

Update on LGA work on culture in the fire and rescue service

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This update report outlines progress on the actions and next steps discussed at the FSMC in May.

LGA Plan Theme: Other service specific support

Recommendations

That FSMC notes progress on agreed actions

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Update on LGA work on culture in the fire and rescue service

Background

1. At the [last FSMC meeting in May](#) a series of actions and next steps for the LGA's work around culture in the fire and rescue service were agreed.
2. These covered:
 - The LGA's engagement with key stakeholders on the issue, including the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Home Office, and the unions, as it was recognised such engagement would be important in ensuring work on this issue would be effective going forwards.
 - The LGA's response to HMICFRS's spotlight review with input from across the Association.
 - A free, one-day conference for members looking at their governance and leadership role in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), alongside their employer role.
 - Refresh and renew the membership and remit of the EDI Champions Network.
 - Look at the wider programme of governance and leadership training for leaders in the service, especially scrutiny of senior officers in this area.
 - Engage with the NFCC on the development of their action plan.
 - Engage with the Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) once its next steps are identified, including potentially reviewing its social media guidance.
 - Prepare media lines to respond to any inquiries the LGA may receive around fire service culture.
 - Consider the relevant employment law and related legal framework in which fire authorities act, including in relation to watches.
 - Continue to engage with the Home Office on sector-led support and wider issues around culture seeking funding to support a sector-led improvement offer on these issues.
 - Sharing lessons learned from services that have experienced issues
3. This report updates Members on progress on these next steps.

Updates on key activities

LGA Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service Conference

4. A free, in person conference focused on culture in the Fire and Rescue Service for members was held on 27 June 2023 and was attended by 29 Members from 16 different Fire and Rescue Authorities.
5. The objective for the day was to explore Member's governance and leadership role in EDI, alongside their employer role. The session was chaired by Cllr Jane Hugo as FSMC Equalities Advocate with Cllr Rebecca Knox, Cllr Greg Brackenridge and Cllr Nick Chard also contributing to the agenda. A copy of the programme is included in **Appendix A**.
6. Feedback from the event was positive, with 62 per cent of attendees that completed feedback (21 out of the 29 attendees) saying they were 'very satisfied' with the event. The sessions which over 70 per cent of attendees found 'very useful' were:
 - Voices from around the sector – experiences, reflections, and way forward (Unison, FBU (Women's section and LGBT+ section) and Afsa)
 - Leading cultural change (Police Service of Northern Ireland, Kent FRS and Lancashire FRS)
 - Exploring Fire and Rescue Authority Members Role (Cllr Knox, Cllr Brackenridge and Cllr Lud Ramsey from Derbyshire)
7. Attendees reported that hearing about good practice from other Authorities and seeing what has been done elsewhere was particularly useful, as well hearing directly about staff's experiences. Gaining a better understanding of the leadership role of Members in driving change and the importance of questioning skills were also highlighted. Attendees also reflected that there is still much that needs to be done to improve culture and EDI in the sector.
8. Feedback also offered suggestions for future training and events, including training for Members around how to be an effective EDI champion, building confidence and questioning skills, as well as engaging BAME communities. These suggestions will be built into the work programme for the EDI Champions Network for the next year.
9. We will also use the ideas shared at the event to help with the creation of a checklist to support members.

HMICFRS's spotlight review recommendations

10. In May Andy Cooke, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services wrote to Cllr Frank Biederman drawing attention to the spotlight report and its recommendations. The letter asked the LGA to provide an update on progress with Recommendation 2 in the spotlight report:
 - **Recommendation 2:** By 1 October 2023, National Employers, the Local Government Association and the National Fire Chiefs Council should review any current independent arrangements whereby staff can raise concerns outside their FRS. They should then ensure that all FRS staff have access to an independent reporting line that can be used as a confidential way to raise concerns outside their own FRS.
11. Officers from Policy and Workforce met to discuss relevant recommendations and how to respond. We have asked HMICFRS for a further meeting to explore the relevant recommendations and seek clarity on the expectations being placed on both the LGA and the National Employers and how best to report and provide progress updates.
12. We are also seeking a meeting with the NFCC given this is a joint recommendation.

Inclusive Fire Service Group

13. The separate workforce report on the Committee's agenda at paragraphs 17-19 sets out the outcomes from the Inclusive Fire Service Group's meeting on 20 June. At the meeting the organisations represented on the IFSG reaffirmed their commitment to strategies for improvement the group had previously developed and agreed that the breadth of membership of the Group meant it was well-placed to work together as a group and with other organisations more widely to ensure there wasn't a fragmented approach in the sector which could continue to hold back progress. The IFSG is looking to meet again this month.

Sector led support

14. In June LGA officers met with Home Office officials to further discuss the bid for funding to pilot a sector-led improvement offer for FRAs with a focus on 'people' and culture.
15. Home Office has not as yet committed to funding for this but are keen to explore whether the Association of Police Crime Commissioners (APCC) would support

the bid. Initial conversations are underway between the LGA and APCC on this point.

Further updates on activities

Agreed next steps	Action taken	Timeframe for completion
Engagement with the NFCC, HMICFRS, the Home Office, and the Unions was a key principle of making sure that work on this issue would be effective going forwards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LGA is engaging with key partners and stakeholders through a number of different forums. 	Ongoing
Respond to HMICFRS's spotlight review with input from across the LGA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with HMICFRS to discuss recommendations. Meet with NFCC to discuss Recommendation 2. 	By 1 st October 2023
A free, one-day conference for members looking at their governance and leadership role in EDI, alongside their employer role. This is planned for the 27 June 2023. The programme would be worked on jointly with the Workforce team and with input from the Equalities Advocate. It would be a mix between discussion and practical training sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event held on 27 June 2023. Build suggestions for content into the work programme for the EDI Champions Network for the next year. Develop checklist to support members drawing on ideas shared at the event. 	Complete
Refresh and renew the membership and remit of the EDI Champions Network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FSMC Chair to write to FRAs which are not represented and encourage a named Member to join the network. 	July 2023
Look at the wider programme of governance and leadership training for leaders in the service, especially scrutiny of senior officers in this area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with LGA Leadership Essentials Programme. 	Ongoing
Engage with the NFCC on the development of their action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A meeting is being organised with the NFCC for later in the summer. 	Ongoing

Engage with the IFSG once its next steps are identified as well as on potentially reviewing its social media guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Employers leading on this work. 	
Prepare media lines to respond to any inquiries the LGA may receive around fire service culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lines agreed by Lead Members. 	Complete
Consider the relevant employment law and related legal framework in which fire authorities act, including in relation to watches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers will explore this issue further with colleagues supporting the National Employers to inform the next stage of work in this area. 	Report back to FSMC in October
Continue to engage with the Home Office on sector-led support and wider issues around culture seeking funding to support a sector-led improvement offer on these issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting held with Home Office on 13 June to discuss bid. Discussions are ongoing with the APCC to explore their input. 	Ongoing
Sharing lessons learned from services that have experienced issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FRSs were invited to speak at culture conference on 27 June. Build in to workplan for EDI Champions Network. 	Ongoing

Implications for Wales

16. Fire and rescue related policy is a devolved matter and much of the Committee's work will focus on changes for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England, with the Welsh Local Government Association leading on lobbying for Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Financial Implications

17. None

Equalities implications

18. HMICFRS's spotlight report highlights a number of EDI issues for the sector. Including the lack of diversity within the workforce, a lack of data on diversity, a lack of targeted activity, poor understanding of positive action and training on EDI issues etc.

Next steps

19. Officers to continue with actions and activities identified and report back to FSMC in October.

Appendix A

LGA Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service conference Programme

Tuesday 27 June 2023, 10.30am – 3.30pm at Bevin Hall Smith Square, London

Programme:

Registration from 10am

10.30am-10.35am: Welcome and introduction

Cllr Jane Hugo, LGA Fire Services Management Committee Diversity Champion and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (chair)

10.35am-11.00am: Culture in the Fire Service: where are we now

- Assistant HMI Shantha Dickinson, HMICFRS

Questions and discussion (10 mins)

11.00am-11.30am: Panel session: Voices from around the sector – experiences, reflections and way forward

- Pat Carberry, LGBT+ National Secretary, Fire Brigades Union
- Robyn Richardson, National Women's Committee Secretary, Fire Brigades Union
- Mike Short, Head of Local Government, Unison
- Jagtar Singh OBE, Asian Firefighters Service Association (Afsa)

Questions and discussion (15 mins)

11.35am-12.20pm: Leading cultural change

- Julie Howell, Strategic Lead, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Ann Millington, Chief executive of Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Cllr Nick Chard, Member of Kent Fire and Rescue Service and LGA Fire Services Management Committee
- Tom Powell, Area Manager and Liz Sandiford, Assistant Director HR, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Authority

Questions and discussion (15 mins)

12.20pm – 1.00pm: Lunch

1.00pm-1.55pm: Exploring Fire and Rescue Authority Members Role

- Cllr Rebecca Knox, LGA Fire Services Management Committee and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and
- Cllr Greg Brackenridge, LGA Fire Services Management Committee and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service
- Cllr Ludwig Ramsey, Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority *Questions and discussion*

1.55pm -2.05pm: Break

2.05pm -2.35pm: Overview of employment law

- Philip Bundy Senior Adviser – Employment Law, LGA

Questions

2.35pm-3.05pm: Managing the Media

- Nick Price-Thompson, Head of Communications at Royal Borough of Kensington, and Chelsea Council

Questions

3.05pm-3.30pm: Reflection and discussion – led by Cllr Hugo