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**Enquiries to: Mrs J Head**

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**Our reference: JH/EIP**

**Date: 2 May 2024**

## **AGENDA**

**TO: THE MEMBERS OF THE ETHCS AND INTEGRITY PANEL**

### **CUMBRIA POLICE, FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER'S ETHICS AND INTEGRITY PANEL**

A Meeting of the Ethics and Integrity Panel will take place on **Wednesday 8 May 2024** at **1.30 pm** in **Conference Room 2**, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith.

**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 Headquarters building.

### **PANEL MEMBERSHIP**

Jane Scattergood (Chair)  
Eloise Abbott  
Andrew Dodd  
Meg Masters  
Ben Phillips  
Alison Ramsey  
Alex Rocke  
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**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Allocated Time</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING &amp; ACTION SHEET</b> To confirm the restricted notes of the meeting of the Ethics and Integrity Panel held on 08 February 2024 (copy enclosed).	
<b>5.</b>	<b>CORPORATE UPDATE</b> To receive a briefing from Assistant Chief Fire Officer Brian Massie and the OPFCC Chief Executive Gill Shearer	10 minutes
<b>6.</b>	<b>CIVIL CLAIMS</b> To receive a report on Civil Claims to monitor any trends/issues and how learning/training has been implemented. (copy enclosed) – <i>To be presented by Mark Clements.</i>	15 minutes

7.	<p><b>EMPLOYEE ABSENCES</b></p> <p>(i) To receive a report on the current position within Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service</p> <p><a href="#">For Managers   Cumbria Fire &amp; Rescue Service</a></p> <p>(ii) Feedback from the DBS dip sample session</p>	20 minutes
8.	<p><b>ON-CALL RECRUITMENT</b></p> <p>To receive an update on the recruitment and mapping process</p>	15 minutes

## ETHICS AND INTEGRITY PANEL

Notes of a meeting of the Ethics and Integrity Panel held on  
Thursday 8 February 2024 via TEAMS at 10.30 am

### **PRESENT**

Alan Rankin (Chair)  
Andrew Dodd  
Meg Masters  
Jane Scattergood  
Shaun Thomson  
Alison Ramsey  
Penny Walker

### **Also present:**

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Brian Steadman  
Head of Safety and Assurance – Mark Clement  
Head of People and Talent – Kristine Ward  
Resourcing, Talent and Wellbeing Lead – Orlanda Wright  
HR Manager – Jemma Taylor

OPFCC Chief Executive – Gill Shearer  
OPFCC Governance Manager - Joanne Head

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly the two new members. To assist them, everyone introduced themselves.

### **10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies from Mr Alex Rocke and Mr Ben Phillips were received.

### **11. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

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

### **12. URGENT BUSINESS**

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

### **13. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting held on Thursday 9 November 2023 previously circulated with the agenda were agreed.

**AGREED;** that the notes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023 were agreed.

#### **14. CORPORATE UPDATE**

Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Brian Steadman briefed the panel on the findings of an inspection of South Wales Fire Service which he felt did not reflect the service in Cumbria. It was acknowledged that public perception may change towards the service and this could have a small impact on recruitment processes and dissuade individuals from applying.

Since the 1 April 2023 the service had internally reviewed its structure with some proposed changes scheduled to take place from 1 April 2024. It was essential that the right resources were in place as the service flexed, expanded and changes to service level agreements were realised. A number of events had been held at on-call stations, inviting employers and families of on-call fire fighters to thank them and recognise their commitment to the service.

Work was being carried out to review station facilities with a view to modernisation where required. This would assist in the recruitment process, particularly for females wishing to join either full time or on-call.

OPFCC Chief Executive, Gill Shearer advised the panel of the work that was being carried out in relation to the fire service which was starting to make a difference and on front line services. Good joint working was taking place with fire, police and the ambulance service on how collaboration could benefit communities and staff.

The OPFCC had recently appointed a Head of Estates jointly funded by police and fire to drive forward the Commissioner's estates strategy and vision. This work would also encompass the review of all fire stations as advised by CFO Steadman.

The recommendations of the South Wales HMICFRS report would be studying to identify any learning for Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service with the recommendations being monitored by the Strategic Finance and Governance Board. It was noted that HMICFRS would be visiting at the end of 2024 to see what progress had been made and how the Commissioner was holding fire to account.

A member asked how the estate review was being funded and whether this would have an impact on front line service provision. The OPFCC Chief Executive advised that the Commissioner had secured over £3m from Home Office funding and it was this that would be used for the estates work.

**AGREED;** that, the updates be noted.

#### **15. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT COMPLIANCE**

The Head of Safety and Assurance, Mark Clement guided members through CFRS Information Management Compliance report. The Deputy CFO was the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) for all things data within CFRS. Previously Cumbria County Council had responded to

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and therefore training had been provided to identified staff to enable CFRS to carry out this function. Following this training an external review had been commissioned to look at their data management to ensure it was robust. They had also utilised the information and support provided by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) to assist them. The findings of the review were due the following week which would be shared with the Joint Audit Committee and the Ethics Panel. A member asked whether there were any particular areas of concern and the Deputy CFO advised that as data management was such a complex area they wanted to ensure that any 'blind' spots were identified and robust systems and processes were in place.

Since 1 April 2023, 72 FOI requests had been received, 75% of which had been responded to within the 20-day deadline. This was due to historic information being requested and held by the two new unitaries which built in a delay in being able to respond. Some requests had been sent directly to the unitaries, who were asking CFRS for the information to respond rather than directly to CFRS. This was being addressed and requesters were being informed to contact CFRS directly as they held the information. It was anticipated that this would assist in improving response times.

Work was being carried out to identify the types of information which were being requested and development of their website which would allow them to direct requestors to. Data would be populated within the new Fire Watch system

CFRS had received three Subject Access Requests (SAR) since 1 April 2023. For the initial request an extension had been applied due to it being the first request received and some uncertainty about the process. The other two had been responded to within the one-month timeframe.

It was noted that CFRS was a statutory consultee on planning applications of which they received between 30 to 40 per month. They were required to respond within 14 days and during the first three quarters of the year they achieved a 95% completion rate.

**AGREED:** that, the  
(i) report be noted; and  
(ii) a copy of the data review report be provided to the Panel at their August meeting.

## **16. DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE CHECKS**

On 6 July 2023 the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) passed new legislation to include Fire and Rescue Authorities in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions). This means that everyone who works or volunteers for CFRS are required to have a Standard DBS check.

Following its introduction CFRS had placed regular communication within the electronic 'Weekly Update' for all staff, developing a FAQ sheet to assist with queries and provide virtual

drop-in sessions. They had also introduced an amnesty period from 28 August to 25 September whereby everyone currently employed could submit a form in confidence to HR highlighting anything they felt may appear in a DBS check, encouraging open and honest lines of communication.

Upon completion of the check, any positive disclosures identified by the DBS check would be notified to the line manager who was required to meet with the employee and complete a risk assessment.

As of 29 January 2024, 605 checks had been commenced, 126 being completed with one positive disclosure. Work was still ongoing to have all DBS checks completed, or at least submitted, by 31 March 2024. The Ethics and Integrity Panel carried out a dip sample process and provided support and guidance in relation to those who refused to complete the DBS form or had still not submitted the completed form. A four-step process was developed and discussed with trade unions who were supportive of the proposed course of action. The four stages were:

- one chase up e-mail with read receipt or recorded delivery letter giving the employee a deadline for completion
- If the employee does not comply there is one mtg with line manager supported by HR to discuss any concerns / offer help etc
- If the employee still refuses proceed to potential dismissal meeting with appropriate Principal Officer
- Right of appeal

The Panel members who attended the dip sample session had provided feedback on development of the risk assessment form which had been utilised to improve the form and improve the process for not only the organisation but the individual. A member advised that the form still did not contain an area for the individual to sign and make comments, which was essential to illustrate a fair and open process. The member also highlighted that the scoring process on the form was confusion as each section added to a running total. The members felt that each section should have its own score and the final total be at the end of the form. The HR Manager agreed that these would be changed.

The DBS checks would need to be completed in another 3 years and a programme of how this would be completed across the service was being developed to reduce the numbers going through the process at any one time. It would be incumbent on individuals to advise CFRS of any changes to their circumstances prior to the next DBS check. The OPFCC Governance Manager suggested that an integrity element be included with staff's annual appraisal to act as a reminder and highlight individuals' responsibility.

The Panel would carry out a further dip sample session prior to the August meeting.

**AGREED;**       that, the  
                  (i)       report be noted;

- (ii) proposed changes to the process and risk assessment be accepted and implemented
- (iii) panel carry out a further dip sample session prior to the August Panel meeting.

## **17. OPFCC COMPLAINTS AND QSIs**

The OPFCC Governance Manager guided members through a report which detailed the number of complaints and quality of service issues which the Commissioner received in relation to Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS).

Since 1 April 2023 the OPFCC had received 8 quality of service issues raised by members of the public in Cumbria. These ranged from a request for an increase in overnight firefighters, warm spot CFRS partnership Fire Safety in the home advice and following a fire consultation process questions regarding demographic information. Where appropriate, all correspondence was sent to the Deputy CFO to provide information to inform the Commissioners response.

The Deputy CFO advised that any positive comments received regarding fire fighters or staff were passed on to them and their managers with a thank you from the organisation.

No complaints regarding the Chief Fire Officer had been received since 1 April 2023.

**AGREED:** that, the report be noted.

## **18. ON-CALL RECRUITMENT**

The Resourcing, Talent and Wellbeing Lead provided a verbal update on the work which had been carried out since the last meeting in relation to on-call recruitment. The new process had been launched the previous week which included changes following feedback from the Panel. The HR team were proactively working with service delivery managers to identify forthcoming retirements, vacancies, longer term absences to be able to identify recruitment requirements quicker.

The recruitment information booklet had now been moved to online for easier access, with the online advert now being open all year round. Testimonials and support from employers of on-call fire fighters were now also included on the website. Information would also include 'spotlight stations' which were ones where the service had rated them as critically in need of on-call fire fighters.

Bespoke branding for on-call fire fighters was being developed in dedicated green branding and is part of the corporate colours. Slowly this will feed into dedicated recruitment packs; spotlight stations will get dedicated recruitment packs with videos and the Facebook platform. The HR team will support them and drum up the excitement and buy in from crews.



The Online Microsoft application form is secure and comes directly to the HR Team. The information is stored securely, and contact is then made directly with the individual to discuss their application. As part of this process, and following feedback from the Panel, an individual's availability would be discussed to ascertain what they could offer for the role. In person or virtual sessions were then offered to meet with the applicant, discuss the role and answer any questions.

Candidates would then complete their eyesight tests which would prevent frustration if they were not to achieve the required standard but had gone through the full process. Any issues identified could be discussed and the services of the Occupational Health Unit utilised where appropriate. Following this, candidates would complete a timed written mental agility test which had been moved online to allow accessibility across the county.

Practical selection days, assessments and interviews were being carried out in a week. The dates of these were published in advance with practical selection being held in afternoons and evenings to allow flexibility. Virtual interviews were also now being offered to assist with accessibility and candidates who worked. Once selected, pre-employment drop-in sessions were being provided and consent for DBS checks for pre-employment vetting were being sought. Many of these were being carried out at a weekend to assist with people's availability. Initial induction would be carried out on a weekend and on one other week rather than the previous two-week period which often caused difficulties for those who worked or had caring responsibilities.

A member asked whether being an on-call fire fighter was a route to doing the role full time. The Deputy CFO advised that many did use it as a route to full time employment but was not a guarantee. CFRS was now delivering training at weekends locally to allow for on-call officers to attend. An example of this was previously driving courses were held at Fire HQ, whereas now it was also carried out in Ulverston and Maryport.

Another member asked what GDPR precautions were being taken when the HR team were going to various locations and taking individual's photographs or written details. The Head of People and Talent assured the Panel that these were done using a work phone and the information was deleted afterwards. A member was pleased to note the use of different social media platforms, especially Instagram, which young people were using and would hopefully encourage them to volunteer.

As agreed in the November 2023 meeting, the Panel would receive a full update on the recruitment process at the May 2024 meeting.

**AGREED;**       that, the  
                  (i)       verbal report be noted;  
                  (ii)       a full update on the recruitment process be provided to the May 2024 meeting.

## 19. ETHICS AND INTEGRITY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The OPFCC Governance Manager provided the Panel with a draft copy of the 2023 annual report which highlighted the work they had carried out during the year. The report illustrated 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 within both fire and policing. The Head of People and Talent advised that the Chief Fire Officer was keen to provide a comment at the beginning of the report.

**AGREED:** that, the

- (i) 2023 annual report be approved; and
- (ii) Chief Fire Officer provide a comment for inclusion within the report.

The OPFCC Chief Executive took the opportunity to thank the Chair, Alan Rankin for his service to the Ethics and Integrity Panel since its inception in 2015. This would be his last meeting as Chair a position he had held since 2016. Utilising his HR background and a calm and methodical approach, Alan has been consulted on his extensive knowledge to help develop policies and procedures, in addition to supporting the OPFCC.

**Meeting ended at 12:10 pm**

**Signed:** *Jane Scattergood*  
Panel Chair

**Date:** 08 May 2024

# Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service

## Claims against Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS)

**Date : 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

**Agenda Item : 06**

**Originating Officer : Mark Clement**

### **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Ethics and Integrity Panel with an understanding of the current picture with regard to Claims against CFRS. This will provide a baseline on which further reports can be built, if required by the Panel.

### **2 Recommendation**

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

### **3 Issues for consideration**

- 4.1 Since 2010 there have been a total of 23 claims against the Service. These can be broken down into

Personal Accident	4
Public Liability	2
Employers Liability	17

- 4.2 These have occurred over a number of years averaging approx. 1.7 per year.
- 4.3 Of those 23 claims just over 50% (12) were successful with payouts ranging from £160 to £83k. The total amount of money paid out if £270k.
- 4.4 Currently there are 3 open cases with a reserve of £65k which are being dealt with through our solicitors and Zurich Insurance. Each of the 3 claims is challengeable and the Service is taking this forward.

Making Cumbria a safer place for all



- 4.5 CFRS is a learning organisation. In each case where an accident or adverse safety event occurs a Manager is assigned to carry out a thorough investigation and any lessons learnt are incorporated into business as usual
- 4.6 The Service also benefits from a national system of learning where points of note are shared between all services across the country.
- 4.7 Finally the health and safety committee meet on a quarterly basis with the rep bodies and others to discuss incidents that have occurred over the preceding three months. In each case if learning is identified it is cascaded throughout the Service.

## 5.0 **Conclusion**

- 5.1 There have been a small number of claims made against the Service over the preceding 10 years. Approx half have been successful and a total of £270k has been paid out over that period
- 5.2 More detail about each claim is available in an anonymised format to the Panel if they require it.

Mark Clement

Head of Safety and Assurance, [Mark.clement@cumbriafire.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.clement@cumbriafire.gov.uk)

# Ethics and Integrity Panel



Peter McCall  
POLICE, FIRE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER

## Title: Employee Absence

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

**Agenda Item No: 07**

**Originating Officer: Kristine Ward – Head of People and Talent**

**CC: Helen Clark and Jemma Taylor – HR Manager**

### Executive Summary:

This report details the process undertaken by CFRS to manage absence for both corporate and operational staff.

CFRS currently have two separate absence procedures for corporate staff (employed under green book terms and conditions) and operational (front line staff employed under grey book terms and conditions).

Long term absence is defined as an absence lasting 28 days or longer. Short term is defined as 3 occasions and / or a total of 8 days within a 12 month period or where there may be a pattern / trend.

### 1. Introduction & Background

CFRS receive daily absence reports which are generated and issued to SLT members plus HR for monitoring.

Absence data is then split into two basic command units (BCU) (broadly following the geographical split of Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness). BCU meetings are held monthly chaired by the Group Manager for the BCU and attended by Station Manager's and HR. Absence cases are discussed and advice provided by HR on an individual basis.

Regular absence case clinics are held for the longest-term absence cases chaired by the Assistant Chief Officer and attended by HR and the employee's line manager. The purpose of the case clinic is to ensure managers are accountable for following the absence procedure with their staff and to look creatively as to ways in which the employee could be supported back to work or ultimately moved to the next stage of the procedure.

An absence checklist has been produced by HR and is available to managers to use as an aide memoir, moving forward the HR Team plan to use this as a tool to dip sample short term absence cases to ensure process is being followed and that paperwork is in order.

The HR Team are undertaking station visits during May which have been publicised to Station Manager's as 'drop in sessions' to come and talk through any absence cases they may have requiring HR advice or support.

At present CFRS use an Occupational Health Service via a hosted arrangement through Westmorland & Furness Council although the OH Team are predominantly based in CFRS HQ, Penrith.

All staff have access to a self-referral system to access counselling support should they feel they need to directly into OH as opposed to needing to make a request via their line manager.

## 2. Current Statistics

Correct as at 01.05.2024 taken from daily absence report:

Cluster	Service Area	Headcount	Modified Duties	Sickness	% of Workforce	Staff Absent	% of Workforce
Fire & Rescue Service	Green Book	73		4	5.48%	4	5.48%
Fire & Rescue Service	Grey Book On Call	337	10	14	7.12%	24	7.12%
Fire & Rescue Service	Grey Book Regular	215	3	9	5.58%	12	5.58%

It is difficult to measure CFRS absence performance against that of other FRAs due to the way in which our HR data is currently captured. Most FRA's follow what is referred to as the 'Cleveland calculation' which allows FRAs to compare performance and enables calculation of shifts that have been lost as a result of absence.

At present we operate from two different systems. iTrent being our HR and payroll system and Gartan for our retained on call staff. iTrent was the system used by Cumbria County Council and was configured in a way not generally compatible for fire staff and does not allow us to record shifts. We are therefore unable to record our data following the Cleveland calculation which makes it difficult for us to compare our absence against others.

Absence levels are generally not of concern across CFRS and, as a result of the mechanisms described above are on the whole well managed.

## 3. Feedback from absence dip sampling of case files

The panel reviewed 10 absence case files selecting cases at random from a list of all CFRS absence cases over the past 12 months.

There was a cross section mix of: gender split, operational staff, corporate staff and both long and short-term absences.

General feedback captured from the panel was as follows:

Overall, there was a lack of supporting paperwork on file with documents missing. The panel were assured that process is being followed and recognised that there were differing management styles from person to person.

The panel were supportive of a move towards one procedure for all staff favouring that in existence for operational staff due to the clarity with clearly defined stages. The panel would like to see some mandatory e-learning developed to capture on call managers to aid accessibility.

The panel would like to see some form of two-way communication within casework files to evidence that the employee understands the process and accepts meeting notes are accurate.

Positive feedback was captured around an individual specific absence case involving mental health / adverse life situation. A panel member noted that the line manager had gone above and beyond what could be expected in terms of support provided.

Feedback from the dip sampling session has been shared with Station Managers and the HR Team.

#### **4. Next steps**

CFRS HR Team plan to review the absence procedures and consult with both staff and Trade Unions with the aim to have one clear consistent policy for all employees.

Once the procedure has been reviewed training will be planned for managers and an e-learning module developed which will become mandatory for all those in a supervisory role.

CFRS are currently moving to a new HR system for storing data away from iTrent and Gartan into a system called Firewatch. The new system will be live in April 2025 and will allow us to develop and capture data in a different way strengthening our ability to report on absence information.

CFRS are also working to develop a mental health app which will be rolled out to all staff which is anticipated to go live in 2024.

# Ethics and Integrity Panel



## Title: On-Call Recruitment 2024

**Date: 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Agenda Item No: 08**

**Originating Officer: Kristine Ward – Head of People and Talent, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and Orlanda Wright – Resourcing, Talent and Wellbeing Lead, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service**  
**CC:**

### **Executive Summary:**

This report details an overview of the new recruitment process for 2024, as verbally shared at the Feb 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Ethics and Integrity Panel. It will also share some of the recently identified challenges and the initial positives from the changes made. Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service has a small, dedicated resourcing function which has created opportunity and commitment to continue to improve the process and attract suitable On Call candidates against a national backdrop of declining applicants and difficulty to recruit in the On Call workforce.

### **1. Introduction & Background**

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service currently has 294 On-Call Firefighters, across 38 Stations, and it is considered an 'On-Call Service'. Building on the success from the 2023 On-Call recruitment process, where the service inducted and trained 34 new On-Call Firefighters at stations across the county, it was identified that a new approach was to be trialled that had the main aims of:

- Reducing the timeline of the full process, specifically the time allocated for Practical Selection Days, Interviews, and Medicals.
- Reducing the impact on the candidate having to find time to attend the process (for example, booking leave from their substantive employer).
- Having recruitment processes more frequently throughout the year, helping the service respond to succession planning.
- And finally, to be a modern and inclusive fire service who is meeting the national challenges with On-Call recruitment.



## 2. Changes to the process

Stage of Process	Previous Process (2023)	New Process (2024)	Initial Feedback
Timeline of process	<p>The 2023 process began in Jan 2023, with Engagement sessions taking place throughout Feb/March and the application window opening for a 1-month period (March).</p> <p>Following applying in March, successful candidates were allocated to a training course, the first being in September 2023.</p>	<p>The 2024 process began in Jan 2024 with two clear distinctions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The application window would be open all year round (no closing date as such)</li> <li>2. Candidates applying before a much advertised 'cut off' date (Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March) were informed they were being developed for the June 2024 training course, offering a quicker process.</li> </ol>	<p>Having the application window open all year round has allowed us to identify areas with low application areas much faster and implement additional advertising and engagement for these stations.</p> <p>However, having a quicker process has meant that if a candidate has missed any part of the process, we have not been able to facilitate support for them to continue. For example, if a candidate who couldn't attend one of the two practical selection days, we aren't able to organise another date for them.</p>
Advert opening and closing date	<p>Advert opened the beginning of March 2023 and was open for 1 month. Applications submitted after this point were not considered.</p>	<p>The On-Call advert opened Jan 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and has remained open since, allowing candidates to register interest as and when suitable for them.</p> <p>The service published the training course 'cut-off' dates and candidates we reassured</p>	<p>The relationship we have been able to build with candidates has been incredibly positive and it is fostering a supportive and inclusive process.</p>

		<p>that if they had missed the date for the June 2024 training course, their application would be reviewed and considered for the Nov 2024 training course.</p> <p>This means we can keep candidates ‘warm’ and engaged, and we can be transparent with our timelines.</p>	
<p>Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media advertising</li> <li>- On-Call web page with national information and resources</li> <li>- in-person engagement sessions and ‘Have-A-Go’ days</li> <li>- candidates invited to drill nights.</li> </ul> <p>Also, the crews leafletting in local areas of the On-Call station.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased use of social media advertising, including On-Call branding being created so any On-Call content on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and eventually TikTok will be instantly identifiable.</li> <li>- Updated dedicated web page with detailed information.</li> <li>- Both in-person and virtual engagement sessions held,</li> </ul>	<p>The engagement the resourcing team has done has had an incredibly positive impact across the service, as On-Call stations are feeling more involved and prioritised when seeing social media posts advertising On-Call recruitment.</p> <p>Future activity will include attending events across the summer period and handing out flyers/interacting with the public. We have also planned some news pieces in collaboration with our Comms officer.</p>

		<p>allowing wider accessibility for candidates, and hopefully removing perceived restricted access to the service (hopefully we have seemed much more supportive and approachable, building on on-going culture work across the service)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Have-A-Go' Days and open drill assessments held as usual.</li> <li>- Local leafletting/on foot recruitment undertaken by crews as usual.</li> </ul>	
<p>Collaborative Working</p>	<p>For 2023, the dedicated resourcing team started in May 2023 when the process was passed the initial stages. Although there was some strong teamwork, there was a noticed gap in information going between Station Managers and the resourcing team, and this impacted the</p>	<p>Having a dedicated resourcing team has helped connect the stages of the process and there was clear establishment of the roles at the start of the process.</p> <p>The resourcing team were able to pick up communication with candidates earlier on, help</p>	<p>This has worked brilliantly so far, and the resourcing team want to build on this further by including Watch Managers in the process and comms. Having Watch Managers join the teams' channel would help take some pressure off Station Managers and allow the Watch Managers to also build</p>

	<p>information the candidate had. It caused some confusion for candidates and inconsistency in messages. One example was a training course being promised to a candidate by a Station Manager, and the resourcing team already filling that course with other candidates.</p> <p>This wasn't very frequent, but all stakeholders in the process agreed our aim for future processes was for everything to be communicated more effectively.</p>	<p>facilitate the station evenings, deliver the virtual sessions, and have had much better oversight of the process. A member of the recruitment team also sat on interview panels to ensure consistency and offer an impartial perspective.</p> <p>Having the resourcing team as the central function of the process has helped with comms to other services, such as Learning &amp; Development and Occupational Health.</p> <p>The resourcing team have also utilised technology and made a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel for all information On-Call recruitment to be shared on. This has been for Resourcing, Learning &amp; Development, Tech Services, and Operational Managers to use. Managers have also been able to ask any questions in this channel and receive a quicker response time.</p>	<p>relationships with candidates as well.</p>
Application Form & 124a	Previously used the Council's	New registration form has	

	<p>online form and it required candidates to complete two attachments, which were often missed and required chasing from the Station Managers and recruiting team.</p> <p>The application form was generic and not fit for purpose and was sent to managers with all data attached.</p> <p>The 124a (availability) form was a paper form that candidates completed and either attached to their application without any Station Manager oversight/input, or sometimes it was handed in at station, needing to be scanned and sent across to the resourcing team.</p>	<p>been created – average completion time is 2 minutes.</p> <p>The information on the form is only viewable by the resourcing team and once completed, the candidate is contacted with information on the next steps and upcoming engagement sessions to join.</p> <p>Once the 'cut off' date has passed, all eligible candidates are invited to a Recruitment Evening at their local station, where they meet the Station Manager and complete a 124a Form with support. This has helped with candidate comprehension of the 124a Form and allowed Station Managers to shortlist candidates sooner in the process, moving those with good availability forward and informing candidates who don't have the availability the station requires right now to stay in touch and apply again if their circumstances change.</p> <p>It has been a better experience</p>	
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		for candidates, rather than receiving an email much later in the process to say they haven't been successful.	
Mental Agility Test	Handwritten test, completed by candidates when they arrived for their Practical Selection Days and marked by assessors that day. This required a full day out to be taken by candidates.	Moved to an online Mental Agility Test, facilitated by Microsoft forms.  This form was timed, accessible via a link sent directly to candidates, closed once the deadline had passed, and had automated scoring, so outcomes could be delivered much quicker.	
Practical Selection Days	4 days held across 4 weeks.  Held at stations across the county. This helped candidates from local areas attend the one nearest to them, rather than have to travel too far.  Candidates had to attend a full day session that included a fitness test, mental agility written test, and six practical assessments.  Candidates were offered a	2 days held consecutively.  Held in the same location for consistency of equipment and facilities.  Offered afternoon and evening slots for candidates to help work around commitments and reduce the need to book time off/leave to attend.  Following the Wholetime process, candidates were offered either a Chester	Having only two days for Practical selection days put considerable pressure on the resourcing team, however it improved the candidate experience.  However as mentioned already, only having two days meant that any candidate unable to attend had to end their process for the June 2024 course. For future processes, we would like to offer more days, including some weekend

	<p>Bleep Test, and if they stopped the test in the development levels (7 – 8.7), they were offered an alternative fitness test, the Chester Treadmill Test. This meant the process became longer and it caused some negative feedback from internal staff.</p>	<p>Treadmill Fitness Test or a Bleep Test, which they had to pass on the day. The development levels were removed.</p>	<p>days, to be even more supportive for candidates.</p> <p>Feedback from the 2023 process was about inconsistencies with scoring across the Practical Selection Days, but by holding two days in the same location, and with the same assessors, consistency of scoring was improved.</p>
Interviews	<p>Station Managers organised the interviews for their stations, and they had a 4-week period to complete these in.</p>	<p>We had two days for interviews, and they were virtual. Candidates could dial in from work or home, and interviews were offered between 12pm and 7pm.</p> <p>The interview questions were reviewed to focus on the CFRS Code of Ethics and candidate understanding of the role of an On-Call Firefighter, such as work/life balance and resilience.</p> <p>A member of the resourcing team also attended the panel with the operational managers</p>	<p>Offering virtual interviews was positively received by candidates and managers, as they allowed for flexibility and accessibility.</p> <p>Also, having the resourcing team on the panel encouraged discussion around what we can ask candidates and what it is important to consider with scoring.</p>

		to challenge bias and support with consistency.	
Eyesight Standards Testing	<p>This form was given to candidates after they had a conditional offer and were booked in for a medical.</p> <p>Feedback from across the service was if a candidate failed their eyesight standards, it was too late in the process, and it would be much better to spot it sooner.</p>	<p>Eyesight Standards Forms were published on the dedicated web page, with detailed information and a guidance document.</p> <p>Candidates were given this after submitting their application and being informed they were progressing for the June 2024 course, so we could pass this information to Occ Health sooner and identify unsuccessful candidates before the practical selection days and interviews.</p>	<p>Giving the candidates the Eyesight Standards form sooner in the process than usual has caused some confusion, and many candidates have not completed them until later stages any way.</p> <p>It has also caused some issues with the collecting of the forms and ensuring they are submitted to Occ Health, which we have addressed as a team, and we are looking for a securer way to complete this part of the process.</p>
Training Course	<p>The training courses in 2023 were delivered as 2-week courses, ran consecutively, and held in one location.</p> <p>This impacted candidates, as they had to book considerable time off work and make travel/lodging arrangements where necessary.</p> <p>It also meant the candidates</p>	<p>The June 2024 training course is being held as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Induction</b> - 11th-12th June 2024</li> <li>- <b>Course part 1</b> - 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> June</li> <li>- <b>Course part 2</b> - 29<sup>th</sup> June 30<sup>th</sup> June and 3<sup>rd</sup> July</li> <li>- <b>2-week BA course</b> - 15<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> July</li> </ul>	<p>The training course hasn't been completed yet, but a further review can be given when this is done.</p>



	had to undertake a huge amount of learning and assessment in this period.	<p>- <b>Mod 3 Water Rescue</b> - 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup> August</p> <p>This has been reviewed and created to utilise weekends and reduce the pressure on candidates to have to book off time from work. Also, by breaking up the course like the above, candidates should have more time on each training point and better processing of the information.</p>	
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## 5. Further review

In 2024 so far, we haven't seen a dip in applications and the quality of candidate applying from 2023, however we haven't seen an increase yet. Following the pre-employment check process, the Resourcing team are planning to meet with Kristine Ward, Head of People, to present the feedback and identify some solutions for the next process, due to start June 2024. Following this, Kristine Ward will take this information to CFRS Standardisation meetings to discuss with operational managers for their thoughts as well. This will be helpful for the resourcing team to take stock and review from the recruitment perspective initially, and then to share this with the wider service.

The Resourcing & Talent team will also produce a SWOT analysis based on their own experience and reflections on the process, to be completed following pre-employment checks.