

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 24TH FEBRUARY 2021
REPORT OF: HEAD OF PROTECTION AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE
AUTHOR: GM MIKE CLARK

SUBJECT: HMICFRS COVID-19 STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with results from the Covid-19 survey undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Recommended: That Members

[1] Note the contents of the report.

Background

2. HMICFRS was commissioned by the Home Secretary to undertake a thematic inspection of all fire and rescue services in England in relation to their responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. The inspection of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) was held during Autumn 2020.
3. To support inspection activity, HMICFRS developed an online survey for individual staff to complete. The survey consisted of 72 questions and was carried out between August and September 2020. It was accessed via an online link and responses were anonymous. The headlines are summarised below.

Survey Results

Overall Results

4. A total of 214 CFRS staff provided a response, equating to a response rate of 25%. Nearly 60% of responses were provided by firefighters while 31% were provided by fire staff.
5. The feedback provided was very positive overall, in many cases reinforcing the positive results from CFRS's own Covid-19 staff survey that had been undertaken in June/July 2020. The survey was broken down into several sections, with a summary of results outlined below. To provide context and

indicate a direction of travel, where possible the results have been compared with the CFRS Covid-19 survey and the last full staff survey undertaken in 2019.

Communications

6. Virtually all (98.6%) respondents felt that CFRS had maintained regular and relevant communication during Covid-19. 97.9% of on-call firefighters felt the Service had either maintained the same level or increased the amount of communication. Primarily communication was undertaken through virtual means (e.g. email, zoom/skype or WhatsApp messaging).
7. These results mirror the Service's internal Covid-19 survey, where 97% of staff felt CFRS had maintained effective communication during the pandemic.

Culture and Values

8. Prior to the survey, CFRS had recently launched a refreshed set of core values. The approach taken to develop and communicate the new values appears to have been effective, as 98.6% of staff said they were aware of the core values.
9. A clear majority of respondents felt that senior leaders, managers and colleagues modelled the core values. While not directly comparable to questions within CFRS's Covid-19 survey or last full staff survey in 2019, the results suggest a tangible improvement.

Fairness and Diversity

10. Most (80.8%) of staff felt they were given the same opportunities for development as others. 89.7% of respondents felt they were treated fairly at work. Regarding promotion, 72% of respondents stated they thought promotion processes were fair. This is a significant increase on the 2019 full staff survey, where 33% said they were confident promotion processes were fair and transparent.

Training and Personal Development

11. Most staff (88.8%) felt that they had been given sufficient training to do their job effectively. This is an increase on results from the 2019 staff survey (72%). There has been a significant improvement on the number of staff satisfied with learning and development opportunities, increasing from 63% in the 2019 survey to 86.8% in the HMICFRS survey.

Immediate Manager

12. Several questions in the HMICFRS survey, while contained in different sections, relate to respondents' interaction with their line manager and as such

are grouped together in this summary. Respondents to the HMICFRS survey said that since the start of the pandemic they had a conversation with their manager at least monthly regarding the following issues:

- Their performance (61.2%)
- Their learning and development (47.2%)
- Their health and wellbeing (68.7%)

13. The results are similar to the results of the CFRS Covid-19 survey, which found that 68% of those working from home said their manager had kept in touch. However the results are a decrease on the last full staff survey, indicating that the changes introduced to adapt to Covid-19 may have made it more difficult for managers and their staff to have regular conversations, particularly informal discussions.

Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

14. Within the HMICFRS survey, 3.3% of respondents said that they had felt bullied or harassed at work within the last six months. In addition, 4.7% of respondents said they had felt discriminated against during the same time period. While not directly comparable, this does suggest improvement over the 2019 staff survey results.
15. For those who have not reported instances of bullying or harassment, the HMICFRS and CFRS 2019 survey both state similar reasons as to why that was the case.

Safety and Welfare

16. The vast majority of respondents (95.8%) were satisfied that their personal safety and welfare is treated seriously at work. Both this and related questions in the CFRS Covid-19 survey show an increase on the results from the 2019 staff survey, which may reflect the emphasis that CFRS has placed on staff safety and welfare during the pandemic.
17. CFRS has invested in mental health provision over recent years and results indicate many staff feel able to access mental health and wellbeing support (94.9%) and that CFRS would offer wellbeing services after an incident if appropriate (96.3%).
18. Results in both the HMICFRS survey and CFRS Covid-19 survey show the vast majority of staff had access to appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and that they understood the policies and procedures in place to support health and wellbeing in the workplace.

19. Both the HMICFRS survey and CFRS survey indicate that staff who have been required to work from home or in a different location have felt supported and have the necessary equipment to undertake their roles.

Incidents

20. A section of the HMICFRS survey focused on operational incidents and associated learning. Most respondents said they were confident that CFRS listened to their feedback about operational incidents and that it took action based on operational learning. The vast majority (90%+) of respondents stated that CFRS works coherently with neighbouring FRSs and that they would be supported should they need to use operational discretion.

Effectiveness

21. Respondents were asked to rank from one (least effective) to five (most effective) how effective they believed CFRS to be in a range of functions, including responding to various incidents, prevention and protection activity and working with other agencies. The majority of staff ranked CFRS as either four or five in every category.
22. The same exercise was also undertaken in relation to additional activities during Covid-19, which fell under the tripartite agreement. Of the roles undertaken by CFRS staff, results were split between those who considered CFRS to be effective and those who did not know. This may be due to the activities only recently being undertaken at the time of survey and limited numbers of staff undertaking each particular activity.
23. Finally, respondents were asked to rank how effective they felt CFRS was regarding several people issues such as a positive culture, wellbeing, inclusion and development. The majority (70%+) of respondents to each issue said the service was effective.

Financial Implications

24. None.

Legal Implications

25. None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

26. The survey asked several questions concerning equality and diversity matters.

Environmental Implications

27. None.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE