

People Strategy end of year report 2024/25

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Simon Hardiman Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Germaine Worker, Head of HR and Administration on 01743 260210.

1 Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on the achievements that have been made against the People Strategy for 2021 - 2025.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

3 Background

The People Strategy 2021 – 2025 provides a framework to support the aims and objectives of the service as outlined in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The purpose of our People Strategy is to support all that we do to attract, recruit, develop, retain, support and reward our employees and teams to meet our future goals and aspirations.

The Strategy details how the service intends to achieve this by:

- a. Developing leadership capacity
- b. Organisational development and engagement
- c. Resourcing the service
- d. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- e. Health, wellbeing and fitness
- f. Skills, training and education
- g. New ways of working

To demonstrate how we will achieve against these areas we have four plans that underpin this strategy:

- Workforce and Resourcing Plan
- Organisational Development Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

Each of the plans reflect the strategic objectives of the People strategy and detail the work that is being carried out to meet these objectives. The critical success factors outlined in the plans will inform the organisation how well we are doing to achieve these objectives over the four-year period.

4 Progress against the existing plans

Developing Leadership Capacity

This area covers two specific areas i.e. Leadership Development and Coaching and Mentoring.

Achievements:

- a) The service has successfully used the services of the NFCC Coaching and Mentoring Portal for 2 individuals to access external coaching. Access to the NFCC Coaching and Mentoring portal is now offered as part of post-promotion support for employees. Whilst this is optional, employees are encouraged to register on the portal and engage in a coaching/mentoring relationship to support their development.
- b) There is currently one live mentoring relationship across the Service.
- c) Currently trialling the NFCC Supervisory Leadership Development Programme (SLDP) following feedback from learners about relevance of the ILM Level 3. Currently 24 active learners undertaking the programme. Learners from across the service including Wholetime, On-Call, Control and Support Staff. Positive feedback received.
- d) Also currently trialling the NFCC Middle Leadership Programme (MLP) with 8 active learners – a mixture of Wholetime, Control and Support Staff.
- e) CMI Level 7 delivered in 2024 with 6 Group Managers attending. A further programme to be delivered in 2025.
- f) Two senior managers have been successful in securing places on the Executive Leadership Programme (ELP) during 24/25.
- g) The service is exploring options for the wider roll-out of 360° feedback across the Service.
- h) In light of the 2024 HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour report – mandatory training commenced in January 2025 for all supervisory managers (and above) relating to effective performance management, handling difficult conversations and conducting effective workplace investigations.
- i) Springboard – Women’s Development Programme launched in September 2024, specifically aimed at focussing on personal and professional development. 11 females from On-Call, Control and Support Service

teams successfully completed the programme. Feedback from delegates has been encouraging and positive.

- j) A number of successful promotion processes have been undertaken including CM, GM recruitment and WM Training and positive review of the promotion process has taken place to enhance improvements.

Organisational Development and engagement

This area covers three specific areas i.e. Workforce Planning, Staff Engagement and Reward and Recognition

Achievements:

- a) Cycle to work scheme ran from 3/6/24 -12/7/24 – 15 Orders £12,380, Avg Order value £825. NIC Savings £1,708. A further window is planned for 3/6/25 – 12/7/25.
- b) Cycle to work scheme has now been running for 6 years. Since the launch the Service have supported 155 Orders @ £121,419, Avg package £783. SFRS have saved £16,756 in NI Contributions. Off setting 8,722kg Carbon i.e. the equivalent of 415 mature trees. Scheme users will have saved £53,445 in annual travelling costs.
- c) 5 members of staff have been awarded honorariums within the non-uniform section of the workforce to support personal and service areas of development.
- d) Celebration of Success was held on 14 October 2024 – 25 On Call Recruits, 19 Development FFs, 1 Employer Award, the High Sheriff's Good Citizen Award, the telent Charity Shield, the Dave Bishton Challenge Shield and the Stations in Bloom winners
- e) Medals Ceremony was held on 17 June 2024 to present 12 Operational Medals (20 year medals), 1 non-operational medal (20 years) 2, 40-year clasps. 2 x CFO Commendations to firefighters who had gone above and beyond the call of duty at incidents
- f) Continued maintain strong relationships and to engage effectively with the Trade Unions re. HMICFRS Culture and Values, Holiday Pay, On Call Leave and Banded Contracts, CRMP, Officer Flexi time, ILM Qualifications, Maternity Policy, Bullying and Harassment, Telford Project and various employee relations matters, new ways of working, positive action and recruitment.
- g) 58 compliments have been received by the Service during 2023 compared to 52 the previous year.
- h) Development Officer facilitated wellbeing engagement sessions across the Service in May and October 2024, listening to staff concerns, thoughts, and ideas. This provided constructive and useful feedback for the Service in terms of culture and moving the Service forward.

Resourcing the Service

This area covers three specific areas i.e. Recruitment and Attraction, Talent Management and Succession Planning and Widening Participation.

Achievements:

- a) On Call Banded Contracts have been successfully implemented as a key objective of the On Call sustainability project to improve reward, recognition and retention within the on call service.
- b) The service have provided secondment opportunities for staff in Development, Protection, Ops, HMI, LRF, C and C project and externally to the NFCC.
- c) Development Officer completed 5-month secondment to the NFCC to write and launch the Middle Leadership Programme across the Sector. The learning from this has been invaluable back in Service.
- d) HR are working effectively using Tribepad the end-to-end recruitment which includes a fully managed online application system to streamline and systemise the entire function, thus, reducing time and eliminating paper from the process.
- e) Supported 3 work experience placements during 2024 and a further 3 planned for 2025.
- f) The Recruitment Action Group meeting has been reinvigorated to focus on specific areas for WT/On Call Recruitment. Work on the on call recruitment process has begun to define the process and identify opportunities/barriers to attract, encourage and maintain interest in the on call service.
- g) Work has been undertaken following feedback and focus groups with staff in late 2024, to understand the issues with the current IPDR process. Six focus groups were held and key themes identified. Feedback has been reviewed and a project is underway to redevelop the IPDR system on LEO (our Learning Management System) together with associated guidance documents and training notes, ahead of launch in April 2025.
- h) A further 4 support staff roles have been reviewed through the JE scheme in 2024 and 2 in early 2025, plus a further 2 roles through the SFIA Framework where roles have been benchmarked and pay uplifted for support staff in line with market values for the roles.
- i) Continued to support Fire Control resources whereby establishment was increased by 2 FF and 3, 12-month FTCs to backfill secondments to the FC project.
- j) The Service currently have 24 live apprenticeships in areas such as Level 3 Operational Firefighter, Level 4 Fire Safety Inspector, Level 3 ICT, Level 6 Accountancy and Taxation, Level 4 Data Analyst and Level 6 Cyber Security. The successful of apprenticeships as a recruitment path and development offering to existing employees has resulted in the Service not having residual funds left in the levy pot at the end of each month.
- k) The Service successfully utilised 5 FF's on Fixed Term Contracts to bolster the resilience in the WT establishment.

- l) Full review of Associate Trainers and Training Instructors contracts has been undertaken resulting in improved work life balance and potential attraction to future vacancies.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

This area covers two specific areas i.e. EDI and Culture and Values

Achievements:

- a) Further to the implementation of the Sexual Harassment duty within the Equality Act 2010, the Service have completed a detailed briefing document and gap analysis for SMT, created a short briefing document for all employees, implemented training for station manager/equivalent and above and are currently reviewing training requirements for all other employees.
- b) Voices Group is continuing, a planning session has been completed, resulting in evaluating and reviewing the group to improve its effectiveness in supporting our employees. Some notable areas have been the Mental Health getting active events in May, Circuits, Jogging and Walks – which are now ongoing. Event for International Women’s Day where we had 2 guest speakers, one current employee who is a Team GB Competitor and one former employee who is a Crime Author both sharing their journeys, as well as a Menopause Networking Event at Market Drayton Fire Station. The BAME rep attended the Caribbean Festival, Police Black History Month Café and attends the Black Firefighters Group. The Mental Health rep and EDI Officer has recently attended the Blue Light Mental Health Symposium and fed this back through the EDI steering group. The Services have attended PRIDE events at Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth.
- c) 38 employees have received the EDI Induction package during 2024, 13 attended the EQIA training and 12 the Dyslexia Awareness training.
- d) A number of On-call Positive Action taster sessions have been held across the Service.
- e) Currently supporting 46 live Reasonable Adjustment cases, the majority of these for Dyslexia, some for ADHD and back problems.
- f) Promoted the workplace adjustment passport at all managers meetings, resulting in an increased uptake of this.
- g) The Service are involved in a number of external EDI groups: Telford EDI Group, Telford Employability Group, Interfaith Basketball Group, SAND, NFCC EDI groups
- h) Ongoing attendance at events and conference, SAND closing conference, National Dyslexia Conference, Autism Awareness Courses, Dyslexia Information Day.
- i) Completed ongoing work to improve equality monitoring data through increased reporting and identification, data update and contact with employees

- j) The Service have seen positive use of the external Confidential Reporting line provided by 'Say So' fostering a culture of transparency, trust and accountability within the organisation.

Health, Wellbeing and Fitness

Achievements:

- a) Bite-sized courses from the Firefighters Charity covering topics such as menopause, developing resilience, Stress Awareness, Preventing Musculoskeletal Injury continue to be offered to staff.
- b) Continuing to provide the services of Serve and Protect Credit Union where staff can save money for their financial future and be there if they need to borrow throughout their career and beyond. Total savings £23,173 Average savings per member £851. Total of 2 loans outstanding, with a total value of £23,996. The average loan outstanding being £11,998.
- c) To date 48 people have attended the Suicide Prevention training. 17 have attended Suicide Safety Training and 6 people have attended Suicide First Aid and 109 Suicide First Aid Lite.
- d) 88 people have attended MH First Aid course, with an additional 1 attending the MH refresher training during 2024, 80 receiving the MH first aid awareness training and additional 62 attending the MH e learning awareness
- e) Overall 396 fitness tests were completed during 2024 with 375 individuals receiving a green rating. The remaining 15 were in the Amber and 6 in the red, all of which have received a supportive trainer journey. Positive feedback has been received stating it's been informative and helpful in improving both fitness and mental wellbeing. Extended Fitness support from External supplier has been agreed for a further year.
- f) The numbers of reported Near Miss incidents have remained high at 64 in 2024 compared to 75 in 2023 and injuries remain low at 23 for 2024.
- g) We have two trained menopause champions who actively provide advice and support across the Service and attended the National Menopause Conference. Regular 'chomp and chat' sessions are held at lunchtimes, sharing up to date research in this topic, and an opportunity to share insights and personal experiences.
- h) The Health and Wellbeing Day in October which involved several of the voices reps, this included a Menopause Workshop, Firefighters Charity Resilience Sessions, Voices stalls with information, Reiki and Massage tasters along with a fitness session.
- i) Encouragement of and regular engagement from staff in lunchtime/after work activities including, yoga walking/running groups

Skills, Training and Education

This area covers two specific areas i.e. Statutory and Mandatory Training and Learning and Education

Achievements:

- a) Training course delivery - Working with Area Command, the Training department have changed the way core skills courses are delivered, especially to our On-call colleagues. These are now tailored around each station, so crews can attend training courses together. This has improved course attendance, staff competences and reduced the number of courses offered which has meant training instructors have been able to work on projects, maintain their own CPD and ensure admin is all done in a timely manner.
- b) Increased our FREC competence levels in our operational staff from 65% of our workforce in Oct 2023, to 80% in February 2025. The majority of the remainder have booked on initial courses in 2025. The aim is by 2026, all operational staff are FREC 3 trained, with the expectation being new recruits who will complete their training in FREC 3 in their year two development.
- c) Undertook a Training Needs Analysis which will form the platform of the Training Facilities Review. The first draft of this will be presented in SMT in March.
- d) Developed the Initial Incident Command Qualification so it is more user friendly and adaptable for those with reasonable adjustments.
- e) Achieved Direct Claim Status with Skills for Justice so we are able to assess and claim qualification for Level 3 Initial Incident Command. This means we do not have to get an external quality insurer in before claiming the qualification for our staff.
- f) The Centre Coordinator supported the unsuccessful CPG for the second time, all passed after completing their support programme.
- g) Re-introduced the On-Call development day for development FFs, covering all core skills to provide an opportunity to train in realistic environments.

New Ways of Working

This area covers two specific areas i.e. Managing Change and Organisational Performance Metrics

Achievements

- a) A full mapping exercise of the feedback from the Staff survey, Cultural audit and HMICFRS report has been completed to identify themed areas for the Service to focus on and work is progressing through EDI Steering Group to address systems, processes and overall Culture of the Service.
- b) With implementation of the Home and Hybrid Working Policy, we have seen an increase in Flexible Working requests enabling staff to work in a more agile way and achieve a better work life balance.
- c) VIVUP is our digitalised employee benefits and reward package enabling staff to access discounts and purchase items. Since December 2022, 15 staff have borrowed £14,673.36 over 36 different loans. This is an average loan of £407.69 and an average per person of 978.22.
- d) In Protection, the Service has introduced its first Fire Engineer role. This demonstrates our commitments to public safety and to developing our staff. Our Prevention team continues to work closely with partners to improve the lives of people in our communities and keep them safe. In particular, the work relating to Preventing Fire Deaths has helped to raise awareness of some of the specific risks to people in Shropshire.
- e) Establishment of the workforce (CPI 9a) and demographics (CPI9b) continue to be monitored through the Performance and Risk group. The Service are currently working on a set of Corporate Health Indicators to evaluate and measure the organisations health.
- f) An exercise has been completed to ensure all staff are DBS Vetted and Right to Work processes have been followed the Government amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- g) Changes to the training course attendance model has been successful. Attendance rates have significantly improved resulting in a more efficient training delivery programme and a reduction in the need for staff to attend courses outside of normal working patterns. Engagement with staff and representative bodies has remained strong. This positive working relationship has seen the introduction of new banded contracts for on-call firefighters and agreement on the wholetime shift system.
- h) Pay negotiations for WT staff, support staff and Brigade managers were agreed and pay awards granted.

- i) Work remains ongoing with the Sargeant and Matthews pensions exercises. **Sargeant** – the service has been able to collect and provide the necessary data needed to provide members with their correct entitlement under the Sargeant remedy. Ongoing legislative issues are still delaying the correction of benefits being paid, but it is expected that cases will begin to be processed through 2025. **Matthews** – all eligible firefighters, from the first round of communications, who had expressed an interest in joining the scheme have now been provided with their statement of benefits and costs. Many have returned their forms to join, and these have been processed and passed to West Yorkshire Pension Fund. We have been able to obtain up to date contact information for the remaining eligible firefighters and we've seen a second wave of expressions of interest. Calculations for these are ongoing. on call firefighters within scope have been asked if they would like to join this second exercise to buy back service, from their start date to June 2000.
- j) All HMICFRS data collections continue to be submitted in a timely efficient manner.

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

The above plans are monitored and updated by the HR department on a quarterly basis and the achievements are then reported back through SMT and Strategy and Resources Committee via an end of year report. This end of year report brings this Strategy to a close and a new People Strategy for 2025 – 2028 has been created. This will be presented to SMT and Members in due course following the publication of the new CRMP.

6 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the progress against the new People Strategy for 2021 – 2025.

7 Capacity

The capacity to undertake all of these areas of work are continually reviewed through the People Management meeting. Where growth is required to support areas of work, reports are submitted to the Senior Management Team for approval.

8 Collaboration / Partnership Working

There are continued opportunities for us to work in collaboration with other Fire Services, educational institutions and other emergency services.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct relationship between the People Strategy and equality and diversity. EQIA's have been completed on the People Strategy and associated plans.

10 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

11 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

12 Reputation

The strategy directly aligns and supports the service aims and objectives. Specifically, Strategic Aims 1 and 5.

13 Appendices

No appendices are attached to this report

14 Background Papers

- People Strategy 2021- 2025
- Workforce and Resourcing Plan
- Organisational Development Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan