



Human Resources Committee

20 February 2024

Staff Survey Outcomes

Report of the Director of Organisational People Development

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Human Resources Committee (HRC) of the findings of the staff survey conducted by People Insight over September and October 2023.

Background

2. The Service, in collaboration with DUBS, launched its first cultural survey in October 2016 to study the impact of a range of workplace factors and how this affects service delivery to the public. To gain an independent, credible view of the culture of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS), this work was undertaken by Professor Les Graham who has worked with approximately 36 police forces nationally.
3. Unfortunately, we were advised by DUBS earlier this year that they could no longer facilitate a survey on behalf of the Service due to other ongoing pressures therefore the Service had to consider alternative options. A range of alternatives were considered before deciding to work with People Insight. The key benefit of the People Insight platform was that it allowed to benchmark data against other Fire and Rescue Services as they currently worked with 13 other FRS across the country.
4. The importance of improving values, culture and behaviour was highlighted in the spotlight report by HMICFRS on “Values and culture in Fire and Rescue Services” which was commissioned by The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire. The report draws on the evidence collected through all inspections since 2018 and highlights there is still a significant amount of work to do in the Sector regarding behaviours at work. The employee survey is a vital tool to enable us to seek the view of our workforce around what its like to work for CDDFRS. Outcomes from the staff survey feed into the overall People Strategy action plan so our achievements and areas of focus are transparent. It is also an area which is explored by HMICFRS during their inspection process.
5. The survey was launched on 25 September 2023 and closed on 25 October 2023. We received 290 completed responses which equated to 53% of the workforce. In 2021, our staff survey achieved a 54.7% response rate therefore is comparable.
6. The finding of the staff survey were delivered directly back to all managers at our leadership forums in November 2023 by People Insight. This gave managers an opportunity to ask questions and gain insights into our results alongside the SLT.

Findings

7. The key measures, survey findings and relationships between key measures for the basis of the findings. It's important to note the responses in this paper are based on the whole

workforce. The data set allows us to further analysis by category of staff i.e. WT, RDS, Corporate and Control as well as location.

- The main areas of the findings can be broken down into several topics which are outlined below. The percentage shown refers to the number of responses which were positive i.e. a respondent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Theme	CDDFRS Result (%)	Benchmarking data (+/-)
Engagement	85%	+6
Purpose	69%	+8
Enablement	71%	+9
Autonomy	63%	+2
Wellbeing	69%	-2
Reward	66%	+10
Leadership	49%	+2
My manager	86%	+11
Governance	78%	+6

- The results show a positive response across multiple categories especially engagement, My Manager and Governance (workplace behaviours). In comparison with other FRS's our responses around Reward, Enablement and Purpose are significantly. Leadership against the least positive response, however, is comparable with other FRS's results with ours on average being +2 higher. Wellbeing is the one indicator where the service scored lower than other services. Leadership, Wellbeing and Autonomy are the three key areas of focus from the survey.

Table 2: Average scores for measures used over time, all respondents – comparative Data

Measure	2016	2018	2021	2023	Direction of travel
Organisational Support	59%	64%	59%	65.3%	Up
Behaviours at work	56%	63%	68%	78%	Up
Fairness	52%	55%	57%	53%*	Down
Job Satisfaction	78%	82%	85%	87%	Up
Engagement	78%	83%	85%	85%	Up
Wellbeing	71%	77%	61.7%	75%	Up

*The new measure around fairness is not a direct comparison, previously this only covered procedural fairness the new measure includes fairness holistically i.e relationships, decisions & processes.

- The results show a positive direction of travel in 5 comparable measures used across four surveys.
- On a positive note, the workforce has reported lower levels of undermining behaviour and incivility than in previous surveys. This suggests individuals believe that, in general, the levels of undermining behaviour that occur in the workplace are low however, some individuals did still report experiencing this. Positive comments were made about the Services approach to tackling these issues through the call it our surveys, leadership forum discussions and subsequent workshops. A key principle of the People Strategy 2023 – 2026 and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022- 2025 is the drive to be a more inclusive organisation where individuals feel they can be their true self at work. This means staff feel able to openly express personal identities and act in a way that feels authentic and true to oneself. This can have important implications for individual wellbeing and their desire to speak up and make improvements. Keeping the conversation going around these issues

are key and will form part of the action plan as well as building upon the recommendations outlined in the HMICFRS Spotlight report which is updated and monitored through the HRC.

12. Improvements in the other key measures show high levels of job satisfaction and comparable levels of engagement which are positive indicators within our culture that staff are happy in their work and feel engaged with the Service. There is an upward trend particularly in the operational workforce with these measures.
13. Wellbeing can be considered as the amount of emotional and mental energy individuals have available to them to meet the daily demands they face in their roles. It is pleasing to see this indicator has seen an overall rise since the last survey. Research has found that low wellbeing levels are related to reduced performance, engagement, and increased absenteeism. Sickness has been particularly high over the past few years although there have not been any specific trends of this nature identified to date. Comments received from staff have been generally positive around wellbeing and the interventions that the Service provide. However, given this is one of the lowest scoring areas, this will feature in our action plan to make improvements.
14. There has been an increase organisational support. This has been one of the key measures we have been trying to improve since the first survey, so it is pleasing to see this has increased. POS refers to an individuals' beliefs regarding the degree to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. It also refers to a feeling of assurance that the organisation will provide support when individuals face particularly difficult or challenging circumstances when carrying out their duties. Given the results across the wellbeing indicators, it is clear to understand the impact of a variety of factors on this indicator. The comments from the survey also highlight pockets of staff feeling undervalued and not appreciated so this is an area we need to concentrate on in the future.
15. The results for My Manager are very positive suggesting individuals perceive their immediate supervisor as being competent, having personal integrity, caring about the wellbeing and development of those who work for them as well as being focussed on serving their communities. Feeling trusted can be thought of as a 'vote of confidence' by a leader in their people. It enhances the person's confidence in their own abilities and a feeling of being valued. These leadership behaviours underpin the principles of supportive leadership and demonstrate that the behaviours the Service have set are being exhibited on a daily basis. Results around development and access to training also support this with some of the main development interventions implemented recently being linked to leadership programmes and relevant qualifications in this area.
16. Whilst there is no direct comparison for improvement behaviour, this area was explored through questions relating to Autonomy, meaning our workforce are comfortable to generate and implement new and creative ideas and will proactively find solutions to organisational problems. The results were lower than we expected in these areas and so it is useful to reflect what we believe the organisation is seeing and feeling this in day-to-day practice. There are several avenues whereby individuals can make suggestions and put their ideas forward and make changes e.g. Fire Away however these are not always utilised to their full potential. This area will be explored with teams through focus groups.

Summary

17. Overall, the survey reported positive findings across many of the measures included and improvements have been made across several comparable measures used in previous surveys.

18. People Insight commented that the results reported were reflective of an organisation that was performing well and that the Service should be pleased with the outcome of the survey. They also suggested we were in the upper quartile for engagement, and this is something we should be proud of.
19. To help us improve further, the report identified the following areas in which the Service should focus their attentions, these being:
 - a) Continue to concentrate efforts around perceived organisational support and wellbeing.
 - b) Removal of any barriers staff may be experiencing which should positively impact engagement, support and wellbeing factors.
 - c) Work to further reduce inappropriate workplace behaviour which should positively impact on wellbeing factors.
 - d) Identify ways to improve SLT visibility and engagement with the wider workforce.

Next Steps

20. The following next steps have been identified following the receipt of the survey outcomes:
 - a) The results of the survey have been shared with all staff.
 - b) A workshop has been facilitated with the SLT to consider the data in more depth and agree the key areas of work. SLT has discussed its current approach to engagement and how it intends to adapt its strategy and methods to address some of the concerns raised by staff.
 - c) Localised data sets have been shared with the relevant managers to review.
 - d) The POD team are undertaking a range of focus groups with watches and teams to help us to understand the outcomes more fully and the interventions that will be required. These will be captured in an action plan.
 - e) Further analysis of the data will take place to identify if there are any trends within specific groups which need addressing.
 - f) A range of ideas for improvement have been put forward by staff. These need to be considered and any changes to ways of working made. All changes will be logged in the action plan.
 - g) Following development of the action plan, consideration should be given to any areas that may warrant further consultation and discussion at a Leadership Forum or Fire Forum.

Recommendations

21. Members are requested to:
 - (a) **note** and comment on the content of the report.

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