



Safest People, Safest Places

Human Resources Committee

16 September 2021

Culture Survey Results

Report of Head of People and Organisational Development

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Human Resources Committee (HRC) of the findings of the third culture survey conducted by Durham University Business School (DUBS) in April 2021.

Background

2. The Service, in collaboration with DUBS, launched its first culture survey in October 2016 to study the impact of a range of workplace factors and how this affects service delivery to the public. To gain an independent, credible view of the culture of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS), this work was undertaken by Professor Les Graham who has worked with approximately 36 police forces nationally, including Durham Constabulary, on collaborative research projects studying '*Service excellence in the policing profession*', in which organisational culture plays a significant part. The projects have been very successful and identified by the Home Office as best practice. The survey applies academic rigour to benchmark our culture and enable it to be tracked over time.
3. In April 2018, the second culture survey was launched. In total, 366 responses (65.5%) were received which is an increase in responses from the 2016 survey (58.6%), the co-worker survey received 319 responses (57.1%).
4. The Service did plan to undertake the third survey in April 2020 however, due to the pandemic impacting on DUBS ability to deliver the survey, this was put on hold and rescheduled for April 2021. The key themes for the 2021 survey included fairness, trust, leadership, and wellbeing. In total, 309 responses were received (54.7%). This is slightly lower than the response rate obtained by the previous culture survey in 2018 (65.5%). By role, this resulted in a sample of 164 whole-time staff, 63 on-call staff and 70 corporate staff.
5. To enable analysis of the data over time and measure change in an individual's behaviour and their perceptions, respondents were asked to formulate an anonymous identification code. 75% of respondents were prepared to provide this which is comparable to the 2018 survey and is a very positive result.

6. The findings of the survey were delivered by DUBS via Microsoft Teams on 27 July 2021. All staff, the representative bodies and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) were invited to attend the online session to receive the results at the same time as the Service Leadership Team (SLT). This was a similar approach taken in 2018 with the aim being to increase trust and transparency. The session was successful with approximately 75 dial ins, some of which were teams and watches. Further to this a copy of the recording and an infographic highlighting key trends was circulated to staff via a Fire Flash, which is an internal communications video. A copy of the report will be circulated now it has been received.

Findings

7. The explanation of the key measures, survey findings and relationships between key measures are included within the report produced by DUBS and is attached as Appendix A.
8. The descriptive statistics for the key measures are presented in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 below. Table 1 shows the measures which were used in all three surveys. These measures were identified by the Service and DUBS as the most important where positive impacts could be made over time and improvement tracked. Table 2 shows the measures which have been previously used in either the 2016 or 2018 survey which the Service felt important to remeasure to support our strategic direction for People. Table 3 shows several new measures which were included in the 2021 survey focussing on trust, fairness, leadership and wellbeing.

Table 1: Average scores for measures used over time, all respondents

Measure (All measures use a 1-7 scale unless specified)	2016 (Average)	2018 (Average)	2021 (Average)	Direction of travel
Perceived Organisational Support	4.13	4.5	4.13	↓
Experienced Co-worker Undermining Behaviour / Incivility (1-6 Scale)	2.65	2.22	1.93	↓*
Procedural Justice (Fairness)	3.64	3.86	4.05	↑
Job Satisfaction	5.45	5.76	5.97	↑
Engagement	5.47	5.82	6.03	↑
Emotional Energy	4.97	5.42	4.32	↓
Voice Behaviour	5.47	5.64	5.68	↑
Ego Depletion / Fatigue	2.63	2.03	3.44	↑

Note: ↓* equates to a positive reduction in negative behaviour.

All measures used a 1 to 7 scale except where stated (e.g. 1–Strongly Disagree, 2–Disagree, 3–Slightly Disagree, 4–Neither Agree or Disagree, 5–Slightly Agree, 6–Agree, 7–Strongly Agree).

9. The results show a positive direction of travel in 5 of the 8 measures used across the three surveys. A decrease has been reported in the two wellbeing indicators (emotional energy and ego depletion / fatigue) as well as perceived organisational support (POS) which will require further investigation.
10. Procedural justice (fairness) is an area where a lot of focus has been given since the previous survey and a specific action plan around fairness was put in place. This indicator

is about the way processes are used to determine the outcomes for an individual so predominantly our policies and procedures and the decisions we make. Whilst we have seen improvements which is positive, there are a number of comments made by staff which highlight perceptions of unfairness. This is an area identified for further investigation. This indicator impacts significantly on a range of other measures and so is a key enabler for change and warrants continued focus.

11. On a positive note, the workforce has reported lower levels of undermining behaviour from their co-workers than in the 2016 and 2018 surveys. This suggests individuals believe that, in general, the levels of undermining behaviour that occur in the workplace are low.
12. Improvements in the other key measures show high levels of job satisfaction, voice behaviour, improvement behaviour and engagement which are positive indicators within our culture that staff are happy in their work and feel engaged with the Service. There is an upward trend particularly in the operational workforce with these measures.
13. Emotional energy can be considered as the amount of emotional and mental energy individuals have available to them to meet the daily demands they face in their roles. It is concerning that this indicator has seen a significant drop since the last survey and would be easy to link to the impact of the pandemic however, further investigation is necessary to determine the reasons for this.
14. There has also been a reduction in POS. This has been one of the key measures we have been trying to improve since the first survey, so it is disappointing to see this has reduced. POS refers to an individuals' beliefs regarding the degree to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. It also refers to a feeling of assurance that the organisation will provide support when individuals face particularly difficult or challenging circumstances when carrying out their duties.

Table 2: Average scores for key measures, all respondents

Measure	2016 (Average)	2018 (Average)	2021 (Average)	Direction of travel
Supportive Leadership		5.33	5.51	↑
Authoritarian Leadership		3.78	3.49	↓*
Organisational Integrity		4.2	4.3	↑
Organisational Identification		5.19	5.52	↑
Challenge Stressors (1-5 scale)		3.67	3.61	↓
Hindrance Stressors (1-5 scale)		2.71	2.57	↓*
Silence due to Fear	3.68	-	3.76	↑
Improvement Behaviour		4.86	5.64	↑

15. The results for supportive leadership have increased suggesting individuals perceive their immediate supervisor as being competent, having personal integrity, caring about the wellbeing and development of those who work for them as well as being focussed on serving their communities. Although this has increased, moderate levels of authoritarian leadership were still reported across the organisation with corporate staff reporting an increase.
16. On average staff reported high levels of challenge stressors. These reflect individuals' perceptions of work-related demands, such as workload, time pressures, and levels of

responsibility and whilst they may find them stressful, staff will view these as an opportunity for personal development or achievement. Whilst this indicator has reduced slightly, the levels reported are still positive in line with our drive to push responsibility down the organisation and offer development opportunities to those identified as having potential. In contrast hindrance stressors were reported as moderately low across the Service and have reduced from the 2018 survey which is a positive outcome.

Table 3: Average scores for key measures, all respondents

Measure	2021 (Average)
Values Alignment	5.22
Identity Integrity	6.4
High Performance Expectations from Supervisors	5.96
Feeling trusted by Supervisors	6.2
Social support from co-workers	4.32
Mental Wellbeing (1-5 scale)	3.62
Fatigue	3.44
Self-Efficacy	6.27
Self-Worth	6.15
Authenticity at Work	5.59

17. Following the Service's launch of its values and behaviours framework, the values alignment measure gives us a positive indication that a high number of our staff are aligned to the values we hold as an organisation.
18. A key principle of the People Strategy 2020 – 2023 and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018 - 2022 is the drive to be a more inclusive organisation where individuals feel they can be their true self at work. This means staff feel able to openly express personal identities and act in a way that feels authentic and true to oneself. This can have important implications for individual wellbeing (Table 1) and their desire to speak up and make improvements (Table 1). Authenticity at work is reported as high across the Service which is positive.

Summary

19. Overall, the survey reported positive findings across the majority of the measures included and improvements have been made across a range of measures used in previous surveys.
20. DUBS commented that the results reported were reflective of an organisation that was performing well and that the Service should be pleased with the outcome of the survey.
21. To help us improve further, the report identified the following areas in which the Service should focus their attentions, these being:
 - a) Continue to concentrate efforts around POS and procedural justice (fairness). These will positively impact on engagement, support and wellbeing measures.
 - b) Continue the move towards a supportive leadership approach which should positively impact felt trust, voice behaviour, improvement behaviour and emotional energy.
 - c) Removal of any hindrance stressors staff may be experiencing which should positively impact engagement, support and wellbeing factors.

- d) Work to further reduce incivility which should positively impact on self-esteem, authenticity at work and wellbeing factors.

Next Steps

- 22. The following next steps have been identified following the receipt of the survey outcomes:
 - a) A copy of the report will be shared with all staff.
 - b) The Service will set up a culture survey steering group (CSSG) and a number of sub focus groups which will help us to understand the outcomes more fully and the interventions that will be required. These will be captured in an action plan which the steering group will be responsible for completing.
 - c) A decision was taken by SLT to give responses to all of the comments made by staff in the survey so we could respond to the issues raised. Work is ongoing with the Heads of Service to complete this. These comments will also be used by the CSSG to form part of the action plan and inform the content for the focus groups.
 - d) More time will be spent with DUBS to analyse the data sets using the additional demographic data collected to identify if there are any trends within specific groups which need addressing.
 - e) SLT has discussed its current approach to engagement and how it intends to adapt its strategy and methods to improve engagement with all staff.
 - f) The Workplace Wellbeing Group is to be re-established to support the wellbeing indicators and any actions which arise from the action plan.

Recommendations

- 23. Members are requested to:
 - (a) **note** and comment on the content of the report.

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