2001: Managing a Modern Fire Service: Bridging the Gap by HM Fire Service Inspectorate

16 December 2002: [The Future of the Fire Service](#) by Sir George Bain

20 May 2008: [Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018](#) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government

17 May 2013: [Facing the future](#) by Sir Ken Knight

February 2015: [Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England](#) by Adrian Thomas

7 March 2017: [An inclusive fire service: the twenty-first century fire and rescue service](#) report by the LGA

13 March 2018: [Fire Vision 2024](#) report by the LGA

20 May 2018: [Smoke and Mirrors: Time to meet the challenge of equality in the fire and rescue service](#) by Asian Fire Service Association

November 2022: [Independent Culture Review](#) into London Fire Brigade by Nazir Afzal OBE

March 2023: Spotlight report on [Values and culture in fire and rescue services](#) by HMICFRS

