

**Safest People, Safest Places**

County Durham and Darlington  
**Fire and Rescue Authority**



## **COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**

**21 MARCH 2017**

### **CULTURAL SURVEY**

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## **REPORT OF AREA MANAGER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of the findings of the cultural survey conducted by Durham University Business School (DUBS) in October 2016.

### **Background**






















2. In 2015, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) launched its three year Organisation Development (OD) Strategy and action plan. This included an objective to audit the culture of the service to gauge the current position and to consider areas for change and improvement.
3. Organisational culture is critically important both to achieving the aims of the organisation and the wellbeing of staff, effective organisational culture helps to manage change and deliver significant public service improvement.
4. A significant amount of work was carried out by the Service in 2015/16 to assess the culture within the organisation. In late 2015, the principal officers (PO) commenced the cultural audit by visiting every watch and section to gauge their thoughts and perceptions of the culture within the service. On a number of these visits the POs were accompanied by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority and although the feedback from staff highlighted significant areas of good practice several areas were identified where improvement was required.
5. An action plan was developed by the Area Managers (AM) who also conducted follow up sessions with staff in 2016 to measure progress against the plan.
6. Although the Service has conducted a significant amount of work assessing its own culture, the Adrian Thomas report 'Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England' published in 2016 had an opinion that nationally, the culture of the fire and rescue service required change to create a high performing service aligned to the needs of the people it serves.
7. To gain an independent, credible view of the culture of CDDFRS, Dr Les Graham from DUBS was approached to carry this out. Dr Graham has worked with approximately 30 police forces nationally, including Durham Constabulary, on collaborative research projects studying '*Service excellence in the policing profession*', in which organisational culture plays a huge part. The projects have been hugely successful and identified by the Home Office as best practice.

8. The Service in collaboration with DUBS launched a cultural survey in October 2016 to study the impact of workplace factors and how this affects service delivery to the public. The survey would apply academic rigour to benchmark our culture and enable it to be tracked over a period of time.
9. A paper survey utilising 19 proven academic scales was circulated to all employees to measure workplace factors, staff attitudes, motivation and wellbeing. Responses were collected over a four week period from 3 October to 31 October 2016. In total, 347 responses (58.6%) were received which is a very positive result.
10. To enable analysis of the data over a period of time and measure change in an individual's behaviour and their perceptions, follow up surveys will be used. For this purpose, respondents were asked to formulate an anonymous identification code, 92.8% of respondents were prepared to do this which again is a very positive result.

## Findings

11. The discussion of the key measures, survey findings and relationships between key measures are included within the report produced by DUBS (Appendix 1).
12. The descriptive statistics for the key measures are presented in Table 1 below. All measures use a 1 to 7 scale except where stated, discussions of the average scores are presented in points 13 to 29.

**Table 1: Average Scores for Key Measures, All Respondents**

Measure	All Respondents	Impact
Mission Importance	6.18	
Positive Culture	4.14	 *
Procedural Justice (Fairness)	3.64	
Relational Justice (Fairness)	4.86	
Perceived Organisational Support	4.13	
Empowering Leadership	5.19	
Public Service Motivation	5.03	
Moral Identity	6.19	
Job Satisfaction	5.45	
Organisational Pride	5.71	
Engagement	5.47	
Emotional Energy	4.93	
Ego Depletion	3.02	
Experienced Undermining Behaviour (1-6 Scale)	2.65	
Mindfulness (1-6 Scale)	4.46	
Role Clarity	5.60	
Voice Behaviour	5.47	
Silence (Fear)	3.68	
Silence (Prosocial)	3.76	
Silence (No Change)	3.79	
Making Improvements	4.73	

*Note: 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).*

*\* See point 14.*

13. Mission importance is reported as very high with an average score of 6.18 which implies that staff across the service believe CDDFRS's mission to be highly important.
14. Positive culture is reported as moderate with an average score of 4.14, however DUBS have stated they would not use this measure in future research for CDDFRS due to a reported lack of understanding of how to answer the questions in the scale and evidence of a lack of reliability which may be due to the context of the organisation.
15. Procedural justice (fairness) is reported as moderately low, with an average score of 3.64. The score for relational justice (fairness) is more encouraging at 4.86; this suggests the service's interactional element of decision making is fairer than the procedural element.
16. Perceived organisational support is reported as generally positive with an average score of 4.13 which implies that staff believe the service shows moderate levels of consideration for their efforts and well-being.
17. Empowering leadership reported a very high average score of 5.19 which reflects a positive level of leadership in the service. This suggests that supervisors make individuals feel empowered, highlight the significance of work, provide them with participation in decision making, convey confidence that performance will be high and remove bureaucratic constraints.
18. Public service motivation across the service is high, with an average score of 5.03. This indicates the majority of employees are motivated to make a positive difference to society, feel a high level of calling to serve the public and are prepared to make self-sacrifices.
19. Very high levels of moral identity were reported by individuals with an average score of 6.19 achieved, suggesting that individuals identify themselves as moral people who behave with integrity.
20. Organisational pride measures how employees view their organisation's status and worth. Employees of CDDFRS reported a very high average score of 5.71 implying the status and worth of CDDFRS to be very high.
21. Levels of engagement are also very high (average score of 5.47) which suggests that staff are willing to invest their personal emotional, cognitive and physical energies into their work. Job satisfaction also reported a high average score of 5.45.
22. Emotional energy reflects individual's well-being and the levels of emotional and mental energy they have available to them to deal with the demands of their job on a daily basis. Staff reported their emotional energy as high with an average score of 4.93 which is a positive result.
23. Ego depletion across the service is low with an average score of 3.02 which suggests that individuals can generally regulate their behaviours in a positive manner.
24. Staff reported low levels of experienced co-worker undermining behaviour (average score of 2.65) which suggests individuals believe that in general the levels of undermining

behaviour that occur in the workplace are low. However, some individuals did report experiencing moderately high levels.

25. Mindfulness reported an average score of 4.46, this is a positive result and suggests that individuals are attentive and aware of the present moment, recognise thoughts and feelings as passing mental events and accept unpleasant thoughts and feelings.
26. Staff reported a very high average score of 5.60 for role clarity which suggests that individuals have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in their role.
27. Voice behaviour is reported as high with an average score of 5.47. This suggests that staff communicate their ideas, suggestions, concerns and information about any work-related issues with the intent to make improvements for the service.
28. Motives for silence are measured using 3 scales with all reporting as low which is positive. The average score for “fear of consequence or speaking up” was 3.68. The average score for “prosocial” silence was 3.76 and for “silence through a belief nothing will change” was 3.79.
29. Making improvements reported a high average score of 4.73, suggesting that staff demonstrate proactive and promotive behaviour at work, with the aim of making improvements and achieving organisational goals.
30. The findings were delivered to the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and representatives from the trade unions by Dr Graham at the same presentation in January 2017. This was a critical milestone in our cultural journey with the aim to increase trust and transparency. Dr Graham was then invited to deliver the findings to all staff at the monthly staff communication briefing on 27 January 2017.

## Summary

31. Overall, the survey reported positive findings across the majority of the 19 academic scales used. In particular, staff felt really proud to work for CDDFRS, had clear direction in the role they perform in achieving the Service’s objectives and wanted to make improvements to ensure they deliver an excellent service to the communities of County Durham and Darlington.
32. Dr Graham 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.
33. However, the report identified 3 areas the Service should consider for improvement, these being:
  - Our staffs’ perception of the degree of fairness that is applied in Service procedures;
  - The degree to which staff feel the organisation values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing and;
  - The extent to which individuals believe they have been undermined by their colleagues.

## **Next Steps**

34. The Service will identify appropriate interventions to improve performance in the 3 areas highlighted in point 33 above to positively impact our culture moving forward. Follow up surveys will be conducted in collaboration with DUBS to assess whether the interventions have been effective in effecting a positive cultural change.

## **Recommendations**

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

Sarah Natrass, Head of Workforce Development, Ext.5587