



Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

Workforce Development Strategy 2017- 2020



1 INTRODUCTION

The role of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) is changing. Fewer fires and more focus on wider community safety means that we need our workforce to be more flexible, diverse, integrated with partners and professionally expert across a wider skill set. We want people to enjoy the work, to give their best and to have fulfilling careers in Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS).

To underpin this, we have developed this three-year workforce development strategy for all NFRS personnel. It forms part of a suite of strategies that support the areas of focus within the National Fire and Rescue People strategy and aligns with the NFRS strategic objectives of keeping our staff and our communities safe and well, whilst making the best use of our resources.

Aim of the strategy

The workforce development strategy is based on a framework of overarching aims, the delivery of which will be supported through the development of annual action plans over the period of the three-year strategy (2017 – 2020). The framework covers the following aims:

- The safety and wellbeing of our staff and our community
- The changing role of the FRS
- The culture of NFRS
- NFRS as the employer of choice

2 THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF OUR STAFF AND OUR COMMUNITY

Firefighter safety, the safety and wellbeing of all our people and of the communities we serve is of paramount importance to us. Fundamental to this is the appropriate selection, induction, development and continuous learning of our staff. A service priority is to continually develop our staff to ensure they are able to do their job.

We recognise that the safety and wellbeing of our staff is dependent upon their ability to understand the purpose and to perform to the requirements of their role.

- We will continually review our processes to ensure we have robust mechanisms in place to select suitable people to perform roles, to provide appropriate induction and development programmes, to ensure competences can be maintained and further developed, and to support career development through continuous learning
- We will continue to progress the advancement of individual personal development records for all members of NFRS staff, complemented through the maintenance of competence framework and the staff appraisal process
- We will ensure that our staff are fully aware of the wellbeing arrangements available to them and that our managers are equipped to support or direct staff in relation to wellbeing issues

An ageing operational workforce profile and less exposure to operational incidents, especially fires, mean that there is potential loss of operational knowledge, experience and key skills, which must be mitigated through knowledge transfer and more realistic training. We recognise that the implementation of the National Operational Guidance Programme

(NOGP), along with its accompanying training specifications and shared operational learning ethos will help support this, as will regular training in realistic simulated conditions.

- We will work collaboratively with other FRSs to agree training approaches, share good practice and progress the timely implementation of the NOGP training specifications
- We will further develop our e-learning platform to help facilitate the development and maintenance of operational knowledge and understanding
- We will continue to develop our tactical firefighting training site at Chelveston and our virtual learning platforms at the Command Development Centre (CDC) at Daventry, using experienced operational personnel to instruct and support simulated, realistic training and assessment activities
- We will introduce a service-wide operational exercise programme to provide realistic training, development and competence assessment scenarios for our operational personnel
- We will maintain robust systems for the capture and dissemination of operational learning from within service, across the FRS sector and through wider partner Interoperability

Workforce planning is essential for the safety and wellbeing of our staff and communities. We must continue to review the balance of core and specialist skills across our workforce to ensure we can provide appropriate operational and business resilience, and to provide clarity on any single points of failure.

- We will develop and maintain an ongoing workforce planning framework that provides for sustainable succession planning across the Service

The protection of our communities often relies on a multi-agency response to emergencies and other major events. Training in collaboration with other agencies is therefore vitally important. We recognise the importance of training together with other agencies to help develop our effectiveness at incidents such as terrorism, flooding, medical emergencies, large-scale fires, etc. These types of incidents require multi-skilled adaptable people with excellent communication and leadership abilities, at all levels, to work across organisational and often cultural boundaries. We have a duty to collaborate with other emergency services in the interests of public safety and the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) is now recognised as best practice for all emergency responders.

- We will continue to look for opportunities to develop joint training and development with other agencies, in order to rehearse together for national resilience, major incidents, and other emergencies in the interests of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and to improve public safety

In addition to the traditionally-recognised operational response skills, the safety and wellbeing of our staff and our communities relies on many other professional skills including: community engagement, communications, resource management, leadership, Information Technology, Fire Protection, Fire Prevention, education, information management, data analysis, HR/people management, wellbeing, influencing, conflict resolution, political awareness, project management, finance, legal, health and safety, procurement, engineering, premises management, etc.

This list is not exhaustive but is indicative of the wide ranging skills required of an FRS. The Service recognises the importance of these skills and the need to ensure our personnel receive appropriate development and support in acquiring and maintaining them.

- We will develop individual Personal Development Records (PDRs) for all of our staff to accommodate the wide range of professional skills that are required to support the FRS

Career paths for all staff need to be transparent and accessible in order to allow talent to rise to the most senior roles in the Service. We need to consider how this might be accommodated for existing staff and any future recruitment.

- We will review our processes for selection and promotion with a view to providing transparent, inclusive processes for career progression including the consideration of talent management processes.

3 THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE FRS

The role of the FRS is changing with much more focus on community engagement and collaboration to support the wider public safety agenda. We need diversity in our skill sets and in our thinking to ensure we can understand the nature of the wider public safety issues and respond to the needs of our community.

Our people need to be able to influence, communicate and engage with people from diverse backgrounds - in their own home, at their business, at an open day, during safety forum meetings, and at an incident - in a manner that inspires confidence and trust. The ability to work with different people without prejudice and being responsive to need is vital.

This requires our workforce to develop expertise in community engagement, understanding the safety needs of our diverse communities and managing vulnerabilities. Activities such as medical response, gaining access to support medical emergencies, supporting other agencies in the search for missing vulnerable people, etc., are now business as usual and demonstrate the development towards the broader role of a firefighter.

We need people who can work across organisational boundaries or in a multi-agency structure, including roles such as fire safety specialists, Prevention teams, Joint Operations Teams and operational Incident Commanders (ICs). This requires emotional intelligence, wider knowledge of other agencies, and use of protocols for sharing information, as well as good influencing, assertion and communication skills.

Public services are increasingly collaborating to form single teams of multi-professionals, and Governance arrangements may mean that future leaders may be required to lead across the public sector with direct responsibility for services beyond fire and rescue, requiring a wider skill set than previous FRS leaders. Our selection and development processes must be capable of supporting this.

A focus on the way we can maximise the use of our resources means that we need to explore ways that managers and leaders are able to develop greater skills in commercialism, commissioning, negotiation and projects to operate effectively in the changing public service environment. This is especially important as we embark on our income generation strategy.

- We will remain cognisant of the skills required for the changing role of the FRS, and will look to recognise this through future selection and development processes for all

roles across the Service; additional focus of the new skills will be included in induction, development and maintenance of competence programmes

- We will look to introduce staff education and awareness programmes on wider community safety issues such as frailty in the elderly and its impact on falls, dementia, impact of poverty, drink and drugs, crime, and mental health

Specific consideration will need to be given to the impact on the Retained Duty System (RDS) workforce as cognisance of the current limited training time available to them. Impact on Control Room staff will also need to be considered as to the part they will play in customer interaction as our role expands.

It is important that we can lead change effectively, in partnership with others. There is therefore a need to develop our people in the personal management of change, understanding the change curve and coping tools, and ensuring the well-being of our staff as we embark on change programmes.

- We will introduce training programmes on the management of change which supports managers in their ability to plan, implement and embed change effectively whilst ensuring the wellbeing of staff

4 THE CULTURE OF NFRS

We recognise that how we do things is just as important as what we do. Our aim is to develop a culture across our workforce that aligns with our service values so that through our attitudes, behaviours and interactions we demonstrate: Trust, Respect, Inclusivity, Humility, Caring, Integrity, Pride and Excellence.

We are committed to supporting and improving the quality of leadership at all levels within the Service in order to implement change and embed a value-based culture across the organisation.

- We will underpin the embedding of our service values through supporting and developing people to adopt the behaviours associated with the service values in their day to day interactions
- We will continuously review our recruitment and promotion processes to ensure the behavioural and attitude criteria that we use to select our people best fit the values of the organisation
- Our leadership development programmes will include a strong focus on change management with a view to equipping our leaders to be the catalysts for achieving an organisational culture centred on our service values

To ensure we have a FRS fit for the 21st century, we need a culture that encourages and facilitates the involvement of the whole workforce in the continuous improvement of the organisation. We need to create an environment of mutual trust that empowers each member of our staff to develop to their full potential in order that they can give their best, knowing that their contribution is valued and is making a difference.

- We will create formal and informal structures to best facilitate staff engagement to ensure all of our people have a voice and are encouraged to contribute to the development and continuous improvement of the Service

We need to listen to our people, our partner agencies, our communities and others from within our sector and beyond, to ensure we are constantly developing and learning as an organisation.

We need to continuously and collectively learn from our shortcomings. This means we need a culture where people are willing to admit to their mistakes without fear of retribution in order for lessons to be shared widely and learning sustained.

To expand our knowledge and our abilities, our managers and staff need to be prepared to change the way we do things, and the things that we do; to challenge assumptions and norms; and to experiment when appropriate to do so.

To support the cultural change required across NFRS, we will commit to a culture of organisational learning.

- We will further develop our frameworks designed to capture and share learning, including our debrief processes, national operational learning and joint organisational learning programmes, operational incident monitoring, staff feedback and suggestion schemes, and outcomes of inspections and audits
- We will look for opportunities to learn and share best practice, including using external leadership programmes to support development of underpinning knowledge and building personal networks
- We will look for ways to improve the time available to staff to accommodate guided self-learning and personal reflection to empower staff to take charge of their own development

The widening of the FRS role means that our people need to interact and engage using different styles and skills depending on the variety of situations they may be dealing with. In addition to command and control skills required for the incident ground, our people must be able to adapt their interactions to the situations they face, using coaching, mentoring, facilitation, influencing and negotiation skills amongst others.

- We will continue to roll out our coaching development programmes with the aim of encouraging our people to use a coaching style in their interaction, extolling the virtues and encouraging the use of self-reflection to aid personal development
- We will introduce formal mentoring programmes to support staff development

5 NFRS AS THE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

Our aim is to attract and sustain a high performing, flexible and skilled workforce that is capable of delivering the expanding community safety agenda of the modern FRS.

We want all of our people to fully understand the purpose of their role and the part they play in the overall purpose of the Service. We want them to enjoy the work that they do, to always give their best, and to work in an organisation where they feel valued.

We want them to have variety in their role and opportunities for development and career progression, whether through promotion, expanding their role, or through continuous learning of new knowledge and skills. We aim to empower our staff and support them in reaching their full potential.

- In recognition of the talents and strengths of our people we will review our current roles and responsibilities in order to provide more opportunities for staff to undertake specialist roles
- We will design new career routes that recognise and support the accelerated development of our high performers
- We will support the continuing professional development of our support services staff through their professional bodies and access to conferences and developmental events

We want all of our people to work in a diverse, supportive environment where all interactions, behaviours and attitudes are aligned to our service values.

- We will ensure that our recruitment processes focus on the expanding role of the FRS, requiring a diverse mix of people capable of delivering a wider range of specialist skills
- We will look to introduce an apprenticeship scheme to help attract a diverse range of people who are interested in a career in the modern day FRS and will be a pipeline for future recruitment to FRS posts
- We will implement processes that support the work of the national standards professional body to ensure our people are developed to agreed professional standards