



**Enquiries to: Mrs J Head
Telephone: 01768 217734**

Our reference: JH/CSP

Date: 28 January 2025

AGENDA

TO: THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL

CUMBRIA POLICE, FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER'S COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL

A Meeting of the Community Scrutiny Panel (Fire) will take place on **Thursday 6 February 2025** at **2.00 pm** in **The Community Room**, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Carleton Avenue, Penrith, CA10 2FA.

**G Shearer
Chief Executive**

Note: Members are advised that allocated car parking for the meeting is available in the Visitors Car Park to the left of the main Police Headquarters building.

PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Jane Scattergood (Chair)
Eloise Abbott
Andrew Dodd
Meg Masters
Ben Phillips
Alison Ramsey
Shaun Thomson
Penny Walker

AGENDA

PART 1– ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

Members are invited to disclose any personal/prejudicial interest which they may have in any of the items on the Agenda. If the personal interest is a prejudicial interest, then the individual member should not participate in a discussion of the matter and must withdraw from the meeting room unless a dispensation has previously been obtained.

3. URGENT BUSINESS AND EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider (i) any urgent items of business and (ii) whether the press and public should be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of any Agenda item where there is likely disclosure of information exempt under s.100A(4) and Part I Schedule A of the Local Government Act 1972 and the public interest in not disclosing outweighs any public interest in disclosure.

PART 2– ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Number	Agenda Item	Allocated Time
4.	NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & ACTION SHEET To confirm the restricted notes of the meeting of the Community Scrutiny Panel held on 07 November 2024 (copy enclosed).	5 minutes
5.	CORPORATE UPDATE To receive a corporate briefing from Fire Lead Paul Hancock and the OPFCC Chief Executive Gill Shearer	10 minutes
6.	INFORMATION MANAGEMENT To receive a copy of the data review report and to note a report by Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service on their compliance with Data Protection Legislation	5 minutes
7.	HR UDATES To receive a report providing updates on: (i) Employee Absences (ii) DBS Checks (iii) HMICFRS Spotlight Report on Misconduct	10 minutes

8.	<p>CULTURE AND DIVERSITY To be provided with the following documents and receive comments from the Panel members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy (ii) Culture and Values Board (iii) People Strategy (iv) Gender Pay Gap Report 	15 minutes
9.	<p>FIRE EMPLOYEES To receive a report on the Fire Service's employee establishment and recruitment programme.</p>	10 minutes
10.	<p>RIGHT CARE, RIGHT PERSON To receive a report outlining the impact of Right Care, Right Person on the Fire and Rescue Service</p>	5 minutes
11.	<p>2024 ANNUAL REPORT To consider and agree the Panel's annual report for 2024 - <i>OPFCC Governance Manager</i></p>	5 minutes



Agenda Item No 04

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL

Notes of a meeting of the Community Scrutiny Panel (Fire) held on Thursday 7 November 2024, The Community Room, Fire HQ at 10.15 am

PRESENT

Jane Scattergood (Chair)
Andrew Dodd
Meg Masters
Ben Phillips
Alison Ramsey
Shaun Thomson
Penny Walker

Also present:

T/Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ian Seel
Head of People and Talent – Kristine Ward
HR Manager – Jemma Taylor
Head of Safety and Assurance – Mark Clement
Resourcing, Talent and Wellbeing Lead – Orlanda Wright
OPFCC Chief Executive – Gill Shearer
OPFCC Governance Manager - Joanne Head

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and ask that everyone introduce themselves.

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies from Eloise Abbott were received.

37. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of personal interest regarding any agenda item.

38. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business to be considered by the Panel.

39. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on Thursday 5 September 2024 previously circulated with the agenda were agreed.



AGREED; that the notes of the meeting held on 5 September 2024 were agreed.

40. CORPORATE UPDATE

T/Assistant Seel briefed the panel on work being carried out by Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service.

The Service recently held its People awards in Kendal at which the contributions of staff from the past year were recognised. The event was attended by the PFCC and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant to recognise the skill and dedication of staff that often goes unnoticed.

Since the last meeting the Fire and Rescue Service had been called to a number of major incidents within the county. This include an accident on the M6 motorway where 5 people lost their lives and which required 7 crews to attend during the incident. Support was in place for those firefighters who attended the incident.

A large fire at BAE Systems in Barrow had seen CFRS crews support the BAE fire crews. A strategic co-ordination group had been set up and ongoing support was being provided to the investigation. A member asked what hazards the service had encountered when attending the incident. ACFO Seel advised that it was not essential that they knew the composition of some of the materials and chemicals rather what risk or hazard it could present to individuals dealing with the fire and making sure that these were actively managed.

The services was currently reviewing and reflecting on the findings of the Grenfell Phase 2 report. ACFO Seel advised members that the measurement for a tall building had now reduced from 18 metres to 11 metres. This had resulted in 2 additional buildings within the county falling into this category and would also be monitored.

The Chief Fire Officer had recently had a pre-planned operation and was still recovering. The service continued to be receive executive leadership support from Mr Paul Hancock on a part time basis.

Preparation continues to take place for the forthcoming HMICFRS inspection in the New Year. A significant piece of work was being carried out to align their Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) to corporate strategies and publish annual delivery plans, bringing together the financial requirements to deliver objectives within allocated budgets.

At the recent NFCC Autumn Conference, Dame Diane Johnson the Minister of State for Fire and Policing gave an update on the HM Government's direction of travel in regard to Fire. An overriding priority of the government is to consider the recommendations of the Grenfell report and ensure they are implemented quickly. To do this they are considering whether fire should remain in the Home Office or move to DCLG where responsibility for a number of the Grenfell recommendations will lie.



Funding for Services and the possible creation of a national College of Fire were also priorities that were highlighted in the previous white paper and which the government have promised to make an announcement on in the near future. These issues will have a significant impact on the viability of services and their direction of travel of the next few years.

The OPFCC Chief Executive provided a corporate update to the Panel. The Commissioner was keen to progress further joint working between the OPFCC, Police and Fire to maximise efficiencies. Work was progressing with the joint estate with 10 fire sites being upgraded to provide appropriate facilities. Links between fire and police procurement was being developed to provide a template for joint working.

The Commissioner was awaiting the 2025/26 financial settlement which should be provided by mid-December. Work would then progress to understand how this affected budgets, with council tax precept consultation taking place towards the end of December and early January 2025.

AGREED; that, the updates be noted;

42. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Head of Safety and Assurance guided members through the CFRS Information Management Compliance report which had been circulated to the Panel prior to the meeting. In the first six months of 2024/25 CFRS had received 48 FOI requests and had a 65% compliance rate to the 28 day deadline which fell short of the ICO recommended 90%. This was attributed to some requests looking for information which was held by the unitary councils and took time to receive. He reassured the Panel that where it was anticipated that the deadline would not be met, they corresponded with the requestor to advise them. Work was also being carried out to publish information the website in an effort to avoid FOI requests being received.

The OPFCC Chief Executive recommended that correspondence should be quicker with the requestors rather than waiting until the deadline was reached. She also suggested that work be carried out as part of contract management regarding the Service Level Agreements (SLA's) with the unitaries to ensure information was provided in a timely manner.

One Subject Access Request (SAR) had been received by the service. This had involved a lot of work which required a significant amount of redaction. The service had taken learning from the ICO and now had a standardised template on its website to assist anyone making a SAR request. They had also purchased redaction software to speed up the redacting process.

CFRS is a statutory consultee on planning applications which are made through the two unitary authorities. Response to these requests is 14 days and within the first six months of the year the service had responded to 247 applications with a timescale compliance rate of 94.1%. They had also responded to 106 licensing applications within the timescales on 95.1% of occasions.



The Panel Chair asked that more detail be provided in future reports to assist the Panel to understand the issues and compliance of the service.

A member asked whether the service was influenced by political or commercial pressures when providing safety advice for communities. The ACFO assured members that the service was firmly in the public duty arena and often saw agendas by companies to promote products giving a false perspective. Within legislation the service have to provide community safety advice and they would, utilising the National Fire Council's advice, all of which was in the public interest.

Previously Cumbria County Council had provided the SIRO service and following the disaggregation of CFRS had carried out work to identify a training package which they had developed to be specific to the Fire and Rescue Service. This would be rolled out to staff and members were assured that this would be mandatory for staff.

AGREED; that,
(i) the report be noted;
(ii) more detail be provided in future reports

43. CIVIL CLAIMS

The Panel were provided with a report which illustrated the number of civil claims which CFRS were currently or had previously dealt with. Since 2010 there had been a total of 23 claims against the service of which 50% had been successful with a total pay out of £294k. Members sought and were given assurance that the service had insurance to enable them to deal with such claims rather than any monies having to come out of budgets.

There were currently three live claims which were being dealt with through solicitors and the service's insurance company. CFRS reviewed the claims on a quarterly basis and ensured that any identified issues or lessons learned were promulgated to all firefighters and staff where necessary. The Head of People and Talent advised that the HR department also worked closing with the Senior Leadership Team in relation to claims.

The OPFCC Chief Executive asked that future reports contain more information regarding the live cases, particularly identifying any trends, themes or issues. The Panel were advised that when the Fire Watch system was installed this would then able the service to track both HR and Health and Safety cases with the ability to provide information and data to the service.

During a discussion regarding benchmarking against other fire and rescue services, the Panel were advised that this was not possible. A member suggested that the insurance company would probably be able to give a good steer on the potential values of claims and the Head of Safety and Assurance confirmed that the Health and Safety Manager worked closely with the insurance providers.



- AGREED;** that,
- (i) the report be noted;
 - (ii) more detail be provided in future reports

44. MISCONDUCT AND WORKFORCE COMPLAINTS

The HR Manager presented a report which illustrated misconduct and workforce complaint cases which had been dealt with in the past six months. The workplace complaints procedure had been refreshed and combined bullying, harassment and grievance procedures to make it easier for staff to raise concerns or issues.

In the reporting period there had been 13 disciplinary cases and 3 workforce complaints. Two of the Panel members had carried out a dip sample of all the cases prior to the meeting. It had been identified that there were gaps with the EDI data for staff. A member asked whether staff not divulging information was a silent measure on how comfortable people felt. This was attributed to previously the County Council requesting the information and it was hoped that with the new system and as staff knew and were more confident with the service's HR department that more accurate EDI data would be captured to accurately reflect the make-up of the workforce.

The two Panel members who had carried out the dip sample session provided feedback. They reported that all the cases had been dealt with in a timely and professional manner. The use of an external investigator had produced clear and concise reports, providing consistency for the service.

The service was currently consulting on moving to one procedure for all CFRS staff rather than the current two. It was felt that the change would make it easier to work across the workforce.

Members were keen to learn if training was to be provided to managers who had to deal with complaints or misconduct. Due to the small numbers and length of service of staff it was difficult to keep skills up to date. The Head of People and Talent advised that work was being carried out to develop training for managers and would utilise case studies to tease out learning and experience. The dip sample had been done via staff's laptops and enable the members to view all the documents and actions taken for each of the cases.

It was noted that HMICFRS had recommended a Professional Standards function within the service and members asked what CFRS were looking at and how this would be funded. The service had looked at a number of options and recommendations were being made to the Senior Leadership Team the following week. The recommendation was to have an external person with previous HR experience appointed to the service for 1 day per month. This would be reviewed regularly and potentially HMICFRS would identify a way to standardise this element across the sector.

Members asked for the HMICFRS inspection report on misconduct handling to be circulated and an update be provided to the next Panel Meeting.



AGREED; that,
(i) the report be noted;
(ii) the HMICFRS report be circulated and an update provided to the next Panel meeting.

45. RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTIONS BOARD UPDATE

The Resourcing, Talent and Wellbeing Lead guided members through a report which provided an overview of the recruitment and promotion processes the service had carried out. She advised that work was being carried out to combine corporate and operational recruitment into one policy to enable consistency across the workforce.

Work had taken place on how recruitment processes were carried out including anonymising personal candidate information to remove any bias, thereby ensuring standards. It was important to embrace diversity to enhance the service and elements which were causing barriers to individuals were being looked at and developed for the future. Where age was a factor with on-call firefighters the service could look to assign them to particular tasks, such as driver only, where physical fitness was an issue.

A member asked whether existing staff were working to encourage individuals to join the service. The Head of People and Talent advised that as many whole time and on-call firefighters lived in local communities many of them were encouraging others to join the service. It was important to get a balance of viewpoints to promote the service and HR were working to ensure this happened.

Members raised concerns about internal recruitment not enabling new talent to enter an organisation. They were assured that although the last round of recruitment had been internal focused in line with a HMICFRS recommendation, there were a lot of new people and transferees who had been successful which enabled new approaches or experiences to be brought into the service.

AGREED; that the report be noted.

46. 2025 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME, MEETING & DIP SAMPLE DATES

The OPFCC Governance Manager provided the proposed 2025 annual work programme, meeting and dip sample dates to the Panel. The work programme identified the cyclical reports which were to be presented to the Panel and enabled capacity for the Panel to review or dip sample areas of work identified by either the Commissioner, Police or CFRS.

ACFO Seel was eager to use the Panel to review areas of work prior to the next HMICFRS inspection and this would be programmed in for the beginning of 2025.

AGREED; that the report, work programme and meeting dates be approved.



The Chair wished to take the opportunity to thank the Head of People and Talent for her support to the Panel and wished her well in her new role.

Meeting ended at 12:10 pm

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
Panel Chair

DRAFT

Community Scrutiny Panel – (Fire) Action Sheet: 07/11/2024

Agenda Item No 04b

Minute Number / Topic	Action to be taken	Person responsible OPFCC / Force	Report back to Panel	Date action completed	Review Date
DATE OF MEETING: 08 May 2024					
Employee Absences	Future reports to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The top 5 causes of absence and how the service was supporting or mitigating them • Average absence figures including any targets which are set by the service. • Age and gender – these may also assist in mapping attrition for the service. • Details of support provision, changes to policy or procedures 	Kristine Ward	November 2024 Deferred to February 2025		
DATE OF MEETING: 05 September 2024					
Home Fire Safety Visits	(i) Alternative wording be considered within the Prevention Strategy when referring to fatalities. (ii) Panel members be afforded the opportunity to accompany fire staff when carrying out HFVS to gain first-hand experience.	Lauren Woodward	November 2024 / February 2025		
DBS Checks	Panel be updated on the outcomes of the next tranche of DBS checks.	Kristine Ward	February 2025		
DATE OF MEETING: 07 November 2024					
Information Management	More detail to be provided in future reports to enable the Panel to understand the issues and compliance of the service	Mark Clement	February 2025		
Civil Claims	Future reports contain more information regarding the live cases, particularly identifying any trends, themes or issues.	Mark Clement	May 2025		

Community Scrutiny Panel – (Fire) Action Sheet: 07/11/2024

Minute Number / Topic	Action to be taken	Person responsible OPFCC / Force	Report back to Panel	Date action completed	Review Date
HMICFRS Thematic Inspection	(i) A copy of the HMICFRS report into misconduct handling and the gap analysis to be provided to the Panel; (ii) An update on the work being carried out provided to the next Panel meeting .	Kristine Ward	February 2025		

CFRS Corporate Update

Date: 6 February 2025

Agenda Item : 05a

Originating Officer : Paul Hancock

1 Purpose of Report

To provide the committee with an overview of recent local and national issues affecting Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS).

2 Local Issues

2.1 Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Recruitment

Following an open and competitive recruitment process, Paul Hancock has been selected by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner as the preferred candidate for the role of CFO. The appointment is subject to ratification by the Police Fire and Crime Panel on 31 January 2025.

2.2 Major Incidents

Over recent months, CFRS has attended several major incidents that have made national headlines. These include:

- Multiple fatality road traffic collision on the M6 motorway
- Fire at BAE Systems, Barrow in Furness
- Fatal fire in Kirkby Lonsdale
- Gas Explosion in Whitehaven

The response and actions of operational crews were effective and instrumental in dealing with the incidents, all of which presented their own unique challenges.

Post incident, crews were supported by specialist and prevention teams who provided technical advice and public reassurance and safety messages.

The operational response and post incident actions have received significant praise from local communities and partner agencies.

2.4 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

The authority's CRMP, which sets out the service's strategic direction for the next four years (2024-28), has recently been reviewed and aligned to the PFCC's new Police, Fire and Crime Plan (2025-29).

The PFCC's Police, Fire and Crime Plan, which outlines 13 objectives for Fire, was officially launched on 8 January 2025.

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To support delivery of the CRMP, an operational fire cover review has been commissioned. The review will consider a wide range of risk and historical response and incident data and will inform future prevention, protection and response strategies and models.

Furthermore, outcomes of the review will inform the authority's MTFP and future savings programme.

3 National Issues

3.1 Budget Settlement

In December 2024 the government published the financial settlement for fire and rescue authorities for 2025-26. Cumbria fared worse nationally (England) regarding its overall spending power (1%). Consequently, this presents challenges to the authority's 2025-26 budget and medium-term financial plan (MTFP).

The authority's budget for 2025-26, including a proposed increase to the council tax precept, will be presented to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on 31 January 2025.

3.2 Road Safety

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has called for further action, including clearer strategies and a consultation on expanded statutory duties, to tackle road deaths and injuries across the UK.

Fire and rescue services (FRSs) find themselves responding to an increasing number of road traffic collisions (RTCs) every year. However, statutory responsibilities are limited to preparing for and responding to RTCs and the NFCC is calling on government to consult on expanding their responsibilities to reflect the wide-ranging prevention activities FRSs deliver. These include educational campaigns and programmes encouraging people to become safer road users.

3.3 His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

HMICFRS has recently commenced its Round 3 inspection of CRFS, which will conclude with feedback to the chief fire officer and commissioner on 7 March 2025.

The service has completed a self-assessment against the key lines of enquiry (KLOES) and shared a significant number of documents – including strategies and plans - with the inspection team.

A timetable has also been drafted and approved, which details the staff and partners the inspection will interview over the course of the next ten weeks. Several focus groups have also been identified to take part in the interviews and fieldwork stage of the inspection.

It is anticipated that the final written report, detailing the inspectorate's judgements and gradings against the 11 inspection areas, will be published in May/June 2025.

Paul Hancock



Community Scrutiny Panel

Title: OPFCC Corporate Update

Date of Meeting: 6 February 2025

Agenda Item No: 05b

Originating Officers: Gill Shearer, OPFCC Chief Executive

This update provides the Community Scrutiny Panel with a headline summary of recent developments within the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

1. **New Police, Fire & Crime Plan**

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner launched his four-year Police, Fire and Crime Plan on 8 January 2025. The Plan incorporates both Policing and Fire priorities, sets out the public's key priorities and details how the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) will work with the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer to keep our county safe. The Plan assists the PFCC in holding both Services to account.

2 **Public Accountability Conferences**

The Commissioner held two public accountability conferences on 20 January 2025 where he held the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer to account for the provision of policing and fire services within Cumbria.

In relation Cumbria Constabulary he focused on domestic abuse; drugs and serious organised crime; and firearms licensing. For Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service the meeting focused on their People Strategy, Workforce Planning; and a thematic on Accidental Primary Dwelling fires.

3 **Council Tax Precept – Police and Fire & Rescue Service**

In December the Commissioner launched a consultation with the residents of Cumbria to find out their views and willingness to pay more towards Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and Cumbria Constabulary. Following the policing settlement

the Commissioner is seeking a rise of 4p/day (£13.95 a year) for a band D property to help tackle anti-social behaviour and crime affecting communities.

The settlement for Fire was lower than expected and this has meant that the Commissioner is asking for an increase of 9.5p/week (£4.95 a year) for a band D property to invest in new technologies and ensure future generations are kept safe.

The Commissioner will present his council tax precept proposals to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on 31 January 2025; where they will decide whether or not to approve his proposals.

4 **Community Fund**

The Commissioner opened his Community Fund in December 2024 and invited members of the public and community groups to run local initiatives and projects that have a specific focus on reducing issues associated with anti-social behaviour and crime. Applications can access grants up to a value of £2,500.

5. **Chief Fire Officer**

Following the ill-health retirement of the Chief Fire Officer in December 2024, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner carried out a recruitment process in December/early January 2025. Following a robust shortlisting and interview process the Commissioner, supported by an Appointment Panel, selected their preferred candidate.

A confirmation hearing before the Police, Fire and Crime Panel is set for 31 January 2025.

CFRS Information Management Compliance

Date : February 2025

Agenda Item : 06

Originating Officer : Mark Clement

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 As a public authority, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) is required to comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and respond to information requests within the statutory timescale. It is also required to process personal data lawfully and respond to 'subject access requests' within the statutory timescales specified within the Data Protection Act 2018. This report provides an update on the levels of compliance achieved by the Service in respect of responses provided to freedom of information and subject access requests.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the members of the panel note the report,

3 Introduction

- 3.1 As a public authority, CFRS is required to comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. These requirements include the right of an individual to ask whether specified information is held by the Service and, if that is the case, to be provided with that information, subject to the applicability of relevant exemptions. With limited exceptions, the Act requires that a response to a request is provided within 20 working days of a request being received.
- 3.2 CFRS is also obliged to ensure that it complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. These requirements include a provision for an applicant to request access to personal data which may be held about them. A response to a 'subject access request, as the right of access is commonly known as, is required to be provided within 1 calendar month, although this can be extended in limited circumstances by a further 2 months.
- 3.3 The Information Commissioner has indicated that an acceptable level of compliance for public authorities to meet, for both freedom of information and subject access requests, is 90% of requests closed within the statutory timescales.

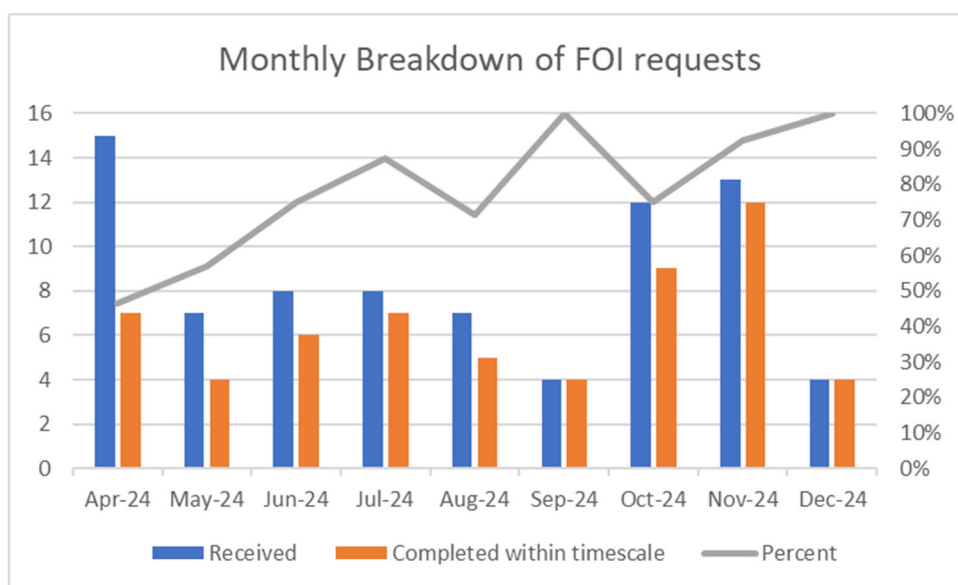


- 3.4 Within CFRS the Head of Transformation acts as the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO). All FOI and SAR requests are processed by an Information Governance Officer and signed off by the Information Governance Lead.
- 3.5 Currently all Information Security services, such as penetration testing or Server security are delivered through Cumberland Council as part of the Service Level Agreement.

4 Issues for consideration

Freedom of Information Requests

- 4.1 Historically (Pre April 2023) all FOI requests were processed by Cumbria County Council, and those that related to functions that were historically delivered by the Council such as Finance, IT or Estates were responded to, often without the Services knowledge.
- 4.2 In the first nine months of the 2024/25 financial year, CFRS has received 78 FOI requests, and of those it has met the 20 day deadline on 74% of occasions, a 10% improvement on the six months figure. The main reasons for delay in meeting the deadline are sourcing information from the two local authorities and the limited resource available to service requests.



- 4.3 The FOIs have covered a wide range of subjects, however we have received several about our fleet, Lithium ion battery fires and requests for sensitive contract information.
- 4.4 On a number of occasions we have taken advice from the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) and refused to release information. There has been one successful challenge to a decision taken by the DPO, and further data is being released to the individual.

Subject Access Requests

- 4.5 Since April 2024, the Service has received one SAR.
- 4.6 This was in regard to a promotion process in which an external applicant was not offered a role within Service
- 4.7 The SAR was responded to within one month, however the requestee has come back several times for further clarification and we are currently working through these.
- 4.8 The Service has introduced a form on its website to standardise any further SAR requests, and purchased redaction software..

Planning Requests

- 4.9 CFRS is a statutory consultee on planning applications that go through the two new local authorities.
- 4.10 The time required to respond to a planning application is 14 days, in the first six months of the year we have responded to 359 applications and met the target on 94.9% of occasions
- 4.11 In a similar fashion we have responded to 143 licensing applications and met the target on 95.8% of occasions

5 Other Considerations

- 5.1 The Service has created a training needs analysis in regard to information governance. This identifies different levels of training need from front line firefighter through to the SIRO.
- 5.2 Whilst a number of different officers within Service have received varying levels of training, the Service is aware of the need to embed consistent systems and processes that allow it to meet all its statutory responsibilities under Freedom of Information and GDPR.
- 5.3 An online training package has been developed in partnership with the Local Authority and this is being rolled out across the Service.
- 5.4 Following a resignation the Service has run a recruitment process and is in the process of appointing a new information governance officer.
- 5.5 Financial transparency information is now available on the Service website which has speeded up responding to FOIs for this type of information.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 In the first nine months of 2024/25 CFRS has responded to a variety of requests for information. Our level of compliance for both SARs and Planning requests meets the legislative requirements..

6.2 We have had some issues in responding to FOIs largely due to the level of resource within Service. Given the similarity of a number of FOIs being received, we are currently exploring the option of publishing all FOI responses online, in an attempt to reduce the burden.

Mark Clement

Head of Safety and Assurance, Mark.clement@cumbriafire.gov.uk

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service

HR Updates

Date: 6 February 2025

Agenda Item : 07

Originating Officer : Jemma Taylor / Helen Clark, HR Managers

This report provides updates for the Panel on the following areas of business:

- Employee Absences
- DBS Checks
- HMICFRS Spotlight Report on Misconduct

1. Employee Absences

Top 5 absence reasons over the past 12 months:

Absence reason	Service Mitigation
1. Infection and Virus; e.g. Flu, Coughs and Colds	Encourage consideration of flu jab Linked to seasonal trends
2. Musculoskeletal-Lower Limb and Feet; e.g. Leg/Knee/Ankle/Foot	Fitness Instructors in house (looking to increase capacity) Support from FF Charity Virtual sessions (prevention, managing pain etc) New absence policy launching w.c 27 January
3. Musculoskeletal-Upper Limb; e.g. Shoulder/Arm/Hand/Wrist	As above Free weights available in stations
4. Musculoskeletal-Neck, Back and Hip	As above
5. Mental Health (excludes Stress); e.g. depression/anxiety/low mood/bereavement	Development of mental health app (currently with Apple designers) Promotion of wellbeing calendar (copy attached for 2024, 2025 is under development to launch February 2025) Self-referral for counselling MH working group MH First Aiders Menopause sessions

Implementation of the mental health app has stalled slightly as it remains with Apple developers, the Resourcing, Talent and Wellbeing Team Lead continues to chase.

Making Cumbria a safer place for all



Our Occupational Health Service is currently a hosted arrangement (led by Westmorland and Furness), the SLA is currently being reviewed and has been extended to October 2025 with options being considered for future arrangements.

The Community Scrutiny Panel carried out a dip sample of our absence cases in April 2024. Key points of feedback were captured as follows:

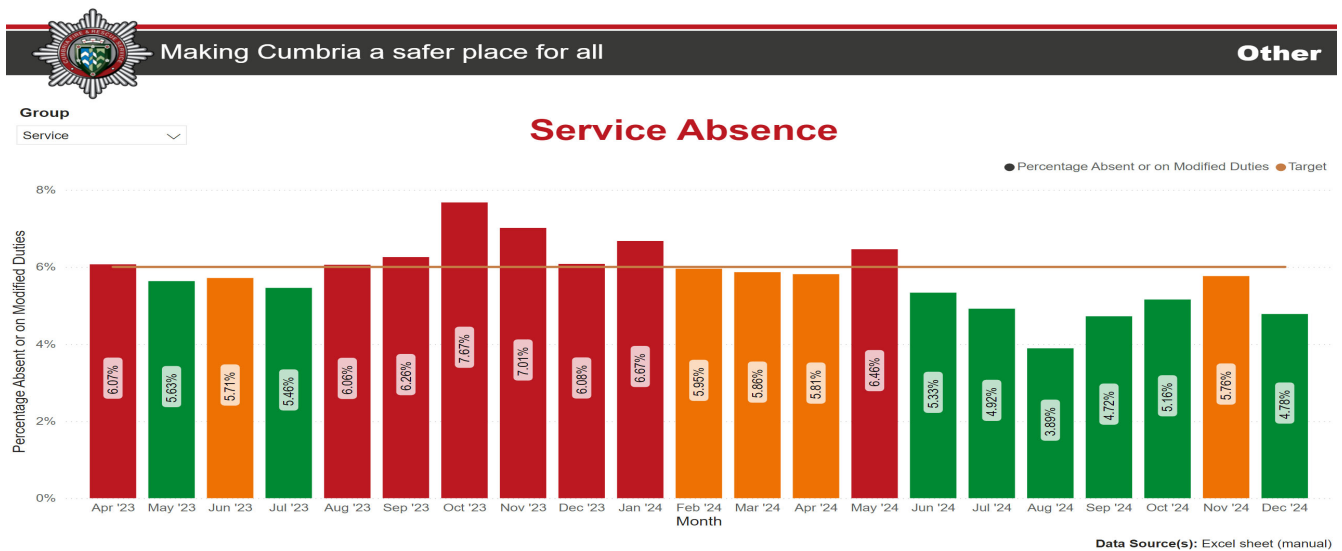
- Lack of supporting paperwork
- Documents missing from files
- Panel were assured process is being followed
- Panel acknowledged differing management styles
- Suggestion of a mandatory absence e-learning to be developed
- Panel would support move to 1 procedure favouring grey book
- Would like to see some form of 2-way comms showing employee has understood / accepts notes are accurate etc

Action taken following feedback:

- Absence for both corporate and grey book now sits within one policy (due to launch w.c 27 January)
- Absence management training is scheduled during 2025
- HR team are contacting line managers to address gaps in files
- HR team have developed a checklist for managers

Other points to note:

- Regular absence case clinics are held chaired by ACFO with HR and line manager attending to provide updates on the case
- Current target for absence is 6% which is being maintained, absence figures are improving and have been sat below 6% for the past 6 months. We are due to review the absence target in April 2025 as part of our KPIs
- The way our absence information is currently recorded within trent does not enable us to readily interrogate the data into age or gender. We hope to improve reporting functionality as we move towards our new HR system (Firewatch) in July 2025



2. DBS checks

The Team have undergone a quality assurance process to ensure all staff have now been fully checked. Our master spreadsheet is updated each month with leavers removed. There were 29 individuals for whom risk assessments have been completed. All 29 were successfully signed off by Head of P&T and Head of Safety & Assurance.

We now move towards phase 2 of the DBS project and how to manage renewals. SLT have considered 3 options for processing our 3 yearly renewals. Namely: considering whether to check front line operational staff before corporate. Carrying out checks on a station-by-station basis and finally, on date order basis. The preferred option is to complete checks from date order of last check for all staff member whether operational or corporate.

Benefits:

- Checks sent out around the 3-year renewal date, everyone will be done in a timely manner if we start from the date of their last DBS check, new members of staff will be done every 3 years which will be more cost effective to the service.
- People will not have unnecessary re-checks done before the 3 year period or go over 3 years without a check being re-started.

Risk:

- The risk is low as everyone will be renewed in accordance with their previously completed DBS check.

The 3 yearly renewal process will commence in 2026 and the HR Team will develop a comms plan for staff closer to this date. In the meantime, new starters will continue to have DBS checks as part of pre-employment checks.

3. HMICFRS spotlight report on misconduct

An update is provided on all 15 recommendations and has been rated as follows:

Green – completed Amber / Yellow – in hand Red – further action needed

Recommendation	Action Taken
Recommendation 1 By February 2025 all CFO's must make sure all staff are aware of core code of ethics and it is embeded into policies and procedures	CFRS have adopted the NFCC Core code of ethics. It is displayed within the majority of meeting rooms, on corporate screen savers and thread into our policies and procedures
Recommendation 2 By 1 February 2025 CFO's should make sure a probationary policy is in place. The policy should make clear that probationers can be dismissed if	CFRS probation policy has been reviewed and includes reference to our core code of ethics. We have included the following: There are some further amendments needed

<p>standards of behaviour in the core code of ethics are not met</p>	<p>following feedback from Trade Unions and the policy will be taken back to our next Joint Consultative Group for approval on 19 February 2025.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 by 1 May 2025 CFO's should make sure staff can be moved from a wholetime watch to a different watch or station. FFs who are promoted for 2 months or more should move to a different watch or station.</p>	<p>CFRS Workforce Development Group are tasked with staff moves and have this in mind when working through staff changes so staff can be placed appropriately.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4 by 1 February 2025 should have access to a dedicated professional standards function to oversee investigation of concerns</p>	<p>Initial scoping meeting took place on 7th January and a Terms of Reference is being drafted. The first Professional Standards Board meeting is scheduled to take place 29th January 2025. The plan moving forwards will be to engage the services of an independent HR consultant to periodically review cases throughout the year.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 by 1 November 2024 CFOs should ensure staff know how to raise a concern, grievance or whistleblowing issue. CFO's should make sure staff know how concerns will be treated with confidentiality and know the difference as to how to raise different concerns</p>	<p>The HR Team have developed a poster 'how to raise a concern' which is displayed in every station. There have been articles featured in Status Magazine and Weekly Update. Posters detailing our independent reporting line via Crimestoppers are also displayed on station with stickers on the back of bathroom doors featuring a QR code. Whistleblowing and grievance procedures have been reviewed and now form one Workplace Complaints Procedure to make it easier for staff to raise an issue. This is live and published on the CFRS website. Feedback from the staff survey shows our staff know how to raise a concern and the different routes available. 56.6% of staff agreed they knew how to raise a complaint or concern with 25.47% strongly agreeing</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 by 1 February 2025 CFO's should have a programme of training in place for managers around</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff welfare and absence management - Managing individual performance, addressing poor performance and potential misconduct issues 	<p>HR training plan is in place and ongoing throughout 2025 (please see attached)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to handle difficult conversations and resolve informally - Clarifying the role of HR in helping managers address issues 	
<p>Recommendation 7 by 1 May 2025 CFOs should make sure policies for misconduct are consistent for all staff and by 1 August 2025 this should be the same regardless of terms and conditions</p>	<p>Disciplinary procedure has been reviewed and new policy incorporating both operational and corporate staff has undergone TU consultation. We are hoping to launch the revised procedure w.c 27 January 2025</p>
<p>Recommendation 8 by 1 November 2024 CFOs should ensure all allegations of misconduct are handled in a consistent way and staff have confidence in processes. CFOs should carry out a full review of cases including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How they monitor and manage investigations - Maintain accurate records and - Adhere to required timescales 	<p>Review of the misconduct process was presented to SLT on 12th November 2024. Setting up the Professional Standards Board will include reviews of investigations, records and timescales as part of the case reviews.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9 by 1 August 2025 CFOs should introduce a case management system if they don't already have one. The system should allow data to be produced to help them better understand and oversee cases</p>	<p>The HR Team currently have a casework tracker in place by means of an excel spreadsheet. The team update regularly. CFRS are developing a new HR system 'Firewatch' which will include a case management system. This is expected to launch in July 2025 and will eventually replace the casework tracker</p>
<p>Recommendation 10 by 1 May 2025 CFOs should ensure they have enough capacity to carry out misconduct investigations. They should consider external investigators to support the process if needed</p>	<p>CFRS already have access to an external IO who carries out complex investigations or those where a degree of impartiality is needed. 3 training sessions have been provided to internal Investigating Officers, with another session planned for end of January</p>
<p>Recommendation 11 by 1 May 2025 CFOs should review the training offered to managers who carry out investigations. CFO's should make sure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All staff who carry out investigations receive adequate training - A programme of refresher training and ongoing support is available to maintain competence - It is clear how services HR provision, staff associations and any trade 	<p>The HR Team delivered IO training on 17 July, 10 September and 17 September in 2024. Further training has been advertised for 23 January 2025 with plans to create an e-mail group for IOs to maintain engagement. Roles and responsibilities are discussed within the training.</p>

<p>union representative or fellow employee will support the investigation process</p>	
<p>Recommendation 12 with immediate effect CFOs should make sure all staff are aware of the welfare support, including OH that is available to support staff involved in misconduct processes. CFOs should encourage all staff involved to access this support whether they are an alleged perpetrator, complaint, witness or decision-maker. Welfare support should be independent of the investigation and have been appropriately trained</p>	<p>Staff have access to a self-referral system for counselling via OH which can be arranged without the need to go via their immediate line manager. Welfare Officers are allocated where necessary and have access to a guidance document / support from HR Team</p>
<p>Recommendation 13 by 1 November 2024 FRAs and CFOs should consider varying the approach to hearing appeals so that appeals for complex or serious cases are heard by a panel rather than one person.</p>	<p>Appeal panels for dismissal appeals is being incorporated into the new disciplinary and absence procedures. The Professional Standards function will review cases to ensure consistent approaches are being taken. The Professional Standards function will review cases to ensure consistent approaches are being taken.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14 By 1 February 2025 FRAs and CFOs should make sure all those who hear appeals have appropriate training. CFOs should make sure there is a consistent approach to appeals</p>	<p>'How to chair a hearing' is covered within the HR training plan (attached).</p>
<p>Recommendation 15 by 1 February 2025 CFOs should put in a process for sharing learning from misconduct cases that have been resolved whilst preserving the confidentiality of all parties involved. Any learning should feed into the national system, when established</p>	<p>The HR Team already have a 'lessons learned' approach after each key case (absence excluded) key personnel involved with the case review and identify learning points or actions which need to be taken forward as a result. The Professional Standards function will also be able to identify and suggest areas for improvement.</p>

CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



HR TRAINING PROGRAMME 2024/2025

The following table identifies the areas where training may be beneficial to those colleagues who have input or responsibility.

Workshop	Content	Who for	Provider	Proposed Dates
Investigations	Purpose of investigations, including the legal framework Roles & responsibilities Structure and techniques of investigations Evaluating evidence Privacy Presenting a report Role of an Investigating Officer (IO) at hearings/ appeals	Current IOs Managers interested in becoming an IO (Watch Manager or above for Grey Book)	HR Team	23 January 2025 10.00 Carlisle East
Managing Absence	More detailed introduction to the policies (green & grey book) Absence prevention & early intervention	Anybody responsible for absence management	HR Team (Toria)	24th March 2025 – Ulverston 10:00 – 12:00 Community Room 1st May 2025 – Carlisle East 10:00-12:00 Community Room 9th June 2025 – Penrith 10:00 – 12:00 Community Room 15th July - Workington 10:00 – 12:00 Community Room
Workplace Complaints (full process)	Introduction to the policy Informal resolution Holding a hearing	All managers	HR Team (Toria)	15th July – Workington 13:00 – 15:00 Community

Agenda Item No 07b

Workshop	Content	Who for	Provider	Proposed Dates
	Delivering an outcome Record keeping			Room
Workplace Concerns (informal stages)	Introduction to policy Informal resolution Difficult conversations	Crew and watch managers & first line managers	HR Team (Torja)	24th March 2025 – Ulverston 13:00 – 14:00 Community Room 1st May 2025 – Carlisle East 13:00-14:00 Community Room 9th June 2025 – Penrith 13:00 – 14:00 Community Room
Sexual Harassment in the Workplace	E-learning module with L&D for development	All	HR Team (Jelen)	Due to launch November 2024
Chairing a Hearing	Preparing for a hearing Holding a hearing Hearing outcomes and next steps	Any managers who may need to chair a formal HR Hearing	HR Team (Jelen)	20 March 2025 10.00 – 11.30 – Community Room Carlisle East 17 April 2025 10.00 – 11.30 Kemplay Bank Penrith
DBS ELearning	Why DBS checks are completed DBS Check Process Demonstration of the electronic system	All	ELearning (Janine)	Due to launch February 2025
Disciplinary stage 3 Refresher	Holding a hearing Responding to professional challenge Delivering an outcome Record keeping	Area Managers for grey book	HR Team (Jelen)	18 June 2025 14.00 -15.00 Kemplay Bank, Penrith

Agenda Item No 07b

Workshop	Content	Who for	Provider	Proposed Dates
Whistleblowing / Speak Up / How to raise concern / make a complaint	How to access and use policies should the need arise	All	HR (Jelen) Lunch & Learn sessions	Via MS Teams 8 July 2025, 11.00 – 12.00 15 July 2025 11.00 – 12.00
Fact find meeting	When to do a fact find Process of a fact find Next steps following the fact find	All Managers	HR Team (Emily) Lunch & Learn sessions	19 December 2024 13.30 – 14.30 Teams session 9 January 2025 13.00 – 14.00 Teams session

Wellbeing Calendar 2024

AUGUST 2024
Focus on Retirement Wellbeing

Come Along...

Free virtual session with the Firefighters Charity on **Tues 20th August at 10.30am** on Wellbeing into Retirement. All are welcome to join. For details on how to join, please email Orlanda Wright, on **orlanda.wright@cumbriafire.gov.uk**

Launching this month...

The Retirees Wellbeing Pack

To support the transition into retirement for all staff.

Look out for...

Wellbeing support for soon-to-be Retirees or anyone considering retirement in Weekly Update.

Also, posters for the Firefighter sessions will be sent to all stations.

Get involved...

Did you know we have a **Retiree Staff Network Group?**

SEPTEMBER 2024
Musculoskeletal (MSK) Month

Come Along...

We have several free virtual sessions being held across this month, delivered by the Firefighters Charity, please see below:

3rd September, 10:00
MSK Injury Prevention

17th September, 10:30
Understanding & Managing Back Pain

24th September, 10:00
MSK Management & Rehab

Launching this month...

Lunch and Learn

We will be highlighting and celebrating those across the service who have some amazing fitness achievements.

Look out for...

Tips and advice around Back Pain, MSK, and Working from Home in Weekly Update.

Also, posters for the Firefighter sessions will be sent to all stations.

Get involved...

25th September is National Fitness Day and we would love Stations and teams to get involved. Further information will be shared in Weekly Update.

OCTOBER 2024
Menopause Month

Come Along...

We have several free virtual sessions being held across this month, delivered by the Firefighters Charity, please see below:

15th October, 11:00:
Understanding Menopause

22nd October, 10:30:
Supporting the Menopausal

Look out for...

Wellbeing support for those going through the Menopause in Weekly Update.

Also, posters for the Firefighter sessions will be sent to all stations.

Get involved...

10th October is **World Menopause Day** and we will be getting involved across all our social media platforms to raise awareness and education around this.



Scan the QR code to visit our Wellbeing Hub

NOVEMBER 2024
CFRS Stress Awareness Month

Come Along...

We have several free virtual sessions being held across this month, delivered by the Firefighters Charity, please see below:

7th November, 10:00
Managing Stress

8th November, 10:00
Developing Resilience

12th November, 10:30
Introduction to Relaxation & Mindfulness

28th November, 13:00
Developing Resilience

Look out for...

Stress and Resilience info, tips, and support in Weekly Update.

Also, posters for the Firefighter sessions will be sent to all stations.

Get involved...

6th Nov is **National Stress Awareness Day**. The Service will be utilising this day to highlight all available tools and resources staff have to help manage stress and build resilience.



The Fire Fighters Charity

To join any of the **Firefighters Charity Free Virtual Sessions**, please book on using PDR Pro.



If you'd like to be involved with anything mentioned above, get in touch with us at: **wellbeing@cumbriafire.gov.uk**

Making Cumbria a safer place for all



Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2024-2028



Making Cumbria a safer place for all

cumbriafire.gov.uk



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Executive Summary



Putting our communities first

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (E,D&I) is pivotal in ensuring the needs of the communities are met effectively and respectfully. A diverse workforce mirrors the community it serves, fostering trust and understanding. Ensuring equality means that all individuals, regardless of their background, receive the same level of protection and support. An inclusive approach helps build stronger, more resilient relationships with community members, making them feel valued and understood.



Dignity and respect

We foster respectful environments, ensuring that all team members and community members are treated with respect. We promote a culture of mutual respect and understanding. We have dignity at the heart of all of our interventions with a person-centred approach. A diverse and inclusive workforce fosters a supportive and respectful work environment, enhancing team cohesion and effectiveness. By embracing diversity, the service can implement inclusive practices that respect the unique needs and perspectives of all community members.



Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality means that all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal access to opportunities and resources within the service. A diverse workforce brings a variety of perspectives and experiences, which enhances problem-solving and innovation. Creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected leads to higher morale and better teamwork. A commitment to ED&I helps the service better understand and meet the needs of the diverse communities it serves.



Integrity

ED&I reinforces the core value of integrity through building trusted relationships, and shows our dedication to treating everyone with fairness and respect. It demonstrates the service operates transparently and ethically, fostering trust within the community and among team members. A diverse and inclusive environment encourages ethical behaviour by valuing and respecting all individuals, which is essential for maintaining integrity.



Leadership

ED&I enhances leadership effectiveness and fosters a positive organisational culture. Championing ED&I demonstrates a commitment to fairness and respect, setting a standard for others. Diverse leadership teams bring varied perspectives and experiences, leading to more informed and innovative decisions. Inclusive leadership fosters an environment where all team members feel valued and heard, strengthening trust and respect within the team.

Introduction

The **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Strategy** for Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) outlines the Service's commitment to fostering a fair, inclusive and respectful environment. The strategy aligns with the service's mission to protect lives and property, whilst ensuring equity in service delivery and employment.

Key Objectives of the Strategy:

1. **Promoting Equality:** Ensuring all employees and communities have equal access to opportunities, services and support.
2. **Embracing Diversity:** Valuing the unique perspectives, experiences and skills brought by individuals from diverse backgrounds.
3. **Driving Inclusion:** Creating a culture where everyone feels welcomed, valued and empowered to contribute fully.

Strategic Priorities:

- **Workforce diversity:** Reflecting the diversity of communities served within the workforce at all levels
- **Inclusive culture:** Building an organisational culture that actively challenges discrimination, harassment and inequality.
- **Service accessibility:** Providing equitable access to our services for all communities, particularly those that are vulnerable or underserved.
- **Community engagement:** Strengthening relationships with diverse communities to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met.

Alignment with Legal and Ethical Standards

The ED&I Strategy is designed to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. It also aligns with broader ethical goals, supporting CFRS to enhance public trust.

Benefits of the ED&I Strategy

- Improved service outcomes by addressing the needs of all community members.
- A motivated, innovative and diverse workforce.
- Strengthened relationships with local communities through trust and collaboration

This ED&I Strategy provides a high-level framework for ED&I for the four years spanning 2024-28. Primarily it will be delivered through a detailed annual ED&I action plan, progress against which will be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with critical oversight provided by the PFCCs independent Community Scrutiny Panel.

In addition, the Culture and Values Board which is attended by Staff Network Chairs and SLT members, will provide an ED&I spotlight on performance for functional areas. The board will have an independent chair.

Our annual departmental plans and Service-wide strategies and policies are informed by comprehensive Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). This ensures we consider the potential impacts on under-represented groups and people that fall under the nine protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010. Due to the profile of Cumbria, EIA's are extended to include the impacts on Rurality and our On-call workforce.

Responsibility

The strategy assigns responsibilities to various levels of the organisation.

1. Leadership Commitment

Leaders are tasked with championing ED&I principles, ensuring the strategy is integrated into the Service's operations, and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion.

2. Workforce Development

All staff are encouraged to embrace ED&I values through training and awareness programmes. This includes addressing neurodiversity, supporting fair recruitment and promotions, and implementing the People Strategy to ensure inclusivity.

3. Community Engagement

The service prioritises understanding and meeting the diverse needs of communities. Staff are trained to identify and support vulnerable individual, aligning with frameworks such as the NFCC person-centred approach.

4. Accountability

Managers and team leaders are responsible for ensuring that the ED&I goals are met within their teams. This includes adhering to the Code of Ethics and addressing any instances of discrimination.

5. Governance and Oversight

Specific committees or ED&I leads may be tasked with monitoring and reporting progress against the strategy's objectives. Data collection and analysis are essential for identifying trends and addressing gaps in representation or inclusivity.

1. We will create a diverse workforce at all levels which reflects the diversity of communities served

The strategic priority of workforce diversity at Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service focuses on building a team that mirrors the rich diversity of the communities it serves.

We will recruit, retain, and support individuals from various backgrounds, ensuring representation across all levels of the organisation.

Creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute, fostering a culture of equality and respect.

To achieve this CFRS will embed equitable recruitment practices, providing development opportunities for underrepresented groups, and support staff through tailored networks and initiatives. By aligning its workforce composition with the communities demographic makeup, CFRS will enhance its ability to deliver cultural competent service and build trust within diverse communities.

2. We will create an inclusive organisational culture that actively challenges discrimination, harassment and inequality

The strategic priority of fostering an inclusive culture within CFRS focuses on cultivating an organisational environment that actively confronts and eradicates discrimination, harassment and inequality.

To achieve this we will embed the principles of fairness, respect and inclusion into all aspects of the organisation's operations from policies and practices to everyday interactions.

We will provide training to all staff on recognising and addressing discriminatory behaviours, implementing robust policies to support equality and challenge bias, creating a workplace where all individuals feel safe, supported and valued.

We will support our staff through networks and initiatives that promote diversity and establish mechanisms for employees to report concerns without fear of reprisal.

We will take a proactive approach to upholding ethical standards and foster mutual respect across the organisation.

3. We will provide equitable access to fire and rescue services for all communities, particularly those that are vulnerable or underserved

The strategic priority of service accessibility at CFRS is centred on ensuring that all communities, particularly vulnerable groups, can equitably access our Services.

We will tailor our outreach, prevention and emergency response efforts to meet the unique needs of diverse populations, addressing barriers that may prevent certain groups from benefiting fully from CFRS support.

We will engage with marginalised and high-risk communities to understand their specific needs, enhancing communication strategies to reach those with language, cultural or technological barriers and we will collaborate with partner organisation to extend the reach of critical services.

We will prioritise delivering education and safety programs to groups at greater risk, such as elderly individuals, those with disabilities or rural residents, endeavouring to provide everyone with the tools and resources to stay safe.

4. We will strengthen relationships with diverse communities to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met

CFRS will focus on building and strengthening relationships with diverse communities to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are effectively met.

We will actively reach out to different groups, particularly those that may be underrepresented or face barriers to participation, and involve them in decision making processes.

We will prioritise engaging with community leaders, holding consultations, and fostering dialogue to understand the unique challenges and risks faced through various populations.

We will use initiatives such as tailored safety campaigns, culturally aware services, and collaboration with local organisations, to ensure our programmes are relevant and inclusive.

We will seek to enhance trust and collaboration, and also ensure the Service is responsive to the evolving needs of all community members.

Summary

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) strategy underscores the deep commitment to creating a workplace and community service that values diversity, fosters inclusion and champions equity. By embracing these principles, CFRS aims to not only reflect the diverse communities it serves but also ensure that all individuals feel respected, safe and empowered.

This strategy is a call to action for continuous improvement, proactive engagement, and collective responsibility, paving the way for an organisation that is truly inclusive and resilient. It will be underpinned by a plan on a page.

Through this effort, CFRS reinforces its dedication to building inclusive and safe communities ensuring its workforce and services are aligned with the evolving needs of Cumbria's people.

Culture and Values Board

Purpose of the Board

The Culture and Values Board has been established to provide support and leadership in fostering a positive, inclusive, and values-driven culture utilising the staff networks. The Board will serve as a focal point for driving cultural change, ensuring that the values of the Service are embedded in all aspects of the Service, and support staff networks that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. The board will provide staff networks with a recognised mechanism for raising issue relating to all areas of business and Governance. The attendees of the board will support the development of inclusive policies, practices, and training programs.

Purpose of Staff Networks

Staff networks comprise of employees coming together around a shared purpose to improve staff experience within the organisation. They share heritage, lived experience, and characteristics which are usually linked to the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. Staff networks provide a inclusive and supportive environment for underrepresented group to be heard. CFRS has a number of established networks with others identified as being required. Staff networks play a vital role in promoting diversity, inclusion, and the well-being of staff members across the Service. These networks provide a platform for staff to voice their concerns, share experiences, and develop solutions to cultural, operational and Leadership challenges. The networks also support the identification and implementation of initiatives that align with the core code of ethics. Staff networks champion employee well-being and support mental health and resilience initiatives. Our current active Staff Networks are:

- Gender
- LGBTQ+
- Mental Health
- Disability and Neurodiversity
- Armed Forces

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- On Call

Objectives of the Culture and Values Board

The Board's objectives are as follows:

- To provide support and advice to the Senior Leadership Team to promote and embed the Core Code of Ethics.
- To support the implementation, development, and success of CFRS staff networks
- To provide support and leadership to staff networks, ensuring their work is aligned with the core code of ethics.
- Identify and support key dates throughout the year for staff network references.
- Establish a meeting and recording structure to update SLT.

Membership

The Culture and Values Board will consist of the following members:

- Chair: ACFO - responsible for setting the agenda and providing strategic support
- Staff Network Representatives: Representatives from each recognized staff network.
- HR and Equality & Diversity Lead: A senior HR or Diversity and Inclusion professional, responsible for ensuring alignment with policies and best practices.
- Service Leadership Team: A representative from the senior leadership team, to ensure alignment with organisational goals. Senior sponsors will be nominated from SLT and aligned to each Network.
- Employee Well-being Officer: A designated officer responsible for promoting well-being initiatives and supporting mental health initiatives.
- External Stakeholders (optional): Depending on the agenda, external experts or advisors may be invited to provide guidance on specific cultural or diversity issues.

Frequency of Meetings

The Culture and Values Board will meet quarterly to review progress, assess cultural initiatives, and ensure the support and progress of staff networks.

Additional meetings may be convened as needed to address urgent issues or emerging cultural concerns. In such cases, the Chair will determine the necessity of additional meetings and communicate with all members in advance.

Review of the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with the evolving needs of the Fire and Rescue Service. Changes or updates to the Terms of

Reference will be approved by the Culture and Values Board and communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Approved by:
Chair of the Culture and Values Board

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service

People Strategy

2024-2028



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Executive Summary



Putting our communities first

The people strategy recognises the huge value that every member of our workforce brings to the service, the public and our communities. We are committed to ensuring we recruit, retain and promote individuals who demonstrate the highest standards of behaviours and skills and continue to put the interests of our communities first.



Dignity and respect

We ensure that all staff are aware of their own conscious and unconscious bias, that we listen to our workforce through regular open dialogue, ensuring that decisions are evidence based, objective and without discrimination. We will support all of our workforce to be the best version of themselves and communicate in an open transparent and respectful way.



Equality, diversity and inclusion

We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI both within the our service and the wider communities in which we serve. We will lead with kindness, curiosity and empathy, embracing difference and removing barriers to ensure equal opportunities for all.



Integrity

We role model integrity at every level of the organisation, creating a positive learning culture where we seek feedback, listen to each other, and encourage open, honest constructive dialogue.



Leadership

There are positive role models and leaders at every level within the organisation. We really value the flexible, supportive leadership demonstrated within the service and are committed to leading with kindness, curiosity, empathy and fairness. Ensuring that our workforce feels accountable and responsible for everything they do, receiving appropriate reward and recognition.

Introduction

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) recognise that our workforce is our most valuable asset and is crucial to providing our communities with high quality services. The skills, knowledge, experience and diversity of our workforce has a direct impact on the success and quality of the service we can deliver to the communities across Cumbria.

The People Strategy is a statement of our intent to support and develop every member of our workforce throughout their employment with CFRS. We are fully committed to making CFRS a great place to work. We want to help our workforce to become more resilient, develop their skills and maximise their wellbeing at work.

We also recognise that the way we lead, manage and behave is fundamental to how people view the Service, so we want to reiterate our commitment to all our staff throughout this strategy. It is essential to demonstrate our commitment to fairness, equality, respect and continuous improvement.

The Service has been through a period of significant change and as the Service continues to adapt to these changing circumstances, we recognise this can be worrying for some staff when the changes impact upon them. The period of change across the Service is likely to be ongoing as we progress into the future. It is essential that this strategy is closely aligned to our work on transformation, collaboration and hosted services to ensure that all enabling services effectively support the needs of the service. We will ensure that we will continue to support and develop our teams to enable all of us to deliver the best possible service to our communities.

Every fire and rescue service is unique, but whilst Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service may have different cultural and people determinants due to our differences in leadership, governance, service delivery model and size, there are common goals and principles which should be consistent throughout the sector.

In developing our Strategy we have considered underpinning principles within the NFCC People Strategy, the national Core Code of Ethics and the inspection process from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and most importantly the continual support and development of our staff to ensure we deliver a first class professional Service to the communities across Cumbria

Service Vision

Over the lifetime of this strategy we will focus on our key commitments in addition to or in conjunction with the strategic direction set by the PFCC, Government, HMICFRS and NFCC. These will be supported by specific action plans/policies to support change and measure improvement.

As part of our cultural journey we have created an environment where our workforce have a voice and we continue to encourage dialogue, feedback and the sharing of views, opinions and perspectives.

The effective communication of this strategy to our workforce is key to its success as it will support understanding and engagement with what we are aiming to achieve and the fundamental part they all play. As an organisation we are dedicated to evolving our service delivery model that continues to put our communities first by focusing on collaborative working with our partners and stakeholders to add value to the work they do, to reduce overall risk and vulnerability across Cumbria.

This strategy will ensure we achieve this, and our workforce will receive the appropriate support and development to deliver this strategy. The oversight of this strategy will be provided by the service's Workforce Development Group.

We encourage our workforce to be fully engaged with the principles and objectives of this strategy and for it to be discussed in a variety of forums.

The vision for Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is

A community-focused, professional and trusted Fire and Rescue Service that makes Cumbria a safer place for all.

The People Strategy supports this vision and is underpinned by 6 key objectives:

1. We will ensure that we have the right people in the right posts at the right time in order to deliver our services to the community.
2. We will promote a positive inclusive culture where all employees display our values and behaviours and contribute to making CFRS a great place to work.
3. We will continue to review the employee offer, ensuring that our employees feel supported and valued.
4. We will ensure that the service is an inclusive organisation where all employees and potential employees have fair and equal access to opportunity.
5. We will maximise the health and wellbeing of our staff.
6. We will ensure all of our employees are equipped with the right skills, tools and guidance to enable them to perform their roles to a high standard in a way which promotes compassion, accountability, support and trust.

Responsibility

Responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of this Strategy rests with the following:

Head of People and Talent is accountable for the delivery and review of this Strategy.

HR Managers are responsible for the development and delivery of all HR policies and procedures to support this Strategy and for monitoring the achievement of the departmental plan on a page (POAP).

The Area Manager Preparedness is responsible for development and delivery of the Learning and Development Plan which supports this Strategy and for monitoring the achievement of this plan.

The Resourcing, Talent and Wellbeing Lead is responsible for the development and delivery of all resourcing and wellbeing policies and procedures to support this Strategy and for monitoring the achievement of the departmental plan on a page

All employees within the People and Talent Directorate and Learning and Development are responsible for delivery of their team plans.

All leaders, managers and employees across the service have a role to play in supporting the implementation of this strategy and ensuring that Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is a great place to work.

The oversight of this strategy will be provided by the service's Workforce Development Group.

1. We will ensure that we have the right people in the right posts at the right time in order to deliver our services to the community.

Recognising that our workforce is crucial to be able to deliver the service to our communities outlined in our Community Risk Management Plan and that the relationship and benefits a diverse workforce bring to improving community outcomes we will continue to improve our approaches to recruitment and promotion in an equal and inclusive way.

We will continue to learn from best practice nationally within the fire and rescue sector and externally, enabling our workforce to develop to their full potential and allow the service to use a range of resourcing methods to ensure we can attract, recruit and retain individuals who meet the needs of the Service and the communities which we serve.

We will build within our recruitment and promotion processes the Leadership Framework, the Core Code of Ethics and the Service values, ensuring that the most suitable leaders are recruited and appointed.

We will develop an effective succession planning process that will be overseen by the Workforce Development Group

We appreciate the need for different approaches to recruitment, promotion and retention based on the different workforces that we employ. Our Wholetime, On Call and Corporate workforces are all equally valuable to CFRS and we are committed to ensuring our process are accessible to all, balancing the need for both consistency and flexibility in approach.

2. We will promote a positive inclusive culture where all employees display our values and behaviours and contribute to making CFRS a great place to work.

We know the best organisations are those that work together, encourage contributions and constructive challenges from everyone in the organisation, share responsibility for successes and learn together from mistakes. The People Strategy will build on this by developing an open and transparent learning culture that promotes fairness and trust, appreciating that different people bring different perspectives, ideas and knowledge, and which together adds a valuable strength and resilience to the organisation

We want to continue to develop a culture of curiosity where we recognise that we may have different perspectives, however our workforce can be confident that their views will be listened to by their peers and leaders through regular open dialogue.

We will continue to embed the core code of ethics, ensuring it is genuinely understood by everyone and that it is embedded in everything that we do.

We recognise that all our of workforce are role models, internally and also within their communities. We are committed to leading with kindness and respect.

We will support the delivery of key national action plans, including the NFCC Culture action plan, HMICFRS spotlight report on culture and values and HMICFRS report on misconduct.

We will set up a Culture and Values Board which will ensure that employees across the organisation and within our staff networks have a voice and are able to positively contribute to shaping the future direction of our culture.

We recognise and accept the difficult findings some of the national reports regarding the culture in the Fire and Rescue Sector and are committed to making sure all of our employees feel safe and supported within the workplace and have confidence to speak up should they witness or experience any actions or behaviours that aren't in line with our values. We will ensure that confidential reporting mechanisms are available to all employees.

A positive and open culture not only allows employees to be comfortable being who they are, it amplifies their own skills and abilities to allow them to do their best and most satisfying work whatever their role. Building a great service, with great people, which is recognised as a great place to be, also gives us the greatest opportunity to attract and retain staff from the widest possible talent pool.

3. We will continue to review the employee offer, ensuring that our employees feel supported and valued.

We will develop a culture where individuals perform to the best of their ability and own their development/career because they have a sense of belonging and feel valued.

This will include the potential and current workforce being committed to the service values and behaviours, exploring opportunities to support our communities in more flexible and different ways of working, underpinned by the National Core Code of Ethics and Professional Standards.

We will regularly review our policies and procedures, ensuring that they are up to date, align with best practice and accessible to all of our workforce. Our policy review framework and links to the NFCC people programme will allow us to identify areas of improvement.

In order for our workforce to feel supported and valued they need to be listened to. Often the best solutions come from individuals at all levels of the organisation. We are committed to listening to our employees and maximising their avenues to provide feedback and dialogue, through staff surveys, staff engagement visits, employees networks, trade unions and our new Culture and Values Board.

4. We will ensure that the service is an inclusive organisation where all employees and potential employees have fair and equal access to opportunity.

CFRS is fully committed to equality, diversity and inclusion recognising that a service which values and supports equal treatment, equal opportunity, inclusion, involvement and transparency has the best chance of its prevention, protection and response delivery meeting the needs of its communities and supporting those who are most vulnerable and at greatest risk of harm.

CFRS aspires to build a workforce that is more balanced and representative of the communities we serve. Operationally, we would like to improve the gender balance and ensure that members of LGBTQ and disabled communities or from diverse ethnic backgrounds recognise that CFRS offers exciting career opportunities for them.

Where there are barriers which prevent anyone in our communities considering that CFRS may be a career choice for them, we will seek to understand these barriers in order to remove or reduce these wherever possible.

We will ensure that equality impact assessments are completed for all relevant policies and procedures and engage regularly with the workforce to ensure fairness and transparency.

We will provide effective learning materials that support cultural change and a good understanding of all areas of EDI and difference including blended/ virtual learning.

We will ensure all our policies and procedures reflect a modern diverse service focused on removing all barriers to ensure all our workforce can thrive and “achieve the very best of themselves”.

We will actively engage with groups that represent underserved groups in the Service and or the community e.g. Women in the Fire Service (WFS), Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)



5. We will maximise the health and wellbeing of our staff.

CFRS is committed to ensuring that all employees are provided with the access to the support that is needed to maintain and enhance good physical and mental health and wellbeing.

We want to encourage our staff to lead healthy lives and make choices that support their wellbeing and where they are able to make good decisions about maintaining a beneficial work/life balance. An important element of this is staff being aware that the service will continue to look at ways of supporting family friendly processes, flexible work patterns and individualised employee support whenever possible.

This People Strategy will assist with the delivery of our Wellbeing calendar which shares our programme of wellbeing activities and initiatives aimed at delivering improved health and wellbeing awareness.

We will continue to work to dispel the stigma surrounding mental health and will continue to support effective health, wellbeing and fitness to maintain a safe and healthy workforce.

Our commitment to employee safety is maintained through continually learning from operational incidents, accidents and near misses to reduce future occurrences, including workrelated post-traumatic stress disorder and we will maintain our full commitment to encouraging more open conversations about mental health issues.

6. We will ensure all of our employees are equipped with the right skills, tools and guidance to enable them to perform their roles to a high standard in a way which promotes compassion, accountability, support and trust.

CFRS staff need to be equipped with the appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies to ensure we are able to effectively meet our future challenges and changing risk profile. Fundamental to this goal is the development and provision of excellent training products and the delivery of high quality learning outcomes for all of our staff.

Within the People Strategy, our commitment is to the whole service, which extends across both our operational and corporate teams, and prepares and develops staff as they progress through each stage of their career.

Operationally, our training and development is designed to meet the risks that are reasonably foreseeable for their roles and ensuring this training uses national best practice and standards – we will adopt the professional standards outlined in the Fire Professional Framework and use NOG to shape training development.

We will use our appraisal processes and create a culture of crucial conversations with our employees to understand their career aspirations, both in and outside of CFRS. Invest in key skills development to ensure our leadership team provides open, supportive leadership inspiring their teams to achieve their potential.

We will support leaders and managers with their people skills, ensuring that they feel equipped and able to have difficult conversations in the most supportive way. Leading with kindness, and curiosity to ensure that they get the best out of all employees.

We will ensure that leadership opportunities are inclusive and accessible across all of our workforce, wholetime, on call and corporate.

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service

Gender Pay Gap Summary

2024



Making Cumbria a safer place for all

cumbriafire.gov.uk

Introduction

Employers in the UK with more than 250 employees are required to produce an annual report of their Gender Pay Gap. The requirements of the mandate within the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 are to publish information relating to pay for six specific measures, as detailed below:

- ▶ Quartile Pay Bands
- ▶ Median Gender Pay Gap
- ▶ Mean Bonus Gap
- ▶ Mean Gender Pay Gap
- ▶ Bonus Proportions
- ▶ Median Bonus Gap

The gender pay gap shows the difference between the average earnings for men and women within the service based on a snapshot date of March each year. A gender pay gap does not necessarily mean that men are paid more than women however it usually means that men are in higher paid roles. This gender pay gap report is a snapshot as of **31 March 2023**.

The intention of the pay gap reporting is to focus organisational attention on taking action to reduce inequalities, bringing to life our commitments from the Core Code of ethics and the People and Talent Strategy ensuring that we are an inclusive organisation which focuses on maximising the wellbeing of our staff and ensuring our employee offer makes us an employer of choice.

Equal Pay legislation requires employers to pay 'equal pay for work of equal value' and this means that men and women will earn the same pay for doing equivalent roles. Having a gender pay gap does not mean that the employer is breaching equal pay legislation.

In CFRS we use agreed pay and grading frameworks to ensure that our pay and grading is fair and consistent.

In previous years our gender pay gap has been produced as part of the Cumbria County Council submission as we were part of the local authority. Following the transition of the Governance to the PFCC in April 2023 we are now reporting as Cumbria Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority.

For the purposes of this report, we are using electronic staff record data taken from our HR System to undertake this analysis, and therefore we are dependent on staff reporting their protected characteristics on the HR system. As of 31 March 2024 Cumbria Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority employed a total of 648 employees. Comprising 82% male and 18% female

What we report

There is specific guidance governing what data we use to prepare the report and when to prepare and report it. The gender pay gap reporting is based on the government's methodology for calculating difference in pay between female and male employees.

As an inclusive employer, we at CFRS recognise that the gender spectrum is wider than male or female and we are keen to promote diversity and inclusivity. For the purposes of this report we are required to report on the gap between the pay of men and women therefore the data used only includes that of men and women.

'Equal pay' means being paid equally for the same/similar work.

'Pay gap' is the difference in the average pay between two groups.



Our Gender Pay Gap Data

Quartile Pay Bands

Pay Quartiles are produced by splitting all employees into 4 even groups 'quartiles' from lowest to highest paid with Quartile 1 being the lowest paid and Quartile 4 being the highest paid. Looking at the proportion of women across the quartiles indicates women's representation across the pay scales of the service.

At the moment we employ significantly more men than women (115 females and 533 males).

In 2024 Quartile 1 has the largest proportion of female employees but Quartile 4 has the second largest portion of female employees. This is because we have some females within the higher pay bandings. Although only 17.7% of all CFRS staff are female, the representation of women across the quartiles is not significantly different in any quartile which means that our gender pay gap is low.



2023 also saw the highest proportion of female employees in Quartile 1, although in 2023 the second highest proportion of females was in Quartile 3, with very few females in quartiles 2 and 4. In 2024 women are more evenly spread across the pay quartiles than they were in 2023.

We are committed to narrowing this margin between the number of males and females that we employ and achieving equal gender representation.

One key area is through our Wholetime and On-Call recruitment processes, where we implement positive action (where appropriate) and focus on removing barriers for women joining into the service.

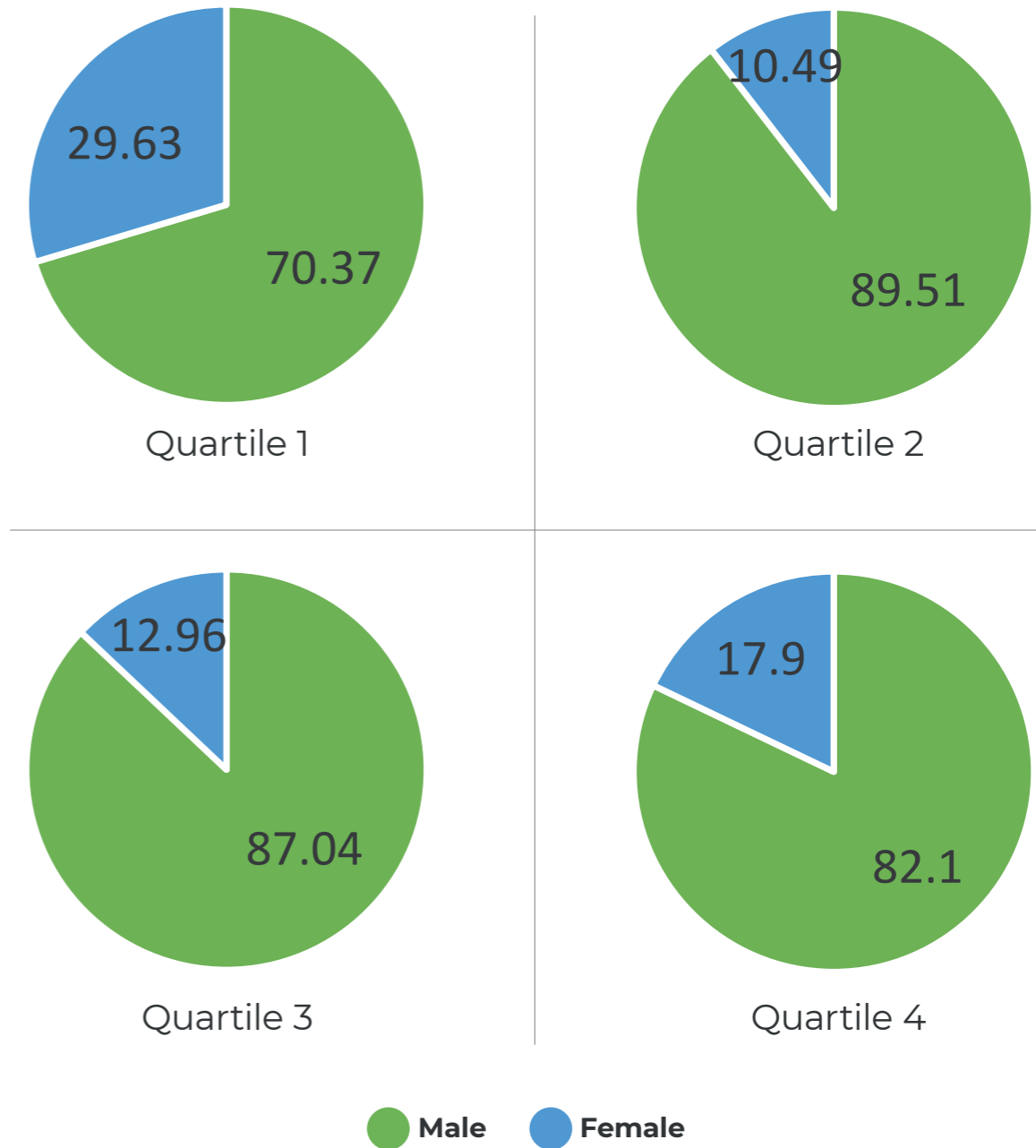
In 2024, we held a Wholetime Firefighter recruitment process, where we held perspective specific engagement sessions, we anonymised all of the data throughout each of the selection stages, and we offered a broader range of fitness assessments, we removed a number of barriers and reduced unconscious bias, and ultimately, we had onboarded a course of 6 female-identifying and 10 male-identifying recruits.

Of the 648 employees within this data set we have:

533 males **115 females**

Percentage of men and women per quartile



This shows where employees are in the pay scales across 4 quartiles. Quartile 1 is the lowest paid and quartile 4 is the highest paid.

Our median male and median female are both in Quartile 2.

Mean Gender Pay Gap

The mean figure is calculated by adding the total male pay and dividing that by the number of males and comparing that to the total female pay divided by the number of females.

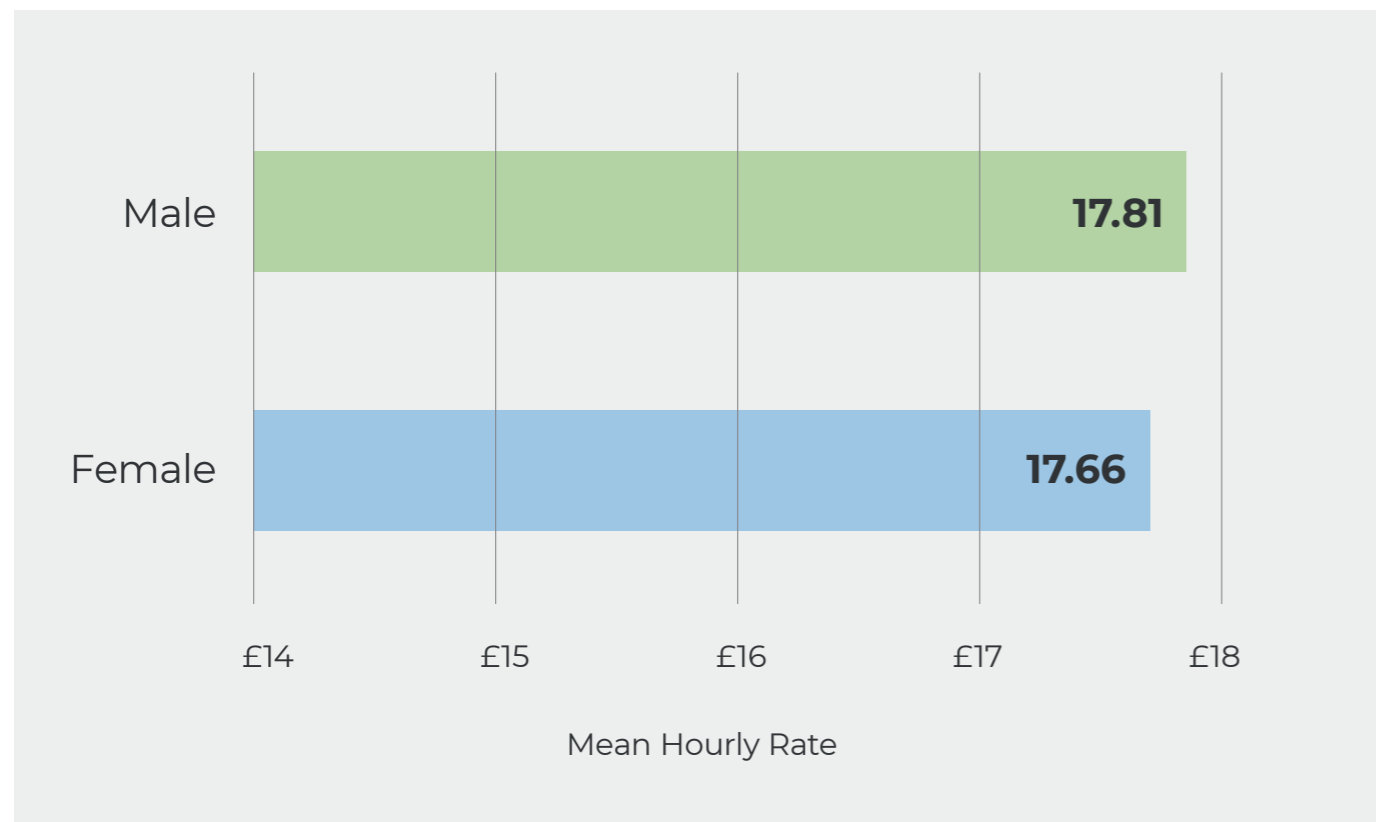
The mean figure then shows the 'average' pay for a male and a female.

Our mean gender pay gap is 0.86% in favour of men. Although this means that men are paid a higher hourly rate than women on average, the gap is very small (men earn £17.81 per hour versus £17.66 for women).

Our 2023 reported mean figure was 3.5% in favour of men therefore our mean pay gap has reduced over the previous 12 months.

The Mean is the total of all female pay divided by the number of females and is compared to the total male pay, divided by the number of males.

Our overall Mean Pay Gap is 0.86%



Median Gender Pay Gap

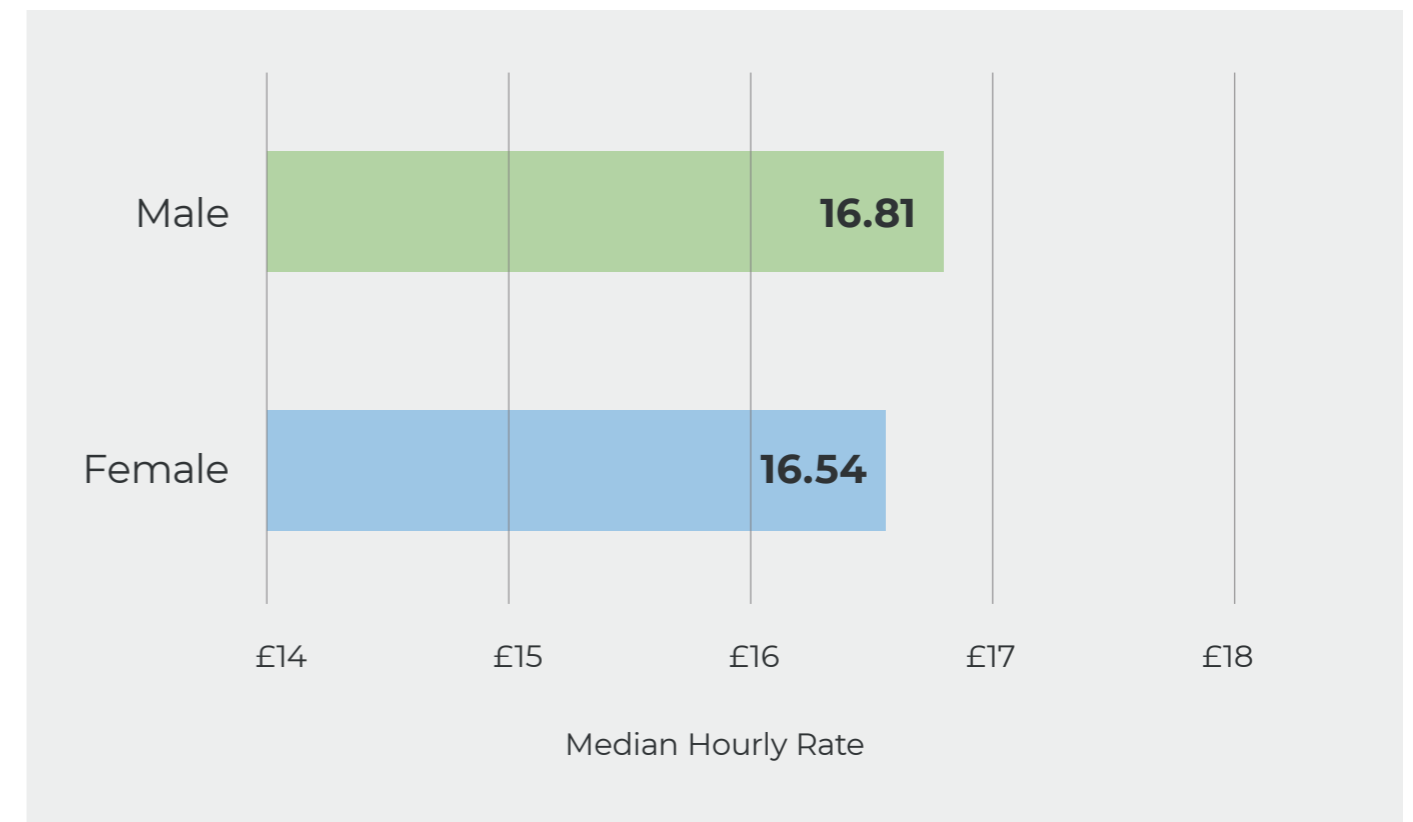
The median figure is the 'middle value' from a list of highest to lowest paid.

The median male's pay is compared to the median female's pay in order to calculate the median pay gap.

Our median male and median female both sit in pay quartile 2. The median male's pay was £16.81 per hour and our median female's pay was £16.54 per hour.

In 2023 this was £15.75 for males and £15.748 for females. Our median pay gap has increased in 2024 to 1.62%.

Our overall median pay gap is 1.62%



Bonus Pay

CFRS do not operate a bonus scheme, however for the purposes of this calculation, bonus pay includes CPD pay, responsibility pay and honoraria. No staff in CFRS received any bonus pay other than these categories. 26.7% of females received bonus pay in 2023/2024 compared to 18.4% of men.

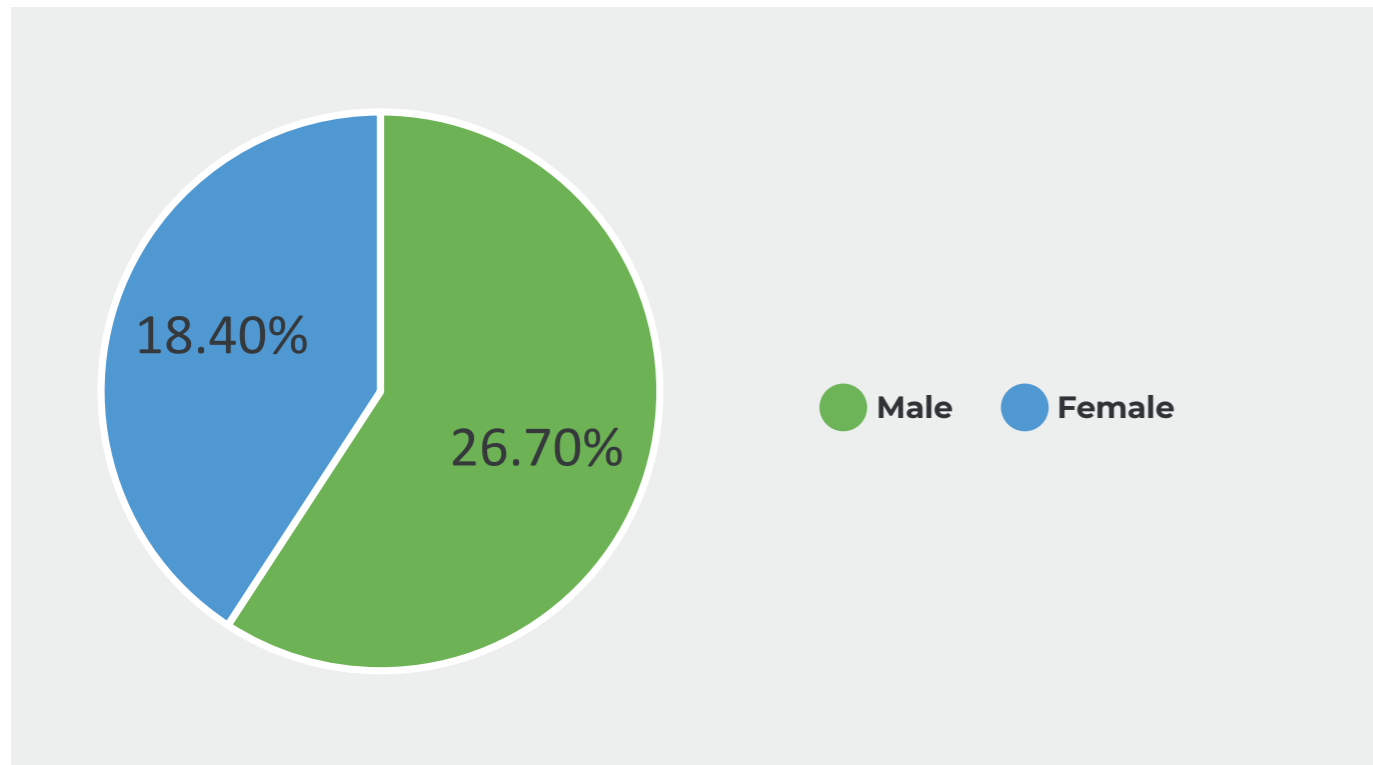
The vast majority of these payments related to CPD for operational staff, these are usually low value. In 2023/2024 there were only two payments other than CPD payments, however the fact that both of these payments were high value and made to a female significantly affects the mean bonus pay gap.

Our mean bonus pay gap is -96.57% in favour of women.

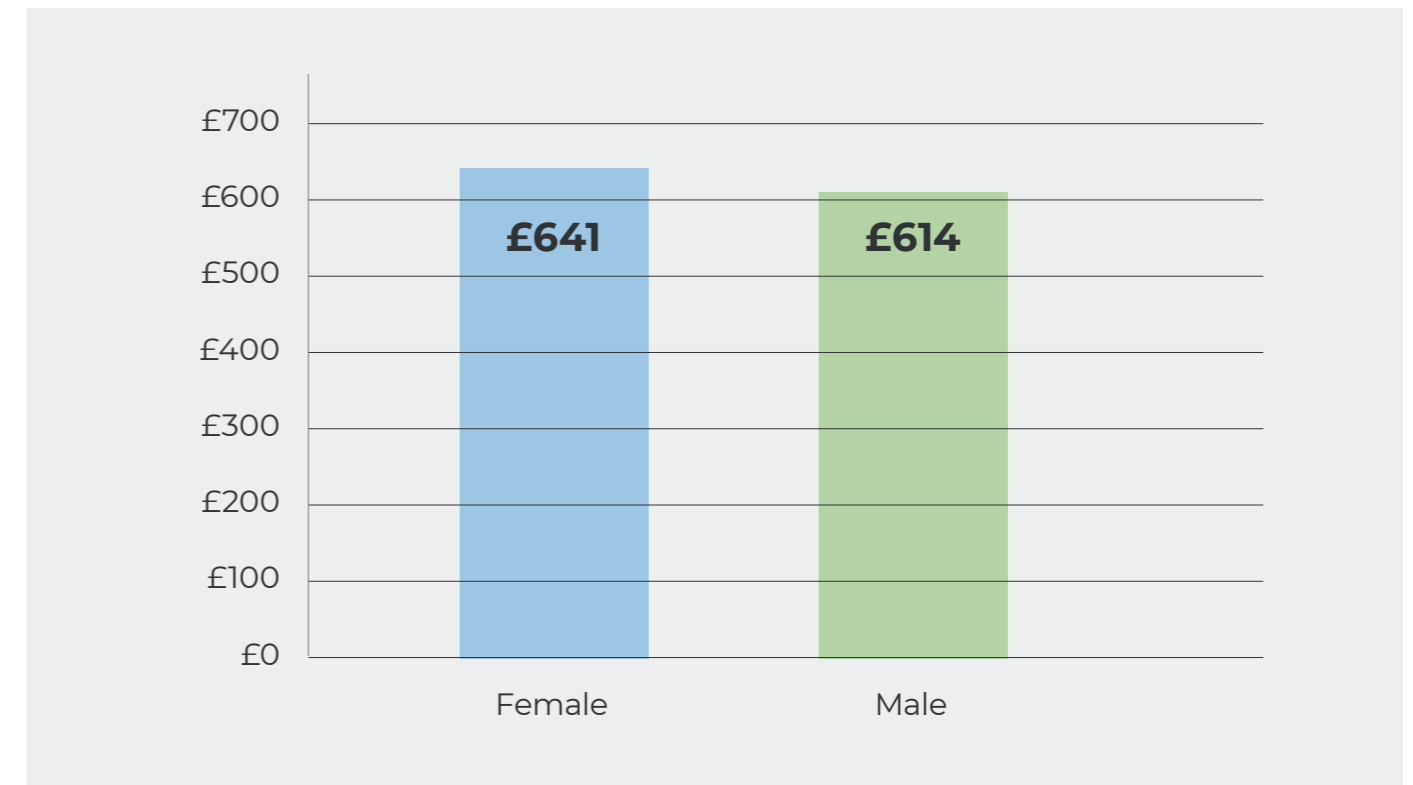
Because our median man and median female are both in the same pay quartile, our median bonus gap is 0%.

In 2022/2023 our mean bonus pay gap was 34.62% in favour of men and our median bonus pay gap was 40.68%.

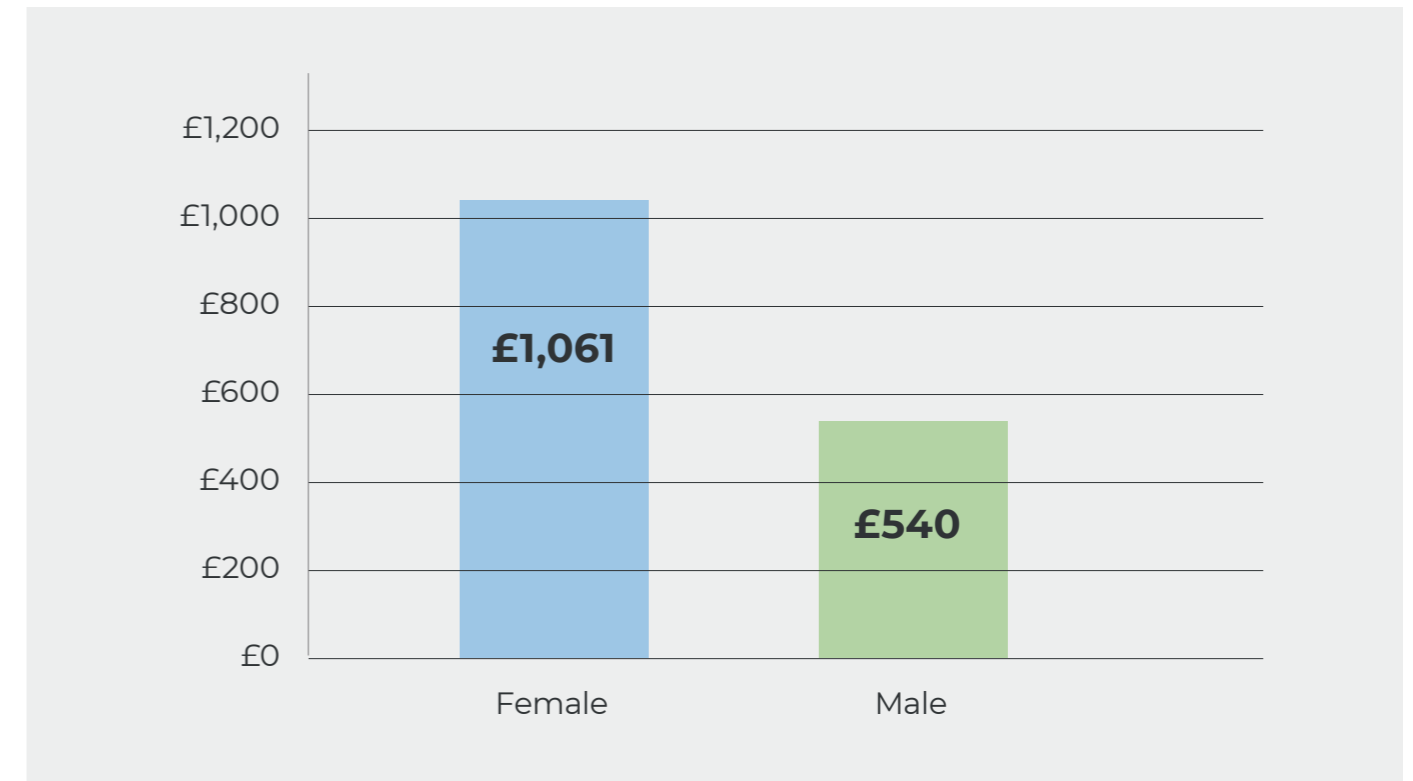
Percentage of Men and Women Receiving Bonus Pay



Median Bonus Pay Our Median Bonus figure is 0.00%



Mean Bonus Pay Our Mean Bonus figure is -96.57% in favour of women



Comparing the Pay Gap

In 2023 the ONS estimated the overall median gender pay gap to be 14.3%.

In 2023 the ONS estimated the overall median gender pay figure for Fire Service Officers (Watch Manager and below) to be £17.19 per hour.

Key messages:

- ▶ Our gender pay gap is well below the ONS estimated average
- ▶ Men and Women in the service earn the same for equivalent jobs (equal pay for work of equal value)
- ▶ We employ more men than women (82.3% of our workforce are men)
- ▶ Our equal pay gap is low because we have a relatively even spread of women across all 4 quartiles
- ▶ Our bonus pay figure takes into account CPD pay and honoraria. The median (middle) value is the same however the mean value is significantly in favour of women. This figure should be treated with caution as it is affected by honoraria payments

What do we do to improve our pay gap?

- ▶ Pay the Living Wage
- ▶ Fair Pay and Grading of roles
- ▶ Family Friendly policies (including flexible working, enhanced paid family leave, job sharing, flexible work locations)
- ▶ Career Progression
- ▶ Fair recruitment practices
- ▶ Re-establishing staff networks



What are we doing to improve?

We aim to continue to reduce our gender pay gap year on year. Effective policies for closing the gender pay gap seek to address factors and barriers common to all women (such as the number in lower-grade jobs with lower pay) as well as target inequalities faced by women belonging to specific groups, based on characteristics such as ethnicity, age and profession.

We have implemented a number of actions over the last 18 months that have contributed to reducing our gender pay gap:

- ▶ Continuing to improve on our inclusive approach to recruitment and talent management by implementing targeted engagement sessions during recruitment campaigns.
- ▶ Continuing to use targeted advertising on jobs boards accessed by disadvantaged groups and continuing to include our statement on recruitment advertisements that the employer welcomes applications from the target group(s).
- ▶ Investing in family friendly policies and practices, underlining our commitment to being an inclusive employer and are drive to make CFRS a family friendly place to work. In 2023 we increased our Family Leave provisions so that employees on maternity, shared parental or adoption leave are entitled to 26 weeks full pay.

- ▶ Encouraging flexible working, ensuring requests for flexible working are considered by the Workforce Development Group and allowing for employees to work flexibly where possible Investing in our staff networks
- ▶ Ensuring salaries are transparent. Our operational roles are paid on the agreed NJC T&Cs. Our corporate roles are all evaluated against an agreed job evaluation framework based on NJC T&Cs. All staff are recruited onto a lower pay point and then progressed onto a higher pay point after passing their probationary period. The pay rates are transparent and advertised on the CFRS website. We produce a Pay Policy statement annually in relation to the remuneration of our staff, which is available on the CFRS website.
- ▶ Collating data on all protected characteristics, plus other factors, and identifying barriers for women across all levels of the organisation.

We also propose to take the following actions in the forthcoming year:

- ▶ Invest in our staff networks to ensure that staff feel valued and supported and any barriers are highlighted and addressed.
- ▶ Launch a Culture and Values Board to understand the culture across the service and work with employees on continually improving the culture.
- ▶ Offering targeted or bespoke training and support to remove barriers for underrepresented groups in recruitment and promotion processes.
- ▶ Identifying areas of our workforce with underrepresentation from women and providing opportunities exclusively to them (and other groups) to learn more about particular types of work opportunities with us, such as open days.



Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service Gender Pay Gap Summary 2024

Our Code of Ethics



Putting our communities first



Dignity and Respect



Equality, diversity and inclusion



Integrity



Leadership

    @cumbriafire

Making Cumbria a safer place for all

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Community Scrutiny Panel



Title: CFRS Recruitment Programme

Date: 06 February 2025

Agenda Item No: 09a

Originating Officer: Orlanda Wright – Resourcing, Talent and Wellbeing Lead, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service

CC: ACFO Ian Seel – Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service

Executive Summary:

The report will provide the Community Scrutiny panel with an update on Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) resourcing and talent policy reviews undertaken at the end of 2025, which are out to consultation currently. The second part of the report will provide an update on On-Call recruitment and the new proposed approach being brought in, as part of a Resourcing team collaboration with Service Delivery and the Learning and Development (L&D) departments. As we move into a new year of recruitment, we have looked at retention figures in our On-Call service and are looking to implement changes in line for the November 2025 training course.

1. Resourcing and Talent – Policy, Procedure, and Guidance review

The Resourcing and Talent team made some significant modifications in 2024 aimed at improving staff trust, service culture, and more efficient processes for all recruitment undertaken. Some of these specific changes in On-Call and Promotion Boards have been shared with the panel previously, but wider examples are:

- Dedicated Jobs pages on the CFRS external website, with access to the Resourcing and Talent policies and procedures, accessible for all and encouraging any candidate considering employment or promotion with CFRS to research us as an organisation.
- Standard inclusion of at least ten minutes prep time with interview questions. For candidates who request reasonable adjustments, this is doubled as a minimum and the team discuss a wide range of other adjustments we can facilitate, whilst also taking direction from candidates.
- Virtual Engagement sessions built into all Operational recruitment processes (including Promotion Boards) as standard, delivered flexibly for external candidates and On-Call internal applicants.

- Bespoke recruitment booklets produced for candidates where a need was identified, e.g. our On-Call recruitment booklet.
- Review of all recruitment forms, utilising digitisation where possible and streamlining processes (e.g. making one form for all outcomes, not separate forms depending on whether it was an internal transfer, external appointment etc.)
- Feedback form located on external webpages and sent to all candidates (internal and external) to complete (optional) following their participation in a process.

To ensure the above were maintained and solidified in our service, the creation of a new Resourcing and Talent policy, supported by additional guidance documents, has been a key focus for the team to launch in 2025.

Following disaggregation, CFRS adopted policies etc. from Cumbria County Council, and there were several individual documents sat under the Resourcing and Talent area. It was quickly identified that a largely operational, and predominantly On-Call, service could not locate and use so many documents effectively or consistently, and the aim was to provide leadership, staff, and candidates with accessibly written and easily found documents that all reaffirmed the Service's culture, values, and core code of ethics throughout them.

Key principles when undertaking this review were that all policies, procedures, and guidance would:

- Be written in accessible language that would support any speciality software for Neurodiverse people
- Where possible, remove duplication of information
- Feature demonstrable commitments to the Core Code of Ethics, bringing tangible examples to them
- Clarify responsibilities of all parties involved
- Have a section on the Equality Act 2010 and how it is to be utilised regarding the policy/procedure/guidance
- Have a section on inclusion and how it can be facilitated regarding the policy/procedure/guidance
- Have a section where it directs the relevant reader to the correct complaint process, if they have had an issue during a process/procedure

The below table shows the existing policies, procedures, and guidance documents which have now been adapted into the new Resourcing and Talent documents, and those which are still to be thoroughly reviewed with above ethos reiterated throughout them.

Previous Council document(s)	New document	Includes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment - Interim Recruitment Guidance without DBS – published 	Resourcing and Talent Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Scope • Principles / Core Code of Ethics

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment, Appointment and Induction Policy • Recruitment, Appointment and Induction Procedure 	<p>(currently out to consultation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Responsibilities/R&T responsibilities • Equality Act and Recruitment • Inclusive Recruitment • Employment Rights • Working Time Directive and Secondary Employment • Data Protection and Privacy • Complaints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic recruitment guidance • AEP Guidance • Casual Workers Guidance • EPW Guidance • Recruitment Guidance and templates • Resourcing Options for managers • Suitability of Ex-Offenders • Guaranteed Interview Scheme guidance 	<p>Resourcing and Talent Guidance</p> <p>Resourcing Options Guidance</p> <p>(both launched)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacancy Management & Resourcing Options • Job Descriptions and Person Specifications • Expressions of Interest • Advertising vacancies • Applications • Resourcing e-learning and additional training • Shortlisting best practice • Assessment methods • Reasonable Adjustments • Proof of Right to Work • Appointment • Pre-employment checks and Safer Recruitment • Contracts • Induction • Probation • Alternative Employment Programme (AEP) Guidance • Guaranteed Interview Scheme Guidance • Suitability of Ex-Offenders Guidance • Assessment Methods • Fixed Term Contracts Guidance • Casual Workers Further Guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Employment and Criminal Convictions Procedure, plus appendices • Safer Recruitment Procedure, plus appendices • DBS Data Handling, Use, Storage, Retention and 	<p>Safer Recruitment and DBS Policy (plus appendices)</p> <p>(going out to consultation Feb 2025)</p>	<p>Appendices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-employment checks for safeguarding appointments Valid Identity Documents DBS Verification and Update Service Form Rehabilitation of Offenders Act CFRS Positive Disclosure Risk

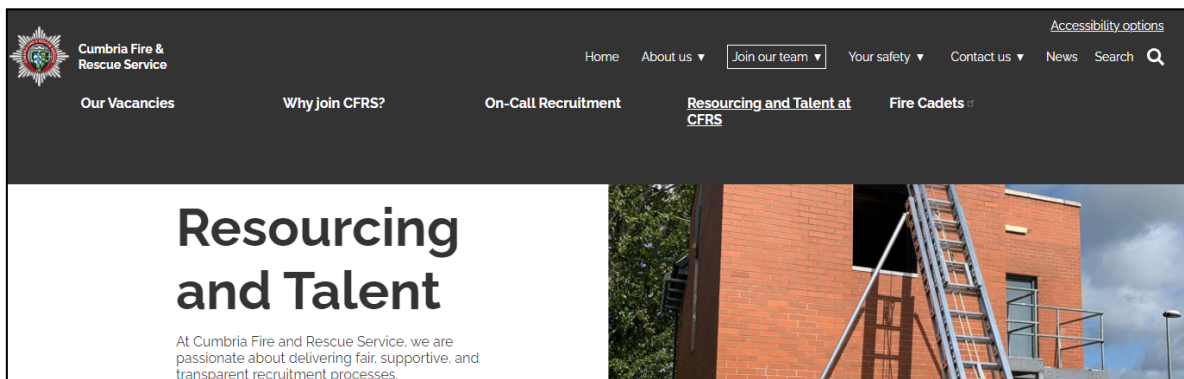
Disposal		Assessment (for recruitment) F. DBS Regulations, Types of Check levels, and Regulated Activity G. Internal Movers DBS Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exit Interview Form Exit Interview Procedure Exit Interview Probate Letter Exit Interviews 	Exit Interviews Policy (launched)	
Previous Council Policies, Procedures and documents we have adopted the still require future review		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probation Policy Career Grade Scheme and Guidance Relocation Assistance Scheme Continuous Professional Development Operational Promotion Board Policy Transfer Policy Induction Toolkit Market Supplements Volunteering Charter 		

To support with the launch of the guidance documents and the pending launch of the policies, the Resourcing team adapted their dedicated web pages to also echo the tone and inclusive approach promoted in the documents.

These pages are still being modified, but they can be found here: [Resourcing and Talent | Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service](#)

When external candidates come to the CFRS website to search for vacancies, these pages are easily located in the same area as the vacancies page and the Operational campaign recruitment pages, as captured in the screenshot below.

Candidates will go to 'Join Our Team' and the pages are linked at 'Resourcing and Talent at CFRS'



In preparation for the launch of the Resourcing and Talent Policy, the team are in the process of creating a Resourcing E-Learning, which is to follow the below process (as detailed in the guidance document):

All managers who are recruiting, shortlisting, or assessing candidates must complete the Resourcing and Talent e-learning. The Resourcing and Talent team will work with Learning & Development to inform them who needs signed up to the e-learning and confirmation of completion will be required prior to any assessments (as a minimum.)

The reason we are implementing an e-learning is to ensure consistency of standards across all recruitment and promotion processes, as well as an understanding of key equality issues such as unconscious bias, Positive Action, and direct and indirect discrimination.

The e-learning lasts for a rolling 12-months and does not need completed for every individual process, unless any informal issues are identified and then Resourcing and Talent will recommend the employee re-takes the e-learning to refresh best practice.

If any additional training is identified, particularly where there is a large campaign, the Resourcing and Talent team will work to implement this, with the support of Learning and Development colleagues if required.

This e-learning programme will replace a previous Cumbria County Council e-learning package which was required by all recruiting managers to complete. Since disaggregation, there has been ad hoc advice given to managers on bias, Positive Action, and discrimination, however the e-learning will provide a consistent message, completion rates can be tracked, and there is a tool for the service to utilise if any issues arise within a process.

Once the policy has been signed off, the team are looking to launch as soon as possible, as the policy is affirming work that is already in progress across all recruitment. The next key project will be launching the e-learning, which we will share in a new part of the process in Weekly Update, the monthly Basic Command Unit meetings, and we also attend Workforce Development Group, where the policy will be circulated. If possible to share at a service Leadership Day, we will do this also.

2. On-Call Recruitment – proposal for November 2025 training course

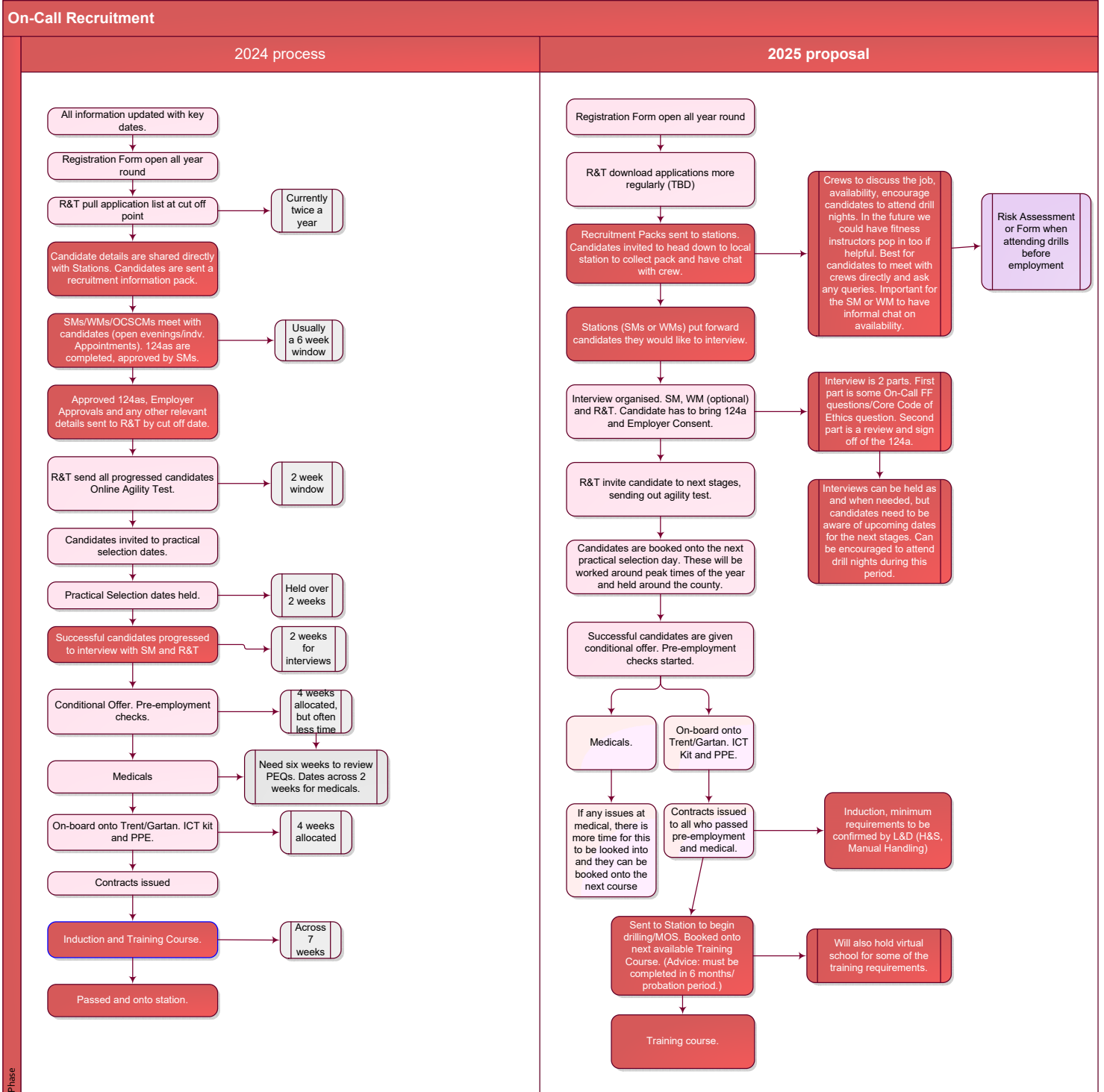
As shared at previous panels, there has been considerable work put into the On-Call recruitment process in 2024 however the service is still facing steady turnover, putting pressure on maintaining establishment levels across the county. This is without the pressure of recruiting to existing vacancies on stations.

The Resourcing and Talent team have compiled data from the past five years of On-Call recruitment to understand the leaver count each year alongside the reason for leaving. **Appendix A** shows the leaver information from 2020 to 2024, broken down by each year, with a year running from 01/01 to 31/12.

As well as the data, the team work closely with the L&D dept., who update on how many Trainee Firefighters complete the training course. The feedback from Trainees who 'drop-out' or withdraw from the training course is that the requirements of the role were not what they had expected, or that they have not maintained the fitness levels demonstrated at selection days (this is due to the process currently taking place over several months).

In discussion with Service Delivery and L&D, it is clear that a number of stages of the current process need adapted to support not only the recruitment of On-Call Firefighters, but also the retention of them.

The below flowcharts show the step-by-step process of 2024 and then the proposed 2025 process.



Key points of change in the 2025 process and the next steps:

- Candidates are invited to stations as their first point of contact. This will improve station involvement in the process (some stations do this very well; others will need some support). They are handed the On-Call Recruitment booklet at the station and talked through the key documentation with a Watch Manager or Station Manager, specifically the 124a Form (the availability form). This is continually an issue with On-Call recruitment processes, as candidates struggle to understand the form, struggle to complete, or will overcompensate and offer more availability than they can manage. A discussion with the right operational manager will ease this, however we need to be mindful of any unconscious bias arising from this, so thorough training and roll-out will need done with On-Call stations and it needs to be clear that this stage is not about shortlisting, instead about advice and information.
- Interviews are to be the first formal stage of the process. Managers have limited time at the minute, so to reduce capacity issues, we will invite candidates to an interview as the first step, including the managers, and then if successful the managers will be able to pass the candidate over to the Resourcing and Talent team and the L&D dept. to manage the rest of the process, hopefully reducing the demand on them throughout. Also, inviting a candidate to interview will be the first formal discussion around culture, behaviours, and availability, establishing who we are as a service with the candidate but confirming if they are the right fit for the station as well. Interviews can also be held as and when needed for the stations. We do foresee push back with this as managers are very used to the current process, so an effective roll-out and feedback sessions will be put in place.
- Following successful completion of the recruitment stages and all pre-employment checks, including medicals, candidates will become Trainee Firefighters (FFT) and will be set up as an employee. They will be required to attend their station drill nights and will be booked onto the next available training course, which must be within the first six months of their employment, in line with the Probation Policy that is currently being reviewed to bring Corporate and Operational in line with each other. In exceptional circumstances, a probation extension can be considered, where a higher priority station has taken the training course slots and a candidate might be going past the six-month point. FFTs will not be able to attend incidents, or any undertake any operational work that competent or developing FFs can. Whilst attending drill nights, a programme will be in place to ensure the FFT is completing required drills and key skills, some of which will be delivered through a proposed 'virtual station/school' where all FFTs will login and complete modules. One reason for this proposal is the candidate experience of going through an intense recruitment process and then straight onto their training course; we see several candidates 'drop-out' at the training course each year, either because they didn't fully understand the expectations of the role or because they realise it's not a right fit. Hopefully by going on their station sooner, they will build camaraderie with their crew, they will get a slower introduction to the service, and they will begin to invest in the role and service sooner. We hope this approach will also improve our retention figures, which are shown in the table below.

Total resignations 2020 – 2024		121	
Number of people in last 4 years that has left before 2 years' service	49	Percentage	41%
Number of people in last 4 years that has left before 5 years' service	69	Percentage	57%
Number of people in last 4 years that has left before 10 years' service	90	Percentage	74%

Appendix A – On-Call Firefighter Leaver Data (from 1st Jan to 31st Dec)

2020	Resignation	Resignation - Better terms and conditions elsewhere	Resignation - hours/shifts unsuitable	Retirement - Age	Retirement - Early	Retirement - Ill Health	Grand Total
Ret Crew Manager	1				1	1	3
Ret Crew Manager Dev				1			1
Ret Firefighter	14	1	1	4			20
Ret Firefighter Development	2						2
Ret Watch Manager	1						1
Ret Watch Manager A				1			1
Grand Total	18	1	1	6	1	1	28

2021	Dismissal - Conduct	Mutual Termination	Resignation	Resignation - Relocation	Retirement - Age	Retirement - Ill Health	Grand Total
Ret Crew Manager	1						1
Ret Firefighter		1	22	1	2		26
Ret Firefighter Competent			1				1
Ret Firefighter Dev						1	1
Ret Watch Manager A			2				2
Grand Total	1	1	25	1	2	1	31

2022	Died in Service	Dismissal - Absence	Resignation	Retirement - Age	Retirement - Early	Grand Total
Ret Crew Manager		1	1	2		4
Ret Crew Manager Dev					1	1
Ret Firefighter	1		24	1		26
Ret Watch Manager				2		2
Ret Watch Manager A				1		1
Grand Total	1	1	25	6	1	34

2023	Died in Service	Dismissal - Capability or Qualification	Dismissal - Conduct	Resignation	Retirement - Age	Retirement - Early	Grand Total
Ret Crew Manager	1	1	1	4			7
Ret Firefighter			2	20	6	2	30
Ret Watch Manager				1	2		3
Ret Watch Manager A				1			1
Grand Total	1	1	3	26	8	2	41

2024	Dismissal	Dismissal - Absent Without Leave	Resignation	Retirement - Age	Retirement - Early	Retirement - Ill Health	Grand Total
Ret Crew Manager			4	3		1	8
Ret Firefighter	1	1	19	2	1		24
Ret Watch Manager				1			1
Ret Watch Manager A			1				1
Grand Total	1	1	24	6	1	1	34

People and Talent Policy

Resourcing & Talent Policy

Version Control	Changes Made	Author
Version 1 Aug 2024	Full review. New template and branding. Changes to format. All employees are in scope. Updated language and renaming of policy. Appendices updated.	Orlanda Wright People and Talent

1. Introduction

1.1. The aims of this policy are:

- to promote safe and fair recruitment, appointment, and induction in Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service,
- to remove barriers and offer opportunities to all eligible applicants,
- and to protect our communities so they feel safe and supported with the employees working in our service.

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to all permanent and fixed-term employees, casual workers and volunteers, and staff engaged through agencies. Individuals who are engaged via a Secondment Agreement are covered in the Secondment Guidance.

2.2. This overarching policy applies to Operational and Corporate staff recruitment, however detailed procedures for recruitment and appointment processes are to be referred to where necessary.

3. Principles

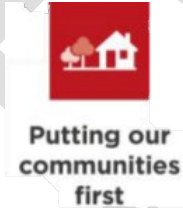

3.1. Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is dedicated to getting the right person in the right role, to make Cumbria a safer place for all.




3.2. This policy is based on the following principles and will:

Making Cumbria a safer place for all



- Ensure the fair treatment of all employees and applicants, regardless of equality factors, whilst also recognising diversity and removing identified barriers to opportunities.
- Offer support and engagement across all processes, promoting equal opportunity, and committing to levelling the playing field for all.
- Actively promote diversity through appointing applicants based on skills, experience, and assessment performance.
- Utilise Positive Action where there is an identified need and offer transparency and learning on this decision making.
- Always comply with relevant legislation and be responsive to changes in employment law and procedures as required.
- Ensure appropriate procedures are always followed to uphold the safeguarding of vulnerable people and the communities around us.
- Strive to develop internal talent, providing avenues for growth, training, and upleveling of skills.
- Consistently collect feedback and review all Resourcing and Talent processes, ensuring they are the most modern and supportive for all employees and roles.
- Empower managers and employees to challenge bias.

Our Core Code of Ethics	Our commitment
 <p>Putting our communities first</p>	<p>CFRS will ensure safe, fair, and ethical recruitment processes are undertaken to ensure the right people are in the right roles, delivering exceptional services to our communities through knowledge, skill, and values.</p> <p>Also, by working to increase diversity in our workforce, we aim to set the standard within our communities, not only representing the current community, but striving to visibly show the community of our future in Cumbria.</p>
 <p>Dignity and respect</p>	<p>CFRS will ensure all individuals involved with any recruitment process will be treated with dignity and respect, including applicants, external providers, panel members, key stakeholders, and employees involved.</p> <p>We will provide confidential and supportive conversations around reasonable adjustments, we will remove bias where</p>

	<p>possible in our processes, and we are committed to continuing to be a Disability Confident Employer.</p>
 <p>Equality, diversity and inclusion</p>	<p>CFRS will carry out our processes without regard to an applicant's sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, skin colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity leave, or trade union membership.</p> <p>We will utilise Positive Action where we identify underrepresentation in the service, we will work to remove barriers to equal opportunity, and we will listen to applicants from all equality strands with the aim of making change to support all.</p>
 <p>Integrity</p>	<p>CFRS will meet or exceed the expectations of all participating in processes and will provide, where possible, transparency and support to all applicants.</p> <p>We will work to build trust with all participating in the process, including the wider workforce, through consistency; informing applicants of key dates and working to adhere to these, removing sections of the application form where we have indicated they will be, and sharing non-confidential outcomes and successes across the service.</p>
 <p>Leadership</p>	<p>CFRS will work to be a sector leader in our resourcing and talent culture, working openly and collaboratively on a national scale to promote best practice.</p> <p>We will educate, train, and support management across the service to establish resourcing best practice, and we will actively encourage and collate feedback on recruitment processes, with the commitment of listening and making improvements for all.</p>

4. Management Responsibilities

4.1. As far as is reasonably practicable, management will:

- Ensure the policy is enforced and supported in a manner evident to employees.
- Ensure the policy is communicated effectively and that employees are made aware of the policy and guidelines and adhere to relevant procedures.

- Complete and promote relevant resourcing training available, across all processes.
- Ensure all applicants are treated fairly and offered equal opportunity.
- Where required, maintain accurate assessment records, and store them securely.
- Provide constructive feedback to applicants where requested.
- Ensure pre-employment checks and requirements are followed correctly, seeking support from Resourcing and Talent colleagues if needed.
- Ensure a safe and inclusive environment is provided for all applicants.

5. Resourcing and Talent Responsibilities

5.1. As far as is reasonably practicable, the Resourcing and Talent team will:

- Ensure the policy is accessible and followed with honesty and integrity.
- Ensure the policy is communicated effectively and that the service is aware of the policy and guidelines, enabling adherence to relevant procedures.
- Where required, offer bespoke campaigns for processes that are consistent and robust, but provide flexibility for Service need.
- Identify underrepresentation and utilise Positive Action where required.
- Create, deliver, and promote resourcing training.
- Ensure all applicants are treated fairly and offered equal opportunity.
- Comply with GDPR legislation around all resourcing data and information.
- Enable managers to provide constructive feedback to applicants where requested.
- Process accurate and safe pre-employment checks, ensuring legislation is followed.
- Be responsive to changes in employment law and recruitment best practice.
- Seek feedback from all involved with processes, committing to making change where possible.
- Securely collect and analyse EDI data, and work with staff network groups where available.
- Ensure a safe and inclusive environment is provided for all participating in any process.

6. The Equality Act and Recruitment

- 6.1. The Equality Act 2010 is legislation that sets out the protected characteristics and prohibits discriminatory behaviour based on these. Discrimination means treating someone less favourably than someone else because of a certain characteristic, causing harm and distress to that individual and not complying with legislation.
- 6.2. The Equality Act 2010 isn't just for new applicants going through a process, as is often assumed with recruitment. It protects employees and workers, contractors and self-employed people, applicants, and former employees.
- 6.3. The protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 currently are:
- age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage or civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
- 6.4. Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service are aware that other protected characteristics are being identified and the legislation hasn't been updated to reflect these, so if there is any query around an applicant and a manager is unsure about discrimination or removing barriers, please get in touch with the Resourcing and Talent team as soon as possible for a confidential and supportive conversation.
- 6.5. Managers must ensure that no applicant is discriminated against directly or indirectly during the recruitment process. This includes the wording of adverts and Job Descriptions, for example phrases such as 'recent graduates' or 'highly qualified' should only be used where they are actual requirements of the job. If these are not requirements of the job, it could be regarded as discriminating against younger or older people who have not had the opportunity to get certain qualifications.
- 6.6. Applicants must not be asked questions, either in the application form or at interview, about the 'protected characteristics' or about:
- their health
 - if they're married, single or in a civil partnership.
 - if they have children or plan to have children

You can ask about health or disability if:

- there are necessary requirements of the job that can't be met with reasonable adjustments
- you're finding out if someone needs help to take part in a selection test or interview.
- you're using 'positive action' to recruit a disabled person.

6.7. The Resourcing and Talent team aim to remove any opportunities for bias to arise in recruitment processes and will support managers with any queries.

7. Inclusive Recruitment

7.1. Everyone has unconscious bias, so we must ensure our recruitment processes reduce the influence of bias and discrimination wherever possible. CFRS is committed to getting the right person in the right role, however within any process there can be conflicting ideas around suitability for a role, as well as pressure to ensure a 'good hire', and this allows the potential for bias to emerge. Clear, objective, structured and transparent processes are fairer for applicants, support equal outcomes, and enable employers to attract a more diverse talent pool.

7.2. Below are some of the ways to create inclusive recruitment across the service:

- Remove biased and gender-coded language from adverts.
- Offer flexible working where possible.
- Focus engagement and outreach with marginalised groups identified in our workforce.
- Advertise vacancies in places more likely to be accessed by marginalised groups.
- Provide applicants with clear expectations, timelines, and communications.
- Be proactive, educated, and supportive around reasonable adjustments.
- 'Anonymise' application forms where possible and be transparent about which information is shared with shortlisting panels.
- Use skill-based assessments where possible.
- Share and collate feedback from and to all applicants.
- Encourage applicants to reapply.
- Analyse recruitment data to prioritise inclusion efforts.

7.3. It is key to note that often there is discussion around underrepresented groups being disadvantaged in recruitment processes, however in some workforces there can be groups that are overrepresented but still face discrimination. The term 'marginalised groups' is a more accurate way of considering these groups when identifying barriers and discrimination.

7.4. Where possible, CFRS will undertake a fair and thorough process for all vacancies and opportunities in the service. Expressions of interest are used where applicants can make the Resourcing and Talent team aware they interested in general careers at CFRS. The Resourcing and Talent team will capture these and review in line with all campaigns and recruitment processes. Expressions of Interest can increase the risk of discrimination and

biases, whether unintentional or not, and should not be used to fill internal recruitment needs, unless in exceptional circumstances. Where a manager seeks to use an Expression of Interest, they must complete a RT1 - Vacancy Approval Form and get written approval before moving forward with this.

8. Employment Rights

8.1. The main employment rights of “employees” and “workers” are outlined below:

Employees AND Workers	Employees ONLY (i.e. not Casual Workers)
National Minimum Wage	Written statement of particulars (contract of employment) Minimum notice period
Paid Annual Leave (inc. Bank Holidays)	Redundancy pay / collective redundancy consultation
Rest Breaks	Unfair dismissal rights
Maximum Working Week (over 17 week reference period)	Continuous service
Maximum nightshift hours & health assessment	Written statement of reasons for dismissal
Protection in the event of Whistleblowing	Sick pay / leave
Right to be accompanied in the event of discipline / grievance	Maternity / paternity / adoption pay / leave
Part time working protection Night working protection	Time off for antenatal care Time off for dependants care
Protection for unlawful deductions from wages	Right to request to work flexibly Right to request time off to train
Protection against discrimination	Parental Leave
The right to exercise any of the above rights	Fixed term working protection
	Protection under TUPE

9. Working Time Directive and Secondary Employment

- 9.1. It is a legal requirement that any employees working more than 48-hours a week (averaged over a 17-week period) must opt out of the Working Time Regulations. If an employee wishes to work/will be working more than 48 hours a week when their employment with CFRS begins, they must opt out of the Working Time Regulations via the relevant form.
- 9.2. We also require all existing and future employees to complete a Secondary Employment Form.

10. Data Protection and Privacy

- 10.1. All personal data collected during the recruitment process is processed in accordance with our Data protection policy.
- 10.2. We do not collect unnecessary personal data from applicants during the recruitment process. For example, we will only request bank account details and next-of-kin contact details from successful applicants. Data collected as part of the recruitment process is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing the recruitment exercise effectively to decide to whom to offer the job.
- 10.3. All candidates are required to consent to their data being processed to facilitate the recruitment process. This fulfils the requirement of Article 6 of the GDPR that any processing have a legal basis (in this case, basis 6.a).
- 10.4. In the event of an offer of employment being made in light of the changed contractual relationship between an applicant and a successful candidate, successful candidates are invited to consent to their data being collected in order to facilitate DBS checks and employment referencing, reaffirming the 6.a basis.
- 10.5. Should Candidates wish to access recruitment data, they are able to request this under the Subject Access Request procedure. This is managed by the CFRS Information Governance Team.
- 10.6. Employees should report immediately any inappropriate access or disclosure of job applicant data in accordance with our organisation's data protection policy. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under our organisation's Disciplinary procedure.

11. Complaints

- 11.1. If an internal employee has a complaint about any part of a recruitment process, they can raise this informally with the Resourcing and Talent team. If an internal employee prefers to raise a formal complaint, they can do so via the Workplace Complaints procedure.

- 11.2. If an external applicant has a complaint about any part of a recruitment process, they can raise this informally with the Resourcing and Talent team. If they prefer to raise a formal complaint, they can do so via our Complaints process. This can be found on our external webpages.
- 11.3. If a manager, employee, stakeholder, or external provider is concerned about practice they witness in a recruitment process, they can raise this informally with either the Resourcing and Talent team or the HR team (in cases where the issue is with the Resourcing and Talent team). If they would prefer to raise a formal complaint, they can do so via our Complaints process. This can be found on our external webpages.

DRAFT

Right Care, Right Person Update

Date: 6 February 2025

Agenda Item : 10

Originating Officer : Ian Seel, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

1. What is the Report About? (Executive Summary)

- 1.1. Right Care Right Person (RCRP) originated in Humberside prior to a national mandate expecting delivery across the UK. It introduced changes to the way Cumbria Constabulary makes operational decisions when receiving requests to carry out concern for welfare checks on members of the public and respond to mental health reports (AWOL).
- 1.2. RCRP went live in Cumbria on 14 May 2024.
- 1.3. Cumbria Constabulary still responds to specific areas such as missing persons, investigating crime and incidents relating to children.
- 1.4. This document provides an update on the impact of RCRP for Cumbria FRS.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. It is recommended that the board note the contents of the report, and raise any further queries.

3. Background to the Proposals

- 3.1 Prior to RCRP going live, Cumbria Police attended an average of 38 calls a day that were in scope. They expected to still attend 11 calls with 27 calls going elsewhere.
- 3.2 It was expected that calls would be mainly referred to the Crisis team, NWS, Adult Social Care, Childrens Services, hospitals and pushed back to the caller. No referrals were expected to be regularly made to Cumbria FRS.
- 3.3 Cumbria FRS already have a Memo of Understanding in place with Cumbria Police and NWS to gain entry for life risk incidents to allow medical staff access to a patient.



3.4 Prior to going live, the following preparation within Cumbria FRS was made:

- Attendance at regular strategic RCRP multi agency meetings.
- Attendance at regular RCRP task and finish group meetings.
- Tabletop exercise to predict and understand the impact/outcomes.
- Adjustments to the MOU for gaining entry on behalf of NWAS.
- Added mental health support information to the CFRS website to allow signposting for support.
- Awareness training delivered to flexi duty managers to provide a standardised approach to response requests and assist in identifying any trends.
- Awareness training delivered to supervisory managers.
- North West Fire Control set up a separate incident type ‘concern for welfare’ to capture some of the calls they may receive that didn’t fit into the agreed incident type list.

3.5 During the go live, Cumbria FRS took part in the following:

- Attendance at daily drop-in surgeries chaired by Cumbria Police.
- Monitoring of incident statistics.
- The Ops Management Committee (NWFC) are over-seeing the impact of RCRP.
- NWFC are building the national operational guidance for control regarding into their ways of working.

3.6 **Impact of RCRP**

The requests made to NWFC can vary and therefore translate into different incident types, as listed below.

Assist other agency:

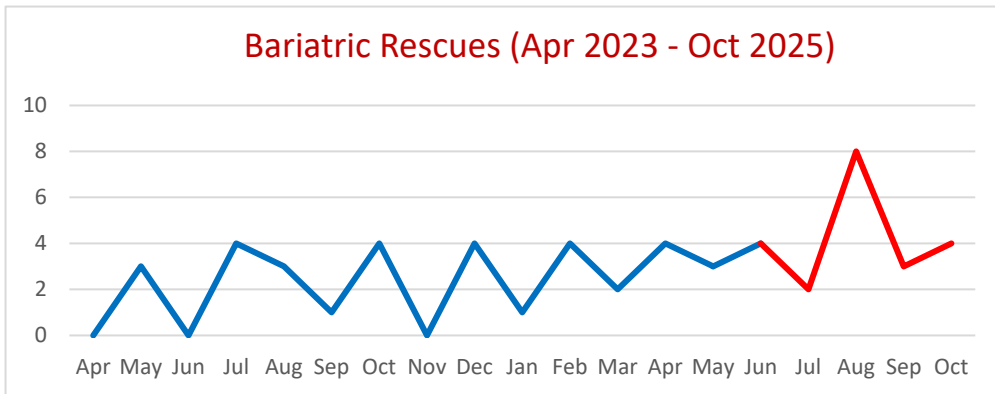
Year	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024	2024 – Oct 25
No. of Incidents	192	376	451	258



The red section indicates the period following the implementation of RCRP.

Bariatric rescues:

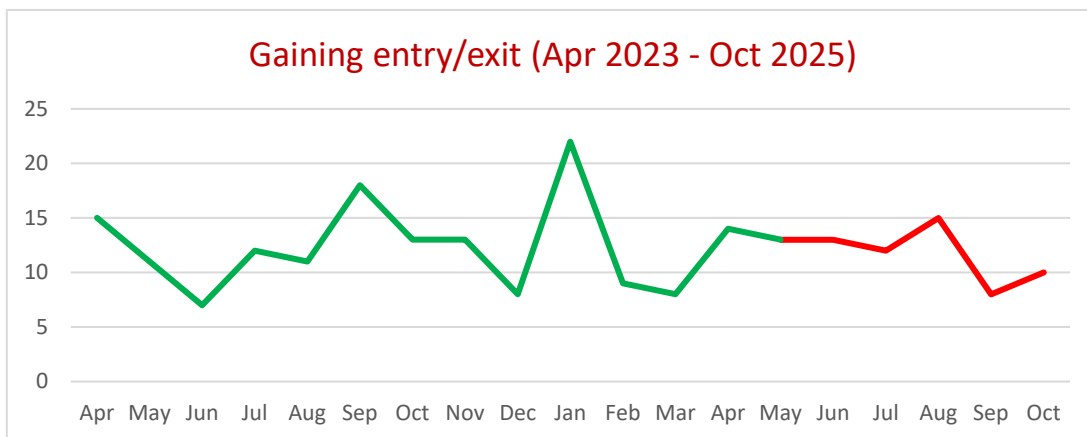
Year	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024	2024 – Oct 25
No. of Incidents	65	48	26	26



The red section indicates the period following the implementation of RCRP.

Gaining Entry/Exit:

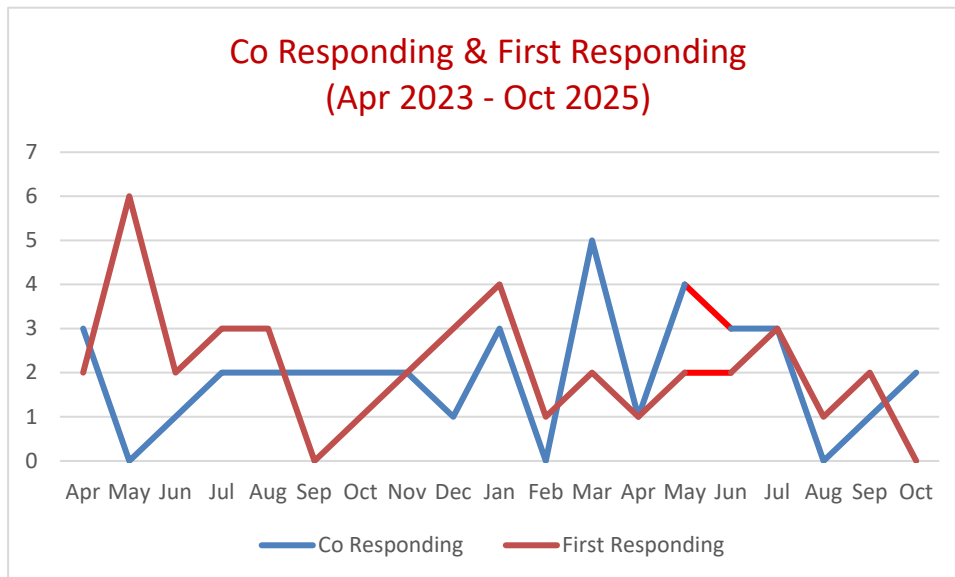
Year	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024	2024 – Oct 25
No. of Incidents	253	201	147	87



The red section indicates the period following the implementation of RCRP.

Medical Incident (Co Responder & First Responder):

Year	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024	2024 – Oct 25
Co Responder	18	42	23	14
First Responder	27	38	29	12



The red section indicates the period following the implementation of RCRP.

Northwest Fire Control has reported difficulty in directly attributing specific calls or requests to the RCRP initiative. However, by analysing trends in incident types compared to previous years, they have observed a year-on-year increase in NWS Gaining Entry calls. It's important to note that this trend predates RCRP and is likely linked to a broader increase in demand for ambulance services. Additionally, NWFC's call challenge process can sometimes delay resource mobilisation, impacting overall response times.

4 Conclusion

RCRP has had a negligible impact on the number of incidents attended by Cumbria FRS. Since its implementation, incident numbers have slightly decreased across various types, with the exception of bariatric-related incidents. Lancashire FRS, the first in the northwest to adopt RCRP, has also reported minimal change.

The preparation work has put assisting other agencies at the forefront of our preplanning work activities and ensured that all flexi managers and control room staff add the appropriate amount of scrutiny to resource requests.

Mobilisation issues arise regularly due to discrepancies between incident descriptions provided by the NWS control room and the actual nature of the event, leading to the deployment of FRS resources.

Making mobilising decisions to assist NWS can be a large moral pressure on flexi managers and control room staff. It is therefore important for the Service Leadership Team to outline the appetite and boundaries in advance so that partnership working and call challenge processes can be implemented to ensure appropriate mobilising.

SLT will continue to receive six-monthly updates on RCRP as part of the current performance reporting arrangements.

Ian Seel

Community Scrutiny Panel

Title: 2024 Annual Report

Date of Meeting: 6 February 2025

Agenda Item No: 11

Originating Officers: Joanne Head, Governance Manager

Executive Summary:

The purpose of the Community Scrutiny Panel is to promote and influence high standards of professional ethics, to challenge; encourage and support the Commissioner, Chief Fire Officer and the Chief Constable in their work by monitoring and dealing with issues of ethics and integrity in their organisations.

Recommendation:

That the Panel;

1. Consider the draft 2024 Annual Report; and
2. Provide feedback to inform the final version to be presented to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner; and the Joint Audit Committee in May 2025.

1. Introduction & Background

- 1.1 The Panel's role is to identify issues and monitor change where required. It has no decision-making powers, although it is able to make recommendations to the Commissioner, Chief Fire Officers and the Chief Constable. It considers questions of ethics and integrity within both organisations and provides strategic advice, challenge and support in relation to such issues.

2. Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 A draft Annual Report has been prepared highlighting the work of the Community Scrutiny Panel during 2024. The report illustrates the areas of business reviewed by the Panel; their findings and where the Panel have made proposals or suggestions to improve business practices and procedures.

3. Supplementary information

Appendix 1 – 2024 Community Scrutiny Panel Annual Report



2024

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT



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Foreword from the Panel Chair

Welcome to the Community Scrutiny Panel Annual Report for 2024. This joint Panel promotes and influences high standards of ethical performance across the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service. Being entirely independent it provides robust assurance to the residents of Cumbria by investigating, dip sampling, constructively challenging and reviewing a broad range of aspects of policy, process and performance, through the lens of ethics and integrity.

I have had the pleasure of being Chair of the Community Scrutiny Panel since the beginning of 2024, having been a member of the Panel since 2022 and prior to that volunteering as an independent custody visitor.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to see challenge and change for the people of Cumbria. This can be attributed to many reasons, not least us still dealing with legacy issues from the pandemic; the increasing challenges of the cost-of-living crisis, and of course societal issues and political instability that affect us all in both the UK and abroad. The Panel have been hugely impressed by each organisations' resilience, commitment, focus and determination to serve our county; constantly striving to offer both the fire and rescue and the policing services that the public expect. This is of great credit to the organisations and their officers and staff.

While 2024 has been an incredibly challenging year, we have enhanced our work programme, adapted to look at a number of thematic areas and recruited additional members to the Panel broadening our capability, insight and diversity. The information in this, and our other quarterly reports, helps to promote a wider understanding and awareness of performance and ethical approach of both Fire and Rescue and the Constabulary.

We hope that you find the report useful and informative and on a personal level I would like to thank all colleagues I have worked with over the last few years in developing, evolving and growing the role of the panel, and our work.

Jane Scattergood

Community Scrutiny Panel Chair

Forewords

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, David Allen



2024 has been a year of change not only for my office but for the Community Scrutiny Panel. From 1 April 2023 we took on Fire Governance and the Panel are now encompassing this area of business into their annual work programme. I am incredibly grateful for the commitment, professionalism, independent and pragmatic

approach taken by the Community Scrutiny Panel in their work. They provide effective and sensible challenge which enables my office, the police and the fire and rescue service to take stock and indeed to change practice where necessary in order to improve the service we are all here to deliver to the public of Cumbria. The ability of the panel to evolve and undertake in-depth scrutiny of specific areas provides not only myself but also the communities of Cumbria with additional assurance. It seeks to achieve this by acting as a critical friend in the work it oversees.

Whilst we are blessed with highly professional, dedicated and committed police officers, staff, firefighters and fire staff we must always be ready to examine performance to ensure that each organisation maintains the highest possible standards, when often faced with difficult and challenging circumstances. I look forward to working with the Panel in 2025.

David Allen
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria

Chief Constable, Rob Carden



As a Constabulary we strive to provide members of the public with an outstanding police service to keep Cumbria safe. The ongoing transformation of the force has delivered significant improvements in performance and service delivery to communities across Cumbria over the last 12 months. The breadth of these

improvements covers a range of areas including call handling, response to calls, crime data integrity, standards of investigation, outcome rates, proactivity and crime prevention. However, in order to build public confidence in policing, it is imperative that our police officers and staff continue to demonstrate the highest ethical and moral standards.

The important work of the panel provides us with the independent scrutiny to ensure that we demonstrate the highest standards of ethical performance and continue to respect a national model of policing based on the principle of 'policing by consent'.

Rob Carden
Chief Constable, Cumbria Constabulary

Chief Fire Officer, Paul Hancock



The Vision of Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is to be a community focussed, professional and trusted Fire and Rescue Service that makes Cumbria a safer place for all.

Over the last twelve months the Service has gone through a significant change process and moved from the governance of Cumbria County Council to

the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC). This has involved a significant amount of work, that has included the creation of new departments, a large number of policies and procedures to be rewritten and the introduction of new IT systems. Despite this, front-line performance to the people of Cumbria continues to be excellent.

The scrutiny work of the panel provides us and the public with the reassurance that we are delivering within a framework based on the National Fire Chief Councils Core Code of Ethics and enables us to continue to embed within the PFCCs governance structure with confidence.

Paul Hancock
Fire Service Lead, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service

About the Community Scrutiny Panel

The Community Scrutiny Panel challenge, encourage, support and promote and influence high standards of professional work and ethics within Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC); ensuring that these are effective in all organisations. This report provides an overview of the work that the Panel has carried out during 2024.

The Panel meets privately on a quarterly basis to enable open and frank discussions. The agenda and reports are published on the Commissioner's website following each meeting, with only sensitive or confidential information being excluded. Notes from the meetings are provided by the Panel to the Commissioner to provide information about the Constabulary, Fire Service and OPFCC's performance in areas that relate to ethics and integrity. The purpose of this is to promote openness, transparency and public confidence.

A programme of work is developed and agreed on an annual basis enabling the Panel to fulfill its terms of reference and scrutiny role. Where necessary the Panel will also provide scrutiny for areas identified during HMICFRS inspections to enable the implementation of recommendations to be monitored. In addition, they have critical and important thematic issues referred to them by both Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. This enabled the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Officers to be provided with independent reassurance.

Further information regarding the Panel, its membership, and the work it carries out can be found on the Commissioner's website:

[Community Scrutiny Panel](#)



**The membership of the
Panel in 2024 was:**

**Jane Scattergood
Andrew Dodd
Eloise Abbott
Penny Walker
Alison Ramsey**

**Alex Rocke
Megan Masters
Shaun Thomson
Ben Phillips**

Work of the Panel During 2024

Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct



The Panel's role is to ensure that both the Constabulary, Fire Service and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner have embedded within their organisations their respective **Code of Ethics** and **Code of Conduct**.

The Panel have been provided with assurance whilst carrying out their role that all organisations take the ethos of the Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct seriously and this has been evident in the reviews and dip samples they have undertaken in other areas of business. During their various dip sample sessions, the Panel saw first-hand that policies and procedures within the Constabulary and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service had the ethos of the Code of Ethics embedded within them.

Similarly, the Commissioner upon election in May 2024 swore an oath to act with integrity and signed a Code of Conduct and Ethics. It sets out how the Commissioner has agreed to abide by the seven standards of conduct recognised as the Nolan Principles. This Ethical Framework allows transparency in all areas of the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner. These principles encompass the Commissioner's work locally and whilst representing Cumbria in regional and national forums.

Equally importantly, all the OPFCC members of staff adhere to a **Staff Code of Conduct** which is based upon the model Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees and incorporates the principles arising from the Nolan Report, providing a framework for all employees in terms of official conduct. During 2024 the Panel did not identify any complaints received from either members of staff or the Commissioner regarding conduct or integrity.


Public Complaints



At their quarterly meetings the Panel received performance data from the Constabulary on the number of complaints received, how these have been managed and whether they were within the required timescales. From these reports there were areas which had again seen an increase in complaints being received, these being 'Police Action following Contact', 'Police Powers (Policies and Procedures) and Use of Force. The Panel undertook to specifically review some of these complaints to see if there were any trends or concerns during their two dip sample session in 2024. During these sessions within the Constabulary's Professional Standards Department (PSD) they reviewed a total of 60 files directly via the Centurion system enable members to view all information, actions and outcomes on the live system. Panel members spoke directly with case workers regarding any issues or concerns.

Quality of Service Issues

The Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner received 789 letters, emails and telephone calls from members of the public who wished to raise issues or dissatisfaction with the Commissioner, highlighting issues that were concerning local communities. Many of these related to operational policing and the OPFCC liaised with the Chief Constable's Staff office to provide information or a solution for the individual. The types of issues raised are varied and detailed below are some of the categories:

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- Police Service Dissatisfaction regarding the standard of service provided or received
 - Firearms Licensing
 - Fox Hunting
 - Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Anti-Social Driving
 - Crime – drug dealing, rural crime, knife crime and ongoing 'in progress' issues.
 - Welfare concerns

Many of the solutions were provided by the Constabulary in conjunction with local policing teams, local focus hubs and partner agencies, including local educational establishments, to see to identify the underlying causes of crime or behaviours and seek to support and deter individuals from going on to make further adverse live choices. The information gathered is used to look at how assistance or changes can be provided not only locally but throughout Cumbria. The Commissioner also uses the information to implement local initiatives to make a difference to local communities. Some of these included Safety of Women at Night (SWAN), Safer Streets Projects in Whitehaven and Workington, and funding for local projects through the 'Property Fund'.

The Commissioner also has responsibility for Fire governance and the OPFCC received twelve contacts from the public which related to:

- Fire Resources (buildings and fire fighters)
- Fire Consultation
- Miscellaneous/general issues
- Workforce complaints

The OPFCC also received a number of compliments thanking the Commissioner, Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service for the service they provide.



Complaint Reviews

From 1 February 2020 the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) has carried out **Public Complaint Review** outcomes of when requested by the complainant. During 2024 the OPFCC received 49 review requests, which 11 (22.4%) of those carried out were upheld and recommendations made. The Constabulary had carried out further work providing the complainant and OPFCC with their findings and outcome. Identified learning from the upheld reviews was collated and disseminated within local teams and more widely across the force. The Commissioner is sighted on this information and monitors force progress and learning at his Executive Board meetings with the Chief Constable and other senior officers.



Misconduct - Police Officer & Police Staff

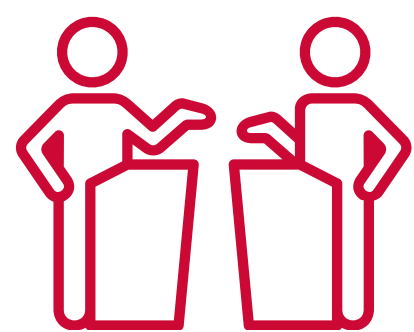
The Panel received information on a quarterly basis relating to **Police Officer** and **Police Staff Misconduct** from the Constabulary's Professional Standards Department. This enables the Panel to monitor performance in relation to these areas of business and consider any patterns or trends across the whole organisation. During 2024 there were 80 conduct allegations made and the outcomes ranged from dismissal, written warnings and reflective practice. As part of their work programme the Panel have reviewed 13 gross misconduct files during two dip sample sessions in 2024. During the session the Panel reviewed all completed files, providing views and recommendations for any improvement in the way information was provided, how cases were handled or the public perception of the handling of such cases. The conduct matters related to the use of Constabulary systems without a policing purpose; discreditable conduct (including sexual harassment and other sexual conduct; unprofessional behaviour (respect and courtesy); honesty and integrity; and assault. During 2025 the Panel will look to review completed accelerated misconduct hearing cases as part of their work programme.

Misconduct - Fire Employees



The Panel carried out a dip sample session of **Fire Employee Misconduct** cases in October, reviewing 10 of the 13 recorded cases which had been dealt with during previous 12 months. The cases had been dealt with a timely and professional manner. The use of an external investigator had produced clear and concise reports, providing consistency for the service. The Panel were particularly pleased to see that following the conclusion of each misconduct case it was internally reviewed to ascertain where improvements could be made in future cases or within the service.

Grievances



On a six-monthly basis the Panel have reviewed **Police Grievances** being processed by the Constabulary. Although the Constabulary's HR Department dealt with all grievances, they link in with the Anti-Corruption Unit to ensure matters were cross referenced. In April and October 2024, the Panel reviewed a total of 9 finalised cases and discussed each one in turn with the HR Manager. Generally, the grievances were regarding policies and procedures or action taken against an individual. For any officer or member of staff leaving the organisation the Panel were keen that detailed conversations were held with individuals to help understand the issues and make improvements to officer and staff employment. The Panel also reviewed three **Fire Workplace Complaints (Grievances)** members found that the outcomes were appropriate. They recommended that further training for managers be provided to enable them to deal with such matters.

Civil Claims



On behalf of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner the Panel also monitor **Civil Claims** being processed by the Constabulary and the Fire and Rescue Service. They received information about the types of claims being made, the stage the proceedings had reached and about the claims that had been resolved. As part of this oversight the Panel seek assurance that any trends are being identified and how the organisation has learnt from particular cases; disseminating such information throughout the organisation to avoid future risks and claims. For the Constabulary 85 claims had been made for a wide variety of issues; whilst the Fire and Rescue Service had 3 live cases being dealt with. Any identified learning was subsequently disseminated across the relevant organisation.

Young in Service Officers



Young in Service Officers continued to be an area which the Panel reviewed across a number of areas of business including complaints, misconduct and officers leaving the organisation. As part of their 2025 work programme the panel would be reviewing sickness absence and exit interviews

Recruitment – Fire Fighters



The Fire and Rescue service continued to carry out **'On-Call' Recruitment** throughout the year. Following feedback from the Panel in 2023 the service had changed the process which had received many positive responses. The process was now open all-year round to enable the service to build up a relationship and support potential candidates. Work had been carried out to speed up the different elements to allow candidates to understand whether they had been successful and move to the next element. The diversity of the workforce continued to developed, seeing more females joining and work being carried out to support neurodiverse and dyslexic candidates.

Police Officer & Staff Wellbeing



During 2024 the Panel monitored **Officer and Staff Wellbeing and Sickness**. In November 2024 the total headcount for Police Officers was 1,359; Police Staff 704 and 60 PCSOs. Further recruitment would be carried out during 2025 and the Panel would be monitoring this as part of the 2025 work programme. During the second half of the year officer absence rates had increased from 3.6% at the same point in 2023 to 5.3%; with staff absence falling from 4.4% to 3.6% at the end of September 2024. Officer retention was a cause of concern to the Panel with the number of officers leaving the organisation increasing (7.3% during 2023/24) and a prediction that this would continue to rise during 2025. As part of the 2025 work programme the Panel would be dip sampling Constabulary employee absence and exit interviews.

CFRS Employee Absences



The Fire and Rescue Service had taken the decision to combine the firefighter and staff sickness procedures into one. This would benefit both the organisation and its staff. The new Firewatch System would ensure that there was a clear and consistent policy and approach for all staff, enabling CFRS to obtain data and trends information. A Mental Health App was being developed and would be available for everyone to download and use. The Panel dip sampled 9 cases and identified that on occasions the cases lacked accurate records of discussions and agreed actions which was essential for both the organisation and individual. They recommended that the sickness process would benefit from having a timeline identifying the different stages and options for managing absence to assist managers.

Police Custody Detention



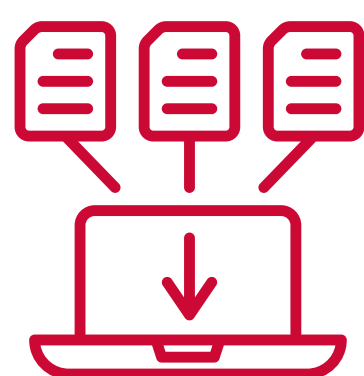
As part of the Government framework to monitor **Custody Detention Scrutiny** the Panel moved from an annual to quarterly performance reports and dip sample sessions where they reviewed 14 cases and provided feedback. They found that cell insertions were controlled and well managed; use of force forms were not completed by all officers; and raised concerns on the average time of detention disparity between white women and Asian women. It was understood that this was due to time taken for interpreters to attend police stations particularly for police interviews.

Stop & Search and Use of Force



During 2024 the Panel undertook quarterly reviews of **Stop and Search and Use of Force**, enabling the implementation of HMICFRS recommendations to be monitored. The Panel carried out reviews of incidents via body worn video and completed forms, reviewing 53 separate incidents, some of which included incidents where the use of **TASER** had also been a factor. The Constabulary were using Stop and Search as a key tool by the proactive policing teams to help prevent and detect crimes. During some of the Stop and Search cases it was noted that young in-service officers were often quick to apply handcuffs leading individuals to become agitated, more resistant and non-cooperative. Although it ensured that officers remained safe, the Panel felt that the use of softer and verbal skills could achieve the same outcome and this was something that the force was developing with officers.

Information Management



During 2024 the Panel received six monthly reports on how the Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Service and Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner were complying with their statutory duties in relation processing and managing data. This included Freedom of Information Requests, Subject Access Requests and data processing. Both the OPFCC and Constabulary continued to see a year-on-year increase in the number of requests being received. The reports also identified whether any data breaches had occurred and how these were dealt with, including whether or not they had been reported to the Information Commissioner's Office and the subsequent outcomes. CFRS also had responsibility to respond to planning applications within 14 days and during the first 6 months they responded to 247 applications with a 94.1% completion rate within the 14-day period.

Violence Against Women and Girls



In May, the Panel was provided with an update on the work being carried out by the Constabulary to deliver an array of services in response to offences such as domestic abuse, sexual crime and patterns of behaviour. Cumbria was sixth nationally for positive outcomes or conviction rates, although there was some disproportion in how crimes were recorded and their outcomes. This had led to a domestic abuse trained sergeant and inspector reviewing each case to ensure everything that could have been done had been, to provide the best possible service.

Race Action Plan



The Police Race Action Plan was initiated in May 2022 and sets out changes across policing to improve outcomes for Black people who work within or interact with policing. The Plan was split into four workstreams and the Panel were briefed on the work being carried out by the Force. Training was being provided and rolled out across the workforce, identifying how to address anti-racism, support staff and report issues to maintain the Code of Ethics. Good work was being carried out in Barrow where a sergeant had been working with black and minority groups, embedding PCSO's into different communities and setting up a desk within a multicultural organisation.

Property Store



In 2022 the Panel had raised concerns about the number of civil claims being received in relation to lost or damaged property which had been held by the police. A review of all property stores had been carried out with a number of new storage and working practices being implemented. A significant step forward of inventory management had been realised with bar coding of all property locations to enable accurate accounting and auditing of property. Work was being carried out to identify different methods the force could use to dispose of digital devices. Cannabis dismantling was being developed to ensure a consistent approach to the dismantling and seizure of items from cannabis cultivations. The Panel would continue to monitor this work through reports and any reduction in civil claims being made.

Right Care, Right Person



From May 2024, the Constabulary launched a new approach when dealing with vulnerable people who had health or social care needs to ensure that the right person with the right skills, training and expertise met their needs; and where the force did not have a legal responsibility to deal with the matter. This approach included signposting callers to contact the appropriate agency especially if the responsibility for a duty of care lay with another organisation. Collaborative work with partner organisations had been developed with testing of the designed toolkit taking place at the end of 2023 and early 2024 in preparation for the launch. As part of the 2025 programme the Panel will receive an update on the impact of the implementation.

Thematic Sessions

Since its inception, the Panel has delivered a significant programme of work on a planned, dynamic and responsive basis. Detailed below are some of the areas the Panel reviewed during 2024.



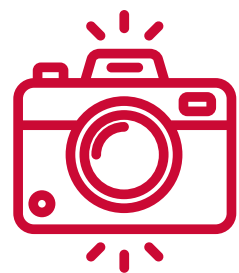
Police Officer/Police Staff Vetting - during 2024 the Panel once again sought assurance from the Constabulary that they were carrying out rigorous vetting of new and existing officers and staff. There had been an increase in the number of vetting cases and a change to the College of Policing APP would place further requirements for dealing with vetting applications. Vetting dip sample sessions took place during February and August 2024, where the Panel reviewed a total of 16 cases. The Panel had found that robust checks had been carried out and where necessary applicants had not been progressed where they did not meet the strict criteria.



From July 2023 legislation had been passed requiring anyone working for CFRS (staff and volunteers) were required to have a **Disclosure Barring Service** (DBS) check as a condition of their appointment. The service had carried out over 600 checks which had identified a total of 29 positive outcomes. The Panel had dip sampled 13 cases and found that appropriate risk assessments and action had been taken where necessary. Their feedback had helped to inform and improve the process for future checks.



Home Safety Visits is an important element of CFRS' fire prevention programme. During 2023/24 they carried out 8,324 visits with a view to preventing accidental dwelling fires or fatalities. Referrals were often made from the NHS, police, social services or other organisations. The Panel dip sampled 18 referrals which represented a cross section of the different referral routes.



The use of **Body Worn Video** continued to feature within the monitoring work of the Panel. In 2023 the Panel had raised concerns and through work of the Constabulary with the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) they had agreed a standardised national approach to pre-vent buffering on all Cumbria BWV recordings. The Panel had also identified that when attending incidents officers were not always activating their BWV when dealing with incidents or members of the public continued to be an issue, or the footage is not marked and retained. Although the situation has improved significantly over recent years. Some complaints could have been dealt with quicker and more effectively if this independent evidence had been available.

Panel Member Recruitment

The Panel Chair, Alan Rankin, retired from the Panel in February 2024 having completed 9 years' service. Following the announcement of his retirement in late 2023 an appoint process was carried out in January 2024. At the conclusion of this process Jane Scattergood was appointed as Chair for a two-year term.

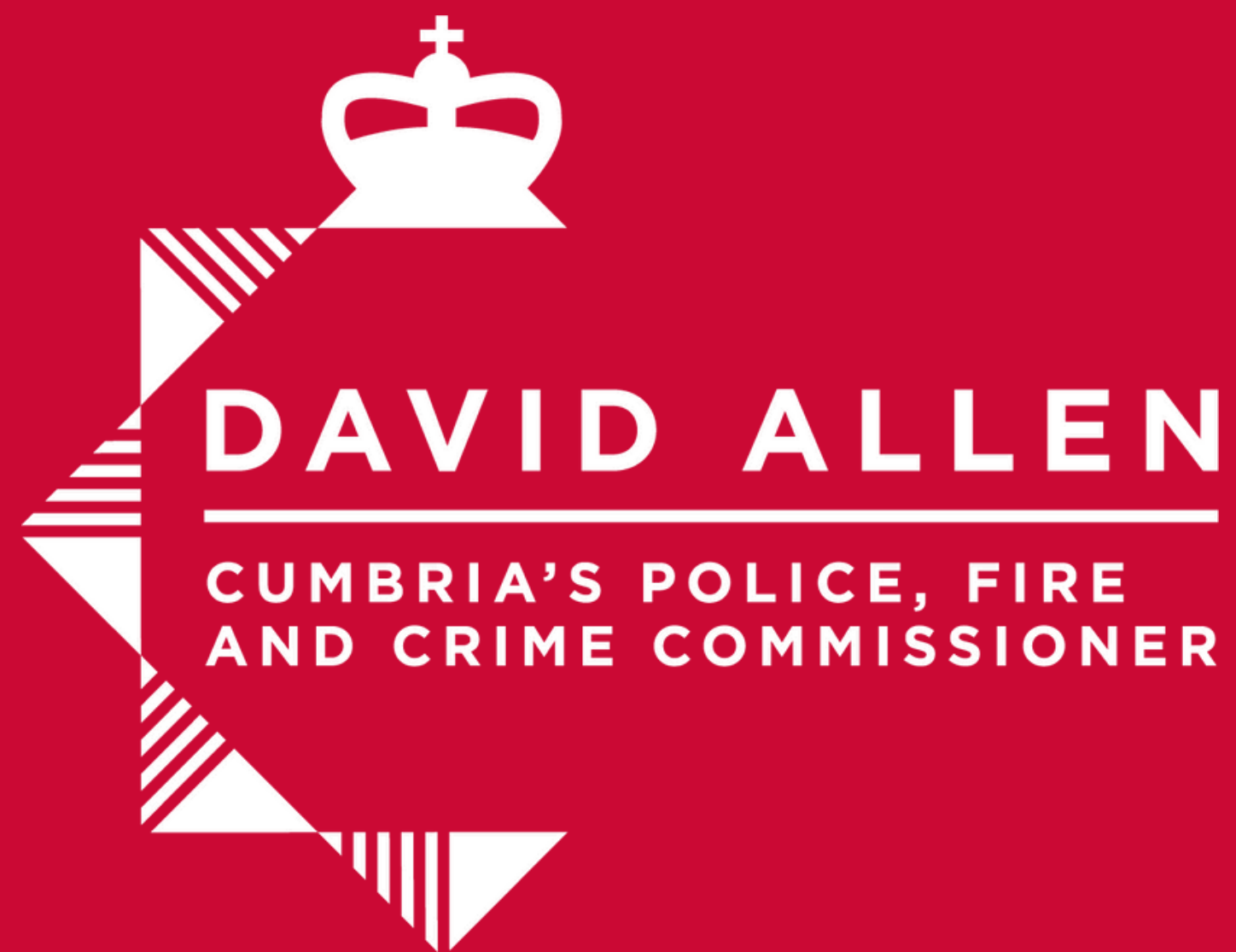
As part of a recruitment process, three additional members were appointed to the Panel. An induction process was held in January and the new members joined the Panel at the February 2024 meeting.



Moving Forwards

The Panel continues to develop their role, expanding into other areas of business to assist not only the Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service, but enable the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to have further and more detailed oversight. They have shown their ability to respond to emerging and changing situations; adapt to understand the issues; work with the Constabulary, Fire and OPFCC to carry out work in addition to that scheduled within their work programme; and provide reassurance to these organisations and the public.

Recommendations and guidance given by the Panel continues to be welcomed; resulting in a number of positive changes and developments to processes and procedures. The Panel's 2025 work programme will continue to ensure that the Panel remain an independent body in their oversight of Cumbria Constabulary, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.



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