



# Workforce Planning Strategy 2025-29



# 1. Background

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is committed to making sure that everything we do improves the safety of our communities, seeking to achieve:

Our vision - *Providing exceptional Fire and Rescue Service for all.*

Our mission - *Preventing, protecting and responding to keep communities safe.*

## Our Values

### We have adopted the NFCC Core Code of Ethics:

- Putting our communities first – we put the interest of the public, the community and service users first.
- Integrity – we act with integrity, including being open, honest and consistent in everything we do.
- Dignity and respect – making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.
- Leadership – we are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexibility and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) – We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI both within the FRSs and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

Delivering an excellent service to our communities relies on having people with the capabilities, integrity, commitment and behaviours needed for current and future organisational success.

In light of the evolving environment in which we operate and the need for a workforce that is equipped to support these changes; we are focused on the development of a strong organisational culture based on values and leadership as well as developing a diverse workforce that is more representative of the profile of our local community.

We are committed to delivering high quality public services while ensuring value for money and, as the highest area of spend for any public service, the effective management of our people and skills is a key enabler for this.

We will ensure that we maintain accurate staffing establishment information. We will do this by having a clear understanding of our workforce, and our ability to meet demand -



including the competency/skills profiles to enable meaningful forward planning from both a budgetary and workforce planning perspective.

The aim of the Workforce Plan is to ensure the Service has the right number of people, with the right skills in the right roles, with the right values and behaviours but also that these people have access to the right opportunities, exposure, stretch and development to reach their potential, whether this be in their current role or for a future role.

Workforce planning and succession planning/talent management achieves this objective.



## 2. Introduction

2.1 NFRS recognises that our people are our most valuable asset. This Workforce Planning Strategy sets out how we will fulfil our ambition to attract and retain the very best people by:

- Having a clear understanding of our workforce and our ability to meet demand through in-depth analysis
- Develop our workforce to meet future challenges in an ever-changing environment
- Increasing diversity at all ranks and levels, in collaboration with the Positive Action Team
- All Employees are to have an active development/career plan in place to benefit the performance development review (PDR) and inform succession planning

- Hard-to-recruit, business critical posts are identified, with appropriate succession plans in place for each head of department.
- 2.2 In doing the above we will increase our workforce capacity and capability, investing in and developing a professional, engaged and committed workforce, that is supported and well cared for.
  - 2.3 Led by the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's (OPFCC) Fire and Rescue Plan and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection recommendations and with a flexible approach, workforce planning precedes the supply of resources through data to meet the organisational demand.
  - 2.4 It is key that the workforce strategy prepares the workforce to manage not only the present demand, but also the potential demand in the future – paying attention to the future role that each employee fulfils, be it more digitally enabled or to better reflect the constant change of the national picture. Therefore, in addition to the numbers of staff in the workforce model, workforce planning is also about skills, potential and how these are deployed and organised. As such it links into leadership, development, career and succession planning and organisational development.
  - 2.5 Workforce Planning is a dynamic process and is subject to constant feedback and review through the governance processes. It is to remain relevant in a rapidly changing environment.



### 3. Key Principles

- Attract and retain the very best people.
- Increase our workforce capacity and capability by investing in and developing a professional, engaged and committed workforce, that is supported and well cared for.
- Preparing the workforce to manage not only the present demand, but also the potential demand in the future.
- Utilising our workforce effectively to ensure our commitment to Making Northamptonshire Safer.
- Careful consideration taken of national, regional, and local factors impacting on workforce supply, along with benchmarking against similar Services around the country.
- To increase the overall diversity of the service so that we truly reflect the communities we serve.
- Work closely with L&D to understand, predict and address skills gaps

### 4. Workforce Planning Activity

#### 4.1 Three horizons of Workforce planning:

- Resource Planning – focusing on the current financial year, managing the fluctuations of demand and the natural evolution of the workforce (absence, leavers etc) Sufficient numbers to meet demand
- Operational Workforce Planning - next financial year to ensure a workforce is in place that will achieve the objectives for the coming year, finance – budget planning
- Strategic Workforce Planning – goes beyond the next budget cycle and across multiple years
  - Determine roles of interest and business critical roles
  - Establish current state and historical trends
  - Determine desired forecasting scenarios
  - Perform gap assessments (headcount and skill set) and determine minimum staffing levels
  - Assess and predict future requirements aligning to the emergency cover review.

#### 4.2 The analysis of the workforce includes numbers of employees by rank and grade, skills, attrition rates - taking into account demographic differences within the workforce.



- 4.3 In a fast-paced changing environment, innovation, agility, resilience and aptitude for change are essential to maintain operational effectiveness. Collecting and analysing workforce data provides the information needed to develop capability and identify skill gaps, critical roles by function, skill and knowledge.



## 5. Anticipated changes and challenges to our workforce

NFRS face change and our workforce need to be able to respond to those challenges:

### Political

- Governance
- Legal duty to collaborate
- Continued use of the apprenticeship levy and an apprenticeship target of 2.3% apprenticeship starts per year of headcount within the public sector
- Recruiting a diverse workforce
- To be transparent, accountable and open to scrutiny
- “Broadening the role” of Firefighters and FRS
- HMICFRS inspection regime
- CRMP 2025-28

## Economic

- Establishing appropriate level of “Reserves”
- MTFP
- Financial challenges of other partners may increase the risks associated with the key functions of NFRS

## Sociological

- Last 2 years (April 2022 to March 2024) NFRS attended 905 RTCs. This compares with 809 in the 2 years prior (April 2020 to March 2022). This is an increase of 11.9% for those attended by NFRS
- The community NFRS serves has grown increasingly diverse, in terms of population, age, ethnicity and religion

## Legal

- Increase in climate of litigation
- Outcomes and impact of Public inquiries (Grenfell Tower, Manchester Arena)

## Environmental

- To provide an effective and proportionate response to terrorism
- Climate related incidents - Response to major incidents involving flooding and wildland/rural fires
- 54 flooding incidents in the last 2 years compared with 48 in the 2 years prior (financial years).
- This is an increase of 12.5%



## 6. Deliverables

6.1 Measures of success will be linked back to our aims in the introduction section:

### **Having a clear understanding of our workforce and our ability to meet demand through in-depth analysis:**

By understanding our data, this will enable our decision making to be evidence based and allow us to improve efficiency and embrace future planning to increase the capability of our workforce. It will also support our working methodology, and future planning. Working closely with internal teams to ensure demand is not only met, but that the Establishment of the service is truly reflective of where demand is, is the greatest measure of success.

### **Develop our workforce to meet future challenges in an ever-changing environment:**

Environmental scanning to look at new joining routes, continuous development programmes and the ever-changing environment will ensure that the workforce is able to meet future challenges. We will be under constant review and underpinned by the existing plans and delivery will also be through active development and career planning.

### **Increasing diversity at all ranks and levels, in collaboration with the Positive Action Team:**

By engaging with communities through Positive Action work, we aim to encourage underrepresented groups to apply for roles within the Service.

Positive Action activities will be more internally reflective too, with the team engaged when there are recruitment processes coming up. All employees looking to progress within the service will be offered the opportunity of Positive Action support.

Measures of success will be to be truly reflective of the communities we serve.

### **All employees to have an active development/career plan in place to benefit the performance development review (PDR) and inform succession planning.**

Full utilisation of the PDR (Headlight) system and its capabilities will ensure this aim is met. The future ambition is to link skills matrices to PDR so that prior to internal recruitment or promotions processes, we will be able to quickly assess who holds what skills and how they have set and met any objectives or recorded any personal development to enable this.

### **Hard-to-recruit, business critical posts are identified, with appropriate succession plans in place.**

These critical posts need to be identified and remain under constant review. We need to work closely with the Leadership Development team and utilise skills matrixes in order to ensure appropriate plans are in place to fill these business-critical roles.



## 7. Evaluation of Plan

The Workforce plan will be reviewed regularly in light of changes to the political, economic, sociological, technological, and legal environment. It will also be updated in light of any change projects which impact on the NFRS workforce. Monitoring of the Plan will be via the Fire Workforce Planning Group, reporting to the Chief Officer Team – Strategic Leadership Team (SLT).

Fire Establishment and associated reporting will now be the responsibility of the joint HR Team. The Fire Workforce Planning Group will be chaired by the Area Commander for Response in Fire.





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FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**