

Workforce Development Strategy

2017/18 – 2019/20



Where are we now?

We believe that our workforce is our greatest assets and recognise the critical need to retain excellent, motivated talent to steer the way through the changing times ahead.

Our workforce has changed significantly over the past few years and this will continue as we change the way we do things, implement transformation plans and continue to redesign our services. With the uncertainty over future funding levels we need to ensure the organisation is future focused and flexible to facilitate growth, change and innovation.

As the Service prepares for the challenges ahead, we know that being successful depends greatly on having a positive, inclusive and engaging culture. We recently conducted a cultural survey which considered a variety of aspects such as values, power structures, teamwork, workloads, employee engagement and communication. The results of the survey have given us a detailed knowledge of our culture and have helped us to understand what interventions are required to positively impact the culture going forward.

Key Drivers

The key drivers which have set the direction of this strategy are:

- Compliance with key employment legislation, national operational standards and guidance and consideration given to the Fire and Rescue National Framework, NFCC People Strategy and Leadership Framework, Fire Vision 2024;
- Future proofing service delivery in terms of staffing levels, skills attainment and knowledge enhancement;
- Reductions in funding which has necessitated restructuring, changes to responsibilities and ways of working;
- Improving employee levels of engagement, innovation and heightening personal responsibility;
- Improving levels of underrepresented groups in our workforce to reflect the diversity of the community we serve in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Strategy and the nationally driven work of the Inclusive Fire Service Working Group (IFSWG);
- Continuing to grow our innovative apprenticeship scheme, ensuring it is sustainable for the future;
- Ensure we identify and plan to address any areas of improvement relating to workforce issues which form part of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).



Where do we want to be?

Our aim is to maintain a workforce that is highly skilled, agile, engaged and safe in their diverse roles, whilst ensuring where possible, employees have opportunities, choice and pathways for promotion and development. Over the next three years we want to shape our workforce to be more agile, diverse, integrated with partners and professionally expert across a wider skills set. We want our employees to enjoy their role and have a fulfilling career with our Service.

Our Workforce Development Strategy sets out a framework for engaging and developing our employees to enable the cultural changes which are necessary to deliver our vision and strategic priorities whilst ensuring our values are at the center of all we do. The strategy details an ambitious 3-year programme that will not be without its challenges, but designed to align activities with the improvements required to lead in a changing environment. The focus is on developing our internal capacity and capability to balance the challenges of providing high quality services to our communities with the efficiencies necessary to achieve our financial plans.

To achieve this, the Workforce Development Strategy has six key improvement objectives (KIO), each objective will have an action plan which will be monitored regularly and refreshed as progress is made:

- Workforce sustainability
- Outstanding Leadership
- Talent management and development
- Wellbeing and reward
- Positive working environment
- Operational excellence



How do we get there?

We have identified six key improvement objectives to deliver the Workforce Development Strategy.

1. Workforce Sustainability

The aim of this work stream is to ensure that our workforce has the capacity, structure and sustainability to meet current and future business needs.

A sustainable workforce is a potential outcome of medium to long term strategic planning. Strategic workforce planning will help to get the best out of our talent by providing an accurate picture of the availability, composition, age structure and capabilities of the workforce. Creating and maintaining a sustainable workforce requires us to take appropriate action to recruit and retain the right people; address key future and occupational skill shortages; promote jobs, careers and the concept of employability; identify, develop and motivate talent and address diversity and inclusion issues.

Given our ageing workforce we understand that it is vital to act now to attract new talent and in turn to provide opportunities for succession planning and our current employees to pass on their invaluable skills and knowledge. We will consequently continue to grow our innovative apprenticeship scheme and ensure it is sustainable for the future. By providing an opportunity for young people to join our workforce and to gain academic qualifications and 'on the job' training through frameworks such as Business Fire safety, Business Admin and vehicle technicians we are investing in our future workforce and ensuring they develop in their career with an underpinning appreciation of our values and vision.

We are ever conscious of the need to ensure that our workforce reflects our local population. Through our ED&I Strategy, we will endeavour to identify any barriers that prevent or discourage individuals from applying for jobs and take action to remove them. We will take positive action to make all reasonable adjustments to our workplaces and roles to ensure that people with particular cultural, religious or disability requirements are welcomed into our teams.

We will ensure the sustainability of the workforce by:

- Developing a strategic workforce plan which will demonstrate our strategies for workforce sustainability. The plan will continually review the organisational structure to ensure it reflects the needs of the organisation and future challenges and ensure effective workforce profiling, forecasting and planning to recruit the right number of people with the right skills, knowledge, values and behaviours at the right time, into the right job so that services are delivered efficiently and cost effectively;
- Continuously improving our workforce planning techniques and resources to manage short, medium and longer-term Service requirements at an early stage, ensuring that relevant information is used to accurately forecast employee numbers and recruitment requirements;
- Designing and facilitating apprenticeship schemes across the Service to allow opportunities for young people to gain employment within a professional and effective organisation, offer clear career paths for our YFA and cadets as well as developing capacity in our current workforce;
- Exploring and managing the issues of an ageing workforce;
- Exploring opportunities to develop a workforce which recognises the diversity of the community we serve.



2. Outstanding Leadership

The aim of this work stream is to develop leaders who can perform in a managerial, strategic and political role and who can work effectively in collaboration/partnership with others.

Our leaders are vital to our success and the success of this strategy. We require strong and effective leadership at all levels to ensure that everything we do aligns to the vision, priorities and values of the fire and rescue service, both locally and nationally.

We recognise the need for a leadership and management programme which can be delivered flexibly to provide clarity, direction and build corporate capacity. Historically, leadership within the fire and rescue service has predominantly been focused on the incident ground. With a growing need to collaborate with partners outside of the fire sector and the requirement for our employees to receive clear and strong leadership, this focus needs to be widened.

We aim to further develop leadership and management skills and capacity throughout the Service including engagement with elected members and local politicians. We want to develop leaders and managers who are visible, accessible, take responsibility and lead by example, portraying the services values and behaviours at all times. We will equip managers to lead our people, be actively involved in their own learning and the learning of our future leaders; deliver measurable outcomes and to be catalysts for achieving the culture we desire.

We will ensure outstanding leadership by:

- Communicating and promoting the Service vision, priorities and expected values and behaviours to all employees;
- Developing the core leadership skills and behaviours required to sustain ourselves as a successful organisation which focuses on the community, empowers employees and manages performance;
- Putting a specific focus on leadership in our cultural survey to ensure we enhance the leadership skills of managers to meet future challenges and build a strong, responsible and resilient leadership culture which enables us to lead and manage change proactively and at pace;
- Embedding a coaching approach to leadership and ensuring this is a consistent approach in all development processes;
- Supporting elected members to ensure they have knowledge and understanding of the fire and rescue service to enable them to provide scrutiny and be effective in their role;
- Reviewing opportunities for shared leadership development with other public sector and partner organisations.



3. Talent Management and Development

The aim of this work stream is to develop a clear, consistent, structured and sustainable talent management process which will enable the Service to identify and make use of its talent across all areas of the business.

The current environment requires high capability and commitment from our leaders to balance the challenges of providing high quality services with excellent outcomes alongside a significant financial challenge and limited resources. We recognise the critical need to retain excellent, motivated talent to steer our way through the changing times ahead.

At present, talent management initiatives take place through recruitment, appraisal, development programmes, succession planning, recognition and workforce planning; however we recognise that these need to be better integrated to provide a more consistent, transparent and structured approach.

We will ensure we manage and develop talent by:

- Considering new initiatives to support career progression and job enrichment and ensure the Service values and behaviours as well as skills, knowledge and ability are the means by which employees are assessed and selected for opportunities;
- Continuing to develop our approach to professional and accredited training and development, with an increased emphasis on behavioural and competency based frameworks and increasing the access to material for people to learn new skills; (e-learning etc.);
- Ensuring our performance management systems are fair and robust and focus on values and behaviours and will produce structured development plans where required to tackle underperformance;
- Reviewing our current annual appraisal and succession planning processes to ensure talent is nurtured and developed effectively;
- Promoting and facilitating organisation or cross sector learning and work shadowing development opportunities to improve skills transfer and increase organisational efficiency and capacity;
- Developing and implementing an effective mentoring scheme across the Service ensuring the provision is available to those who wish to engage;
- Planning development well in advance to ensure the appropriate skills are available to cover any roles within the organisation should they become available;
- Exploring opportunities for acceleration and talent management programmes for those identified as high performers.



4. Wellbeing and Reward

The aim of this work stream is to enable people to be the best they can and remain in employment as long as they wish to through the provision of a safe working environment, effective training programmes, support for their fitness and wellbeing and rewarding positive performance where appropriate.

Maintaining a healthy and happy workforce will undoubtedly have efficiency benefits for the Service in terms of attendance at work and productivity. There is growing evidence that the wellbeing of employees has a direct impact on productivity delivered and the experience of the public engaging with our services. We seek to empower our employees to take control of their own health and wellbeing.

To support employees we offer a holistic Employee Assistance Programme and a range of fast track interventions where employees and managers, working together, can tailor a personalised health and wellbeing programme, this could include for example, emotional support, financial guidance and access to fast track physical and mental health services.

By rewarding our people and recognising their efforts in helping to make our organisation the leading fire and rescue service, we aim to strengthen their motivation and sense of value. We will have a 'total reward' approach, bringing together all the investments we make in our people with everything that our people value in working for us. This will go beyond pay and include a range of rewards and benefits such as healthcare, wellbeing, learning and development and career development opportunities.

We will ensure wellbeing and reward for the workforce by:

- Exploring ways to acknowledge positive performance and high performing employees, ensuring employee success is celebrated and widely recognised both internally and externally;
- Listening, responding and giving opportunity for employees to be heard;
- Rewarding outcomes and achievements that have been gained through application of behaviours consistent with the values of the Service;
- Reviewing and implementing appropriate physical and mental wellbeing initiatives;
- Supporting our aging workforce through wellbeing initiatives to ensure they remain fit for their role;
- Investigating alternative approaches to health care which will have no direct cost to the Service however may benefit employees.



5. Positive Working Environment

This work stream aims to support the development of a positive and inclusive culture that encourages continuous improvement of our Service aligned to our vision and values.

We are committed to creating as secure an employment environment as possible by means of effective workforce planning. In meeting our commitment to providing the best possible service with our available resources, change is however, inevitable and we have already undergone significant organisational change, we will continue to manage these changes with minimum disruption to our employees and the public.

We expect our employees to treat each other and those who they come into contact with whilst undertaking their role with dignity and respect. We are committed to ensuring fairness and equal opportunity for all our employees and as such will apply all policies and make decisions equitably and fairly. Our recent cultural survey identified that individuals had experienced co-worker undermining behaviour within the organisation, in general the level was low but is unacceptable. We will take effective action to deal with this behaviour, discrimination, victimisation or harassment and have a clear process by which employees can raise any concerns without fear.

We will ensure a positive working environment by:

- Demonstrating a coaching style of leadership and management;
- Designing roles which support our values and expected behaviours as well as allowing decision making and flexibility;
- Exploring new ways of working including collaboration, partnership working and strategic alliance in addition to promoting the fire & rescue service as an employer and partner of choice;
- Regularly undertaking a cultural survey and working with employees to make positive changes on the outcomes;
- Reviewing our induction processes to ensure we get new people working effectively as quickly as possible;
- Utilising our processes and coaching approach, to encourage all employees to continuously develop themselves and provide support and development for those whose performance falls below the required standards;



6. Operational Excellence

This work stream aims to ensure that employees conform to the highest level of professional standards by having the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding in order to fulfil the vast array of operational and non-operational demands placed upon them, therefore developing a safe and competent workforce.

A person can demonstrate operational competence by applying their skills, knowledge and understanding at operational incidents or in a realistic simulation. Designing and implementing an operational competence framework that covers technical skills, command and control, leadership and management skills, working with others and multi-agency collaboration, is about ensuring that operational firefighters and commanders have the right skills to deliver public safety by applying recognised operational procedures, Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles [JESIP] and complying with appropriate health and safety legislation.

We recognise that the requirements of the fire and rescue service are changing as we prepare to respond to all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks. Our workforce has developed their skills to respond to a changing risk profile, including: extreme weather events such as flooding or wildfire; terrorist incidents; and medical emergencies. The change in our community risk results in the need to ensure that we maintain a workforce that is competent and safe within their respective and diverse roles.

We will ensure operational excellence by:

- Ensuring we undertake a training needs analysis on an annual basis taking into account all national and local based risks and national guidance and programmes;
- Ensuring that sufficient mechanisms are in place to address under performance in all risk critical training;
- Ensuring that all learning and development addresses organisational, team and individual skills requirements. Where appropriate, document and record learning, development and competence, for example, through the attainment of appropriate qualifications or standards within our FireWatch system;
- Developing and reviewing our e-learning packages, and ensure the e-learning platform is accessible for all employees;
- Producing a two-year training programme to ensure that all employees have access to the risk critical courses that are required for their role within the appropriate time frame;
- Ensuring we provide adequate CPD for our Flexible Duty Officers including any specialist roles such as: HMEPO; DIM; FI; FS; WIM; Wildfire; and NILO;
- Exploring opportunities for further skills acquisition supported by the relevant training through the transfer of employees throughout the Service to ensure we have an agile workforce which can meet changing demands;
- Ensuring that every commander receives command development which includes leadership, considerations of organisational culture, operational team effectiveness, situational awareness, command decision making, incident command communication and personal resilience. Every commander will need to demonstrate all of these to be effective and assessed as competent in role;
- Ensuring that every commander receives command development which includes leadership, considerations of organisational culture, operational team effectiveness, situational awareness, command decision making, incident command communication, application of JESIP and personal resilience. Every commander will need to demonstrate all of these to be effective and assessed as competent in role;
- Undertaking quality assurance across all activities deemed as risk critical, assuring and further developing quality performance in work.



Measuring Progress

We will monitor progress of this strategy in the following ways:

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)**
 - We will develop a suite of appropriate Key Performance Indicators to help measure the progress of this strategy.
- **Reporting Progress**
 - Scrutiny of progress against the strategy will be undertaken by the Performance and Programme Board (PPB) who will receive regular reports from the Head of Workforce Development, in their role as strategic lead for workforce development.
- **Measuring Perceptions/ Sense Checking**
 - We will regularly ask for feedback from our operational staff to inform us of our progress with the Workforce Development Strategy. Their opinions and suggestions will be used to measure and influence improvement.
- **Keeping it current**
 - We will provide a progress report and update the plan annually to ensure it maintains its currency.



Key Improvement Objectives

To achieve our vision for Workforce Development, we have identified 6 Key Improvement Objectives (KIO):

Each of the KIO are underpinned by priority activities and prioritised over the next 3 years.

KIO 1 – Workforce Sustainability - to ensure that our workforce has the capacity, structure and sustainability to meet current and future business needs.		
WHY? Strategic workforce planning will help to get the best out of our talent by providing an accurate picture of the availability, composition, age structure and capabilities of the workforce. Creating and maintaining a sustainable workforce requires us to take appropriate action to recruit and retain the right people; address key future and occupational skill shortages; promote jobs, careers and the concept of employability; identify, develop and motivate talent and address diversity and inclusion issues.		
Target Year	KIO Ref.	Description
17/18		We will develop a strategic workforce plan which will demonstrate our strategies for workforce sustainability through effective workforce profiling, forecasting and planning as well as looking for ways to improve our methods and techniques for doing this.
17/18		We will implement and review our initial firefighter apprenticeship scheme to ensure it delivers the outcomes we expect and make improvements for future schemes.
18/20		We will explore further apprenticeship opportunities with local education establishments for upskilling our current workforce, as well as progressing to become an employer provider and end point assessor ensuring effective utilisation of the apprenticeship levy.
18/19		In conjunction with Community Risk Management, we will design and implement a clear career path and supportive measures for our YFA and Cadets on to our apprenticeship schemes and retained duty system stations (where applicable).
18/20		To support the delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, particularly focussing on improving the diversity of the workforce through positive action programmes, target setting and addressing diversity and inclusion issues.
18/19		We will review our processes for on call recruitment, taking into consideration supportive mechanisms for potential applicants and evaluating the impacts on applicant numbers from aligning point of entry testing with Wholetime recruitment.
18/20		We will review our workforce plan annually, utilising any improvements in methods and techniques we have developed to ensure it is still fit for purpose and is providing realistic and value added management information for strategic planning.



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KIO 2 – Outstanding Leadership - to develop leaders who can perform in a managerial, strategic and political role and who can work effectively in collaboration/partnership with others.		
<p>WHY?</p> <p>Our leaders are vital to our success and the success of this strategy. We require strong and effective leadership at all levels to ensure that everything we do aligns to the vision, priorities and values of the fire and rescue service, both locally and nationally.</p>		
Target Year	KIO Ref.	Description
17/19		We will review our current model for leadership development at all levels of the Service taking into consideration the skills required of managers to meet future challenges as well as opportunities to work with partners to make improvements to our delivery mechanisms where appropriate.
18/19		We will consider including a coaching and mentoring qualification in our leaders' development programme and assist us in driving cultural change and developing a coaching and supportive style of management.
18/19		We will implement the outcomes from the review of leadership development ensuring any new training requirements designed support the values of the Service and desired culture.
19/20		We will review the success of our processes by evaluating the number of potential leaders identified through succession planning processes; and those who have been developed in advance of vacancy opportunities and who have been successful in gaining promotion.



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KIO 3 – Talent Management and Development - to develop a clear, consistent, structured and sustainable talent management process which will enable the Service to identify and make use of its talent across all areas of the business.		
<p>WHY?</p> <p>The current environment requires high capability and commitment from our leaders to balance the challenges of providing high quality services with excellent outcomes alongside a significant financial challenge and limited resources. We recognise the critical need to retain excellent, motivated talent to steer our way through the changing times ahead.</p>		
Target Year	KIO Ref.	Description
17/18		We will review our process for annual appraisal to ensure it is aligned to the Services values and measures expected behaviours as well ensuring this process is utilised effectively in career progression decision making.
18/19		We will review our processes for succession planning, aligning to the strategic workforce plan to make sure we effectively plan development in advance, ensuring the appropriate skills are available to cover any roles within the organisation should they become available.
18/19		We will review our processes for career progression ensuring processes are fair and transparent, are linked to the values behaviours framework, aligned to the appraisal process and gives the Service a sufficient supply of eligible candidates to fill vacancies throughout the establishment both on a permanent and temporary basis as and when required
18/19		We will seek to implement an effective mentoring scheme across the Service ensuring the provision is available to those who wish to engage and adequate training is provided to all involved.
18/19		We will explore the potential of secondment opportunities with other fire and rescue services and wider partners to establish development opportunities on a larger scale.
19/20		We will explore opportunities for acceleration and talent management programmes for those identified as high performers through appraisal and succession planning processes.



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KIO 4 – Wellbeing and Reward - to enable people to be the best they can and remain in employment as long as they can be through the provision of a safe working environment, effective training programmes, support for their fitness and wellbeing and rewarding positive performance where appropriate.

WHY?

Maintaining a healthy and happy workforce will undoubtedly have efficiency benefits for the Service in terms of attendance at work and productivity. There is growing evidence that the wellbeing of employees has a direct impact on productivity delivered and the experience of the public engaging with our services and by rewarding and recognising peoples efforts we aim to strengthen their motivation and sense of value.

Target Year	KIO Ref.	Description
18/20		We will build upon and further explore ways to acknowledge positive performance and high performing employees, especially where outcomes and achievements are gained by applying behaviours consistent with the values of the Service. We will ensure employee success is celebrated and widely recognised both internally and externally, where appropriate and we understand the ways in which our employees wish to be rewarded and recognised.
18/20		We aim to maintain our Better Health at Work Continuing Excellence status through annual reassessment and work towards achieving ambassador level.
17/18		We will improve our procedures for annual fitness testing by implementing the recommendations and guidance from Firefit regarding fitness testing and support mechanisms and ensuring 100% of the operational workforce are tested and remain fit for role.
18/19		We will review our current wellbeing initiatives to ensure they support our workforce to remain fit for their role, giving particular consideration for our provisions around mental health support and how this can be improved.



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KIO 5 – Positive Working Environment - to support the development of a positive and inclusive culture that encourages continuous improvement of our service aligned to our vision and values.		
<p>WHY?</p> <p>We are committed to creating as secure an employment environment as possible by means of effective workforce planning and ensuring fairness and equal opportunity for all our employees. We expect our employees to treat each other and those who they come into contact with whilst undertaking their role with dignity and respect and will challenge behaviour that is not aligned to our values.</p>		
Target Year	KIO Ref.	Description
17/18		We will review and action the findings from our recent cultural survey ensuring we take a collaborative approach with our workforce to influence positive change.
18/19		We will undertake a second cultural survey, the results of which will be openly shared with our workforce and trade union representatives and will track progress against key measures, shaping our interventions for improvement and ways of working moving forward.
17/18		We will launch our values and behaviours framework which has been developed in conjunction with our employees and will underpin our workforce processes for performance management and career progression.
18/19		We will review our processes for selection and induction to ensure new employees joining our Service are aligned to our values and can contribute effectively as quickly as possible.



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<p>KIO 6 – Operational Excellence - to ensure that employees conform to the highest level of professional standards by having the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding in order to fulfil the vast array of operational and non-operational demands placed upon them, therefore developing a safe and competent workforce.</p>		
<p>WHY?</p> <p>A person can demonstrate operational competence by applying their skills, knowledge and understanding at operational incidents or in a realistic simulation. Designing and implementing an operational competence framework that covers technical skills, command and control, leadership and management skills, working with others, multi-agency collaboration and changes in community risk will ensure that we maintain a workforce that is competent and safe within their respective and diverse roles.</p>		
Target Year	KIO Ref.	Description
17/18		We will undertake an annual training needs analysis considering all national and local based risks as well as the needs of the Service and individual development identified through the strategic workforce plan and appraisal and succession planning processes.
17/18		We will launch and embed new ways of working for logging and recording competence within our FireWatch system as well as undertaking quality assurance across all activities deemed as risk critical, assuring and further developing competent performance in work for our employees.
17/18		We will produce a two-year training programme to ensure that all employees have access to the risk critical courses that are required for their role within the appropriate time frame as well as providing adequate CPD for our Flexible Duty Officers which will cover specialist roles such as HMEPO, DIM, FI, FS, WIM, Wildfire and NILO.
18/19		We will look to develop and review our e-learning packages to ensure the e-learning platform is accessible for all employees and offers an alternative method of self-development for employees interested in career progression.
18/19		We will continue to enhance and implement effective incident command development which will encompass leadership, considerations of organisational culture, operational team effectiveness, situational awareness, command decision making, incident command communication and personal resilience.

