

REVIEW OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **1 October 2020**

From: **Overview and Scrutiny Review Group**

Forward Plan ref: **N/A** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To present the findings of the review of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service Health and Wellbeing Provision**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to:**

- **Consider the findings of the Review Group and note the contents of this report**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Theme	Paragraph	Positive Findings	Neutral Findings	Negative Findings	Recommendation
Part A - Background	1 - 3				
Part B – Findings					
Background	4	People at the centre Clear vision statement People Strategy in place COG sponsored	More work required to progress values and culture action plan(s)	Poor mental health growing concern nationally within emergency services	Consider demand v resources in future
Internal and External Drivers and Influencers	5	Legally compliant Two way sharing Level of employee involvement		Influencers and drivers outside organisational control	Continue to work to address areas of improvement
Scope of Activities both Established and Planned	6	Wide ranging Commitment to do more	Availability of resources/finances		
Progress Against any Action Plan and/or Any other Measures in Place	7		Mixed levels of progress		
Comparison Against Other Fire and Rescue Service Family Group	8	HMICFRS inspection report findings			
COVID-19 Related Activities	9	Proactive approach			
Equality Impact Assessment	10				
Observations/Recommendations	11	Authentic leadership Clarity of commitment and direction Self-aware organisation			
Conclusions	12				

PART A - BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This review is being undertaken to satisfy the Fire Authority that the work undertaken by Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) under its People Strategy and specifically that in relation to the health and wellbeing of its employees is appropriate. Whilst this review contributes to all four excellence statements it is predominantly focussed on people.

1.2 It is recognised that those working in emergency services deal with a range of challenges and recent research shows that rates of poor mental health are growing across all services; it's more important now than ever that employees are offered the support to deal with the situations they face every day. It will be necessary to review the lessons learned and any changes/improvements that need to be made as a result of the Service's experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3 The review was undertaken by Councillors Lynda Harford (and Janet Goodwin).

2. REVIEW OBJECTIVES

2.1 The objectives of the review were to;

- identify the internal and external drivers and influencers,
- identify the scope of activities both established and planned,
- review progress against the action plan and/or any other measures in place,
- compare CFRS against other fire and rescue service family group members,
- provide the Authority with assurance that the direction of travel and approach is appropriate.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The terms of reference for this Member-led review set out the key lines of enquiry;

- understand the drivers and influencers,
- identify what activities CFRS has put in place to maximise opportunities and progress against any measures,
- research/compare CFRS against other fire and rescue service family group members,
- confirm the direction of travel.

3.2 The report does not comment on any related influencers outside of CFRS control. It does however consider how the Service monitors any change in direction of those influencers and responds to it.

3.3 In order to familiarise themselves with the work being undertaken and those delivering it, the review group interviewed a number of key individuals (Amy Jackson, Sam Smith,

Jacqui Gavin and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO)) and conducted desk top research of the tools available to employees.

3.4 Any Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishing to review evidence not specifically included in this report or requiring further information should contact the Scrutiny and Assurance Manager who will make the necessary arrangements.

3.5 The remainder of this report sets out the findings from the review.

PART B – FINDINGS

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority is a complex organisation with a range of statutory and community duties. To enable the Authority to meet its statutory obligations, strategic priorities and operational needs it currently operates from 28 fire stations across the county, 27 of which are operational. Management, professional support services and the UK's first Combined Fire Control (CFC) are all based at Service Headquarters in Huntingdon.

4.2 The current establishment is 242 wholetime firefighters (including Principal Officers) and 250 (full time equivalent) On-Call firefighters who are mobilised across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Suffolk by 36 staff operating within the CFC. Essential operational and business support functions are provided by 138 full time employees that work in professional support service roles.

4.3 The number and locations of the stations, management structures and staffing model are routinely reviewed to ensure CFRS delivers a service that continues to be effective and efficient within the constraints of the budget available each year.

4.4 People are at the centre of the organisations vision; this is an ambitious statement of where CFRS aspires to be one day and includes people in the community and CFRS staff in terms of training, development, health, safety and wellbeing.

4.5 CFRS believe that organisational success depends on having appropriately skilled and motivated staff who feel valued as individuals, making them more likely to deliver an excellent service. Their **People Strategy** (Appendix 1), published in July 2018 and sponsored by the CFO, considers both internal and external drivers and influencers to set the strategic direction for workforce development and engagement activities. Through the review of risk and opportunity the Service has identified a number of areas to further improve its People Strategy; one such area is developing and improving the ways in which the Service supports the mental health and wellbeing of its staff.

5. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DRIVERS AND INFLUENCERS

5.1 The Service is influenced by a number of both internal and external drivers and influencers; the review group consider the following as the most significant.

5.2 In May 2013 the government published an independent report by Sir Ken Knight entitled '**Facing the Future**' that made recommendations on the efficiency and operation of fire and rescue provision in England and then in November 2016 it published another independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England by Adrian Thomas (the **Thomas Review**). The Service considered the recommendations of both reviews, conducted a gap analysis against them and converted identified opportunities into a prioritised action plan which in turn informed the development of the people section of the integrated risk management plan (see Paragraph 5.4 below).

5.3 The **Fire and Rescue National Framework** published in May 2018 states that each fire and rescue authority should have in place a people strategy that has been designed in collaboration with the workforce and that takes into account the principles set out in the **National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) People Strategy**; the framework also sets out the minimum requirements for inclusion in a people strategy. Further information on the NFCC People Programme can be found at Appendix 2.

5.4 Government places a legal requirement on each fire authority to produce an easily accessible and publicly available **Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)** covering at least a three year time span and show how it will meet a number of criteria. The Service published its IRMP for 2020/24 and underpinning action plan after an extensive period of activities to inform its content including both internal and external consultation with key stakeholders and approval by the Authority. It has been deliberately developed as a single, integrated and holistic strategic plan written within the context of blue light collaboration and continued reductions in public sector funding. It robustly addresses all the areas that the national framework states such a document should cover including signposting where CFRS strategic plans take account of the framework requirements. The document can be found on the website via the following link <https://www.cambsfire.gov.uk/media/2783/final-cfrs-irmp-2020-24-a4-32pp.pdf>. The review group scrutinised the action plan to find one action under the people heading that specifically relates to the mental health and wellbeing of staff; further detail is given at Paragraph 6.13 below.

5.5 In July 2018 the Service was inspected by **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)** and was judged to be '**Good**' across all three key strands of efficiency, effectiveness and people.

5.6 Members will recall that within the people key strand of the inspection, focus was put on how well an organisation trains, manages and supports their staff. The review group scrutinised the report further and found commentary that staff and representative bodies had told HMICFRS inspectors that CFRS;

- puts its people's wellbeing first; staff use and appreciate its support services,
- a set of values underpins the organisational culture,
- staff respect leaders and their efforts to improve workplace culture,
- leaders look for feedback and the Service is keen to engage better with staff.

5.7 **Culture and Values** – the review group were particularly pleased that HMICFRS had drawn specific attention to the fact that (the organisation) '*it is good at promoting the right values and culture.*' Staff at all levels understand and demonstrate the Services **one team**

behaviours of trust, respect, results, commitment and honesty (Appendix 3 refers). As stated above HMICFRS found that staff see senior leaders as role models (visible, approachable, open to challenge, supportive of and demonstrating the one team behaviours) and respect them for improving the culture within the Service. This is particularly since the current senior team have been in place although some staff expressed concerns that not all managers have embraced the new culture. That said, although the Service had commissioned an action plan to improve culture it had made slow progress against the plan in some respects. There is limited evidence of bullying and harassment but staff are not confident in reporting such incidents should they occur; it needs to do more to make staff feel comfortable reporting bullying and harassment if it occurs (please also see Paragraph 5.11 below).

5.8 In order to assess and document progress since December 2018, CFRS were due to be inspected in the second round of the HMICFRS inspection process in May 2020. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic inspections have been suspended and at the time of writing the Authority was awaiting confirmation of revised dates.

5.9 The first **State of the Fire and Rescue** (annual assessment) report follows on from the three tranches (December 2018, June 2019 and December 2019) of the first independent inspection into all 45 fire and rescue services (FRS's) for 12 years by HMICFRS. This report makes some stark comments on the variances found across the sector and future reporting will influence CFRS activities. The report can be found at <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/state-of-fire-and-rescue-2019-2.pdf>

5.10 **Employee Engagement Survey** – the Service ambition is to have a fully engaged workforce. Employee engagement is best described as a deep emotional connection to the organisation, characterised by employees that are satisfied, committed, motivated and strong advocates of their employer. The Service undertook an employee engagement survey in 2015, a pulse check in 2017 and another full survey in 2019. Analysis of the data revealed that between 2015 and 2019 the level of engagement had incrementally increased with 66% of the workforce 100% engaged; work is ongoing to further improve engagement but this level of engagement is about 22% higher than the national average across emergency services.

5.11 One of the areas identified through the employee engagement survey was a lack of confidence among staff in reporting bullying and harassment. The Service commissioned research from an external consultant (IODA Ltd) to address this area of concern and the resulting **RESPECT** action plan was developed to support staff to raise issues of inappropriate behaviour in confidence; to get the support they need through this process and to ensure that the response to this is thorough, appropriate and proportionate with both informal and formal resolution options. It further sets out that leadership in the context of such negative behaviours is consistent, fair, sustained and that the organisation learns from its mistakes. Although progress against the action plan has been slow, it remains important that staff feel confident in reporting bullying and harassment should it occur and the Service should improve delivery against the RESPECT action plan to ensure staff have this feeling (please also see Paragraph 5.7 above).

5.12 **Equality Strategy and Priorities** – a strategic document covering a three year period provides direction for the continued improvement of equality and inclusion in CFRS. It covers equality in service delivery as well as the working environment and builds on previous

strategies and achievements whilst taking account of the legal requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010.

..... an extract from Page 7 (plus items 6 and 7 of the associated action plan) reads ... *the well-being of all our staff is a priority and we will continue to participate in the **MIND Blue Light Programme**, supporting staff at the earliest stages of mental ill health through our **Blue Light Champions Network**. A further priority is ... 'to bring about lasting cultural change in the way we interact and deal with each other'*. The review group identified that since 2007 the Service has worked to inform and train staff on appropriate behaviours in the workplace, how to challenge inappropriate behaviour, including bullying and harassment and how to seek support in dealing with these issues.

* The charity MIND runs the Blue Light Programme to give mental health support to emergency service staff and volunteers; over 30 voluntary Blue Light Champions were embedded throughout the Service in 2017/18 to provide additional mental health support and information to colleagues. Appendix 4 refers.

5.13 The review group was particularly interested to note a further support provided by the Service to ensure fairness and promote diversity, the use of **Inclusion Custodians**. An Inclusion Custodian is a manager who; takes a particular interest in a specific aspect of inclusion or diversity, wants to find out more about it, is committed to raising staff awareness of that issue and is committed to listening to staff and their viewpoints about the issue. There are currently eight managers who have volunteered to become custodians and one of them is focussed on mental health and wellbeing. The review group commend all eight who, whilst not necessarily an expert in the subject matter, have volunteered to raise awareness about inclusion and spread good practice; ultimately making the Service more inclusive for people affected by their area of interest.

6. SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES BOTH ESTABLISHED AND PLANNED

6.1 The review group looked for evidence that there is commitment from the very top to continuous improvement of a subject that has already been externally acknowledged as **Good** and which has the challenge of culture change at its heart. It found evidence of a continuous thread running from the national influencers mentioned in Paragraph 5 above to activities within the Service and that opportunities are taken to ensure that communication channels are open in both directions. Whilst interviewing outside organisations was out of scope, the evidence obtained from CFRS Officers pointed to an outward facing service with a leadership willing to learn from and share good practice. In addition to the activities mentioned in Paragraph 5 above, the review group identified a number of other opportunities being undertaken by the Service.

6.2 The Service introduced a social media application called **Workplace** to improve engagement. It provides an interactive source of service news and information and includes a 'Chiefs Chatter Group' where the CFO posts regular blogs and welcomes comments and direct feedback. Although it is recognised that this method of communication does not suit everyone it is another resource in which to inform staff about health and wellbeing matters.

6.3 A **Wellbeing Matters open group** was formed on this application in December 2019. The first post was published by Sam Smith, Head of People (Inclusion Custodian for mental

health and wellbeing) informing readers it was a place to discuss and support each other in all matters wellbeing. At the time of writing the review group evidenced that there were 657 members of the group and a myriad of posts giving links to videos, articles and individuals own experiences. The review group wish to highlight a few key articles;

20 January 2020 - Lots of people will be talking about **#BlueMonday** today - supposedly the most depressing day of the year. The mental health charity MIND have helpfully shared that depression doesn't care what day it is and there is support available year-round. The NHS are also encouraging people to participate in **#BrewMonday** instead - to use today to reach out to a friend, colleague, family member or neighbour over a cup of tea.

Attendance by two officers at a **Blue Light Training showcase event** where police and fire gave updates regarding their respective progress with supporting the positive mental health of all staff. It was recognised that there is more to do but acknowledged that both services are building on a positive platform.

Mental Health Awareness Week May 2020 – as published by the Mental Health Foundation about 1 in 7 people experience mental health problems in the workplace. Additionally, women in full-time employment are nearly twice as likely to have a common mental health problem as full-time employed men (19.8% vs 10.9%). Evidence suggests that 12.7% of all sickness absence days in the UK can be attributed to mental health conditions. The CFRS rate of sickness absence due to mental health and wellbeing is attached at Appendix 5.

The term 'mental health' is such a broad term and having started the week with a video clip from ACFO Anderson outlining how the Chief Officers Group or COG believe people are the greatest organisational asset and how important it is to look after yourself and colleagues, information on a range of topics was posted for the next six days for example, male suicide, * mental health bias in the workplace, anxiety, panic attacks, bipolar/personality disorder, depression, eating disorders and stress.

* Research by social psychologists Tajfel and Turner, highlights how we as human beings, and thus employers, have a tendency to divide the world into in-groups and out-groups based on a set of both conscious stereotypes and implicit bias. These biases often result in mental health stigma. Social stigma, as stressed by the sociologist Erving Goffman arises from negative attitudes and discriminating behaviour, based on common stereotypes such as; people with mental illness are dangerous and unpredictable (most prevalent stereotype), incompetent, deserve blame for their conditions, have little hope for recovery. These biases impact employers' perceptions of people with mental health issues resulting in them not wanting to employ people or assign certain types of work to people with mental health conditions, avoidance by colleagues and name calling and talking behind people's backs.

Research by the YMCA found that two thirds (66%) of young people have heard harmful words relating to mental health. Many young people say it is simply part of everyday language, with 'psycho', 'retard' and 'attention seeker' being among the most commonly used words. This type of language has a profound impact on an employee's sense of self, resulting in 'covering' at work. The term 'covering' was coined by Goffman as part of his work on stigma. 'Covering' is a strategy through which individuals manage or downplay their differences. In a paper entitled 'Uncovering Talent: A new model of inclusion' by Deloitte University, the authors have identified four ways in which 'covering' at work manifests;

appearance ('covering' up aspects of ones' appearance, including attire and mannerisms), affiliation-based 'covering' (not talking about medical appointments or not wanting to support mental health related work events or talks for fear of being outed), advocacy-based 'covering' (not wanting to outwardly be an advocate for mental health issues at work. Not 'sticking up for' mental health issues or colleagues with known conditions. This results in down-playing their own condition) and association-based 'covering' (not wanting to attend disability or mental health employee network groups for fear of being exposed and discriminated against).

The review group was advised by those that they interviewed that the Service had adopted or was in the process of adopting the following practices to mitigate (mental health) social bias within the organisation;

- reviewing recruitment policies and at work processes to ensure it did not discriminate against people with mental health conditions,
- training hiring managers to be mental health aware,
- creating an inclusive work environment by educating everyone on the nature of mental health conditions - focusing on myth busting,
- proactively challenging negative stereotypes and attitudes amongst employees,
- providing a platform for mental health role models,
- ensuring mental health inclusion is central to organisational diversity and inclusion goals.

6.4 A programme of informal '**back to the floor**' engagement visits by senior leaders is well received by staff as they are seen as a good opportunity to engage, feedback and challenge. The visits are carried out across the organisation and are inclusive of all departments. Evidence of where this had been specifically about mental health and wellbeing was found in a workplace post; **National Time to Talk Day** (6 February 2020), a day designed to get the nation talking about mental health in a bid to end mental health discrimination and stigma. At that time the Service had been working behind the scenes to develop a wellbeing strategy for employees and seized this opportunity to share with as many employees as possible the progress to date. It also wanted to start to engage everyone in the conversation about wellbeing and what more could be done to achieve a positive wellbeing culture across the organisation. A chief officer, member of the IRMP team or Head of Group visited locations across the organisation at morning tea break to discuss the strategy, garner employee thoughts on the work done to date and hear ideas about what more can be done to achieve the positive wellbeing culture. The review group were able to see evidence of the visits and (positive) comments made online by those that attended after the event.

6.5 **Workforce Wellbeing** - both the physical and mental wellbeing of staff are a clear priority for the Service. It has a well-resourced **occupational health department** providing a variety of support including health and wellbeing advice, health screening, medicals and fitness testing. It also offers an externally provided **employee assistance programme (EAP)** and **medical plan** via Healthshield. These two programmes provide staff with services such as legal and financial advice, counselling, physiotherapy and hospital investigations. The review group was advised that between September 2019 and September 2020 the following contact to the EAP had been made by members of staff;

- **8 telephone calls** (all were due to mental health/stress/wellbeing issues and direct support was provided),
- **35 online visits** (33 out of 35 could be included in the mental health/stress/wellbeing categories). Online access means accessing specific online guides dealing with for example, bereavement, managing stress, low self-esteem, relationship breakdowns, in other words a broad range of mental health and wellbeing issues.

6.6 Both Cambridgeshire Constabulary and CFRS utilise an effective **trauma risk management** or TRiM debriefing system for incidents within their organisations. The system provides a positive and proactive approach to debriefing staff (post incident) to ensure their welfare is considered at the earliest opportunity and individuals receive the correct level of support that they need at that time. This collaboration is covered by a Memorandum of Understanding with Blue Light Partners and reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

6.7 **Manager Seminar Programme** – the Service hold regular seminars for managers to inform them and facilitate discussion on a range of issues that affect the organisation. The review group evidenced that the seminar held in January 2020 was focussed on the people agenda for 2020 and beyond. It was led by the COG who stated that they wanted to talk about evolving the management culture and the large part individual managers could play to help embed and achieve this important cultural change. They also wanted to outline their expectations of them as leaders within the organisation and dispel some myths that they had heard about what they expected of them. The COG went on to say that whilst they recognised the organisation was in a great place from HMICFRS inspections and the employee engagement survey results, conversations with staff and feedback from the staff survey had led them to see that if we want to do even better we need to make changes in the way we do some things to fully create the culture we aspire to. This is the **driver for the change** they wanted to portray to managers at the seminar and maximum attendance was encouraged. The review group evidenced this as a leadership team taking a consistent approach to strategic direction, demonstrating the desire to engage with staff to inform this direction and putting people first.

6.8 In October 2019 a member of staff designed a **poster** that signposts readers to support that is currently available internally as well as some external support options. These have been displayed throughout service premises to support current work in the mental health and wellbeing area and to ensure that existing avenues of available support are communicated to everyone. Appendix 6 refers.

6.9 All service IT equipment has the Wellbeing Matters **logo** on it to remind users of its existence. As part of the wider **Wellbeing Strategy** a dedicated email inbox (wellbeing@cambsfire.gov.uk) was created in March 2020 for employees to share thoughts, make requests and put forward ideas for example, something specific at a work location, a service wide initiative, an idea for a national awareness day or any feedback for both physical and mental health. At the same time as this was published employees were informed about a **Wellbeing Working Group** being set up to help co-ordinate and deliver the Wellbeing Strategy; expressions of interest to be a part of this group were open. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer is the nominated strategic lead for the Wellbeing Strategy.

6.10 The Service are currently drafting a Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.

6.11 The People Strategy forms part of the COG performance objectives in 2020/21. Part of the objective is to embed the Wellbeing Strategy (approved at the Chief Officers Advisory Group meeting in January 2020) by March 2021.

6.12 On 5 August 2020 the review group evidenced a Workplace post from the Learning and Development Manager stating a planned action as follows ... *'At the time of writing the Service was in the process of commissioning **well-being training** from specialist providers for all employees. It had received three proposals which were being reviewed early August in consultation with stakeholders. The session will focus on mental ill health awareness in yourself and others and some early intervention strategies. It's an important piece of work and it's vital we get it right. The desire to share this with every employee shows our commitment and desire to do the right thing'*. At the time of writing this action was still being progressed.

6.13 **People Strategy – IRMP Action Plan** - as stated at Paragraph 5.4 above the IRMP includes an action plan that details the work the Service will deliver within the people pillar. There are seven actions, one of which is specifically about developing and improving the ways in which CFRS support the mental health and wellbeing of its staff. The measure of success is stated that by 2024 CFRS will have designed, implemented and evaluated a range of wellbeing interventions via a wellbeing strategy. It is clear from the plan that the Service recognises that these are areas where it can work to improve everyone's working life, ensuring everyone feels valued and motivated and able to be the best they can be in whatever role they do across the organisation. The review group could evidence that since late 2019 the Service had shared information on how it was focussing on mental health and wellbeing recognising it was an area which they hadn't given specific focus to until recently.

The following is an extract from a communication from the CFO stating ... *'That's not to say we haven't done anything. We have a whole range of support options available to staff to help them, but we have recognised that it is predominately 'reactive' help, which is there at the point a person needs it. There is more that we could potentially do to support people to maintain good mental health and wellbeing, as well as extra support for managers and peers to help them identify the signs that someone could benefit from some support with their mental health and wellbeing. And we don't just mean work related stress and mental illness. Around 40% of sickness last year was mental health related, but by far the largest proportion was non-work related. Family complications, relationship problems, financial worries - all can take its toll on a person.*

We don't have all the answers right now, and actually we want staff to help us shape where we can make improvements, what might be beneficial, understand what some of the causes of workplace stress are and help us develop solutions. We also know we need to better communicate about the support that's already available, as I'm not confident everyone could name every option available to them if they needed help – or know where to go to discreetly find that information if they need to.

We all have mental health, all of the time, and it can vary for all of us, just like our physical health can'

The review group consider the inclusion of a specific action, this communication (that was followed by an action (Manager Seminar at Paragraph 6.7)) demonstrates authentic leadership and commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of staff.

6.14 The review group was made aware that the Service plan to recruit a Mental Health Advisor in autumn 2020.

7. PROGRESS AGAINST ANY ACTION PLAN AND/OR ANY OTHER MEASURES IN PLACE

7.1 The Review group believe progress against any action plan and/or measures in place are routinely monitored and the Service works hard, under increasing pressures, to deliver what it sets out in its strategic documents.

7.2 Further, the review group are confident the Fire Authority are involved in decision making where appropriate and sighted, through democratic processes, on key policies, audit reports, service delivery and direction of travel in the context of health and wellbeing.

8. COMPARISON AGAINST OTHER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE FAMILY GROUP

8.1 Primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the review group did not wish to burden other organisations with requests for information however it did scrutinise the available reporting from inspections and overt information from sources such as organisational websites. Please see Appendix 7 for headlines.

8.2 The review group was pleased to evidence that CFRS are performing at the forefront of the sector and is striving to maintain that influential position.

9. COVID-19 PANDEMIC EVIDENCE

9.1 During the review period, the organisation was faced with the COVID-19 pandemic; unprecedented times for the world. At the time of writing the pandemic continued to test business continuity plans and the Authority accepts that it may lead to a delay in delivering some of the actions as they were previously planned and are detailed in this report. However the review group was satisfied with the evidence available that the impacts and recovery are being closely monitored as part of ongoing business continuity activities. It found no reason to suspect that the Service's inherent attitude towards continuous improvement would change due to the pandemic but rather that it would take account of learning from the emergency to further its efforts.

9.2 Whilst working to ensure that the emergency response provided to the public is continued and sustainable, the review group noted that the Service is also working with partner agencies to support them in their response. This includes providing staff to help with community hub work and drivers to help the ambulance service deal with extra demand and staff sickness. It is recognised that this may expose staff to different environments and incidents and could impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

9.3 It is also recognised that the social distancing and level of isolation we are currently having to deal with can be difficult for some; it can be easy to fall into unhealthy habits and

patterns of behaviour that make people feel worse. The review group evidenced that the Service had taken opportunities to share information and support with staff and would like to highlight the examples below;

- Public Health England campaign to help people to manage their mental wellbeing during the pandemic using Every Mind Matters self-care resources (www.nhs.uk/oneyou)
- MIND information support and resources on coronavirus and your wellbeing
- Handout giving information on looking after physical health as a home worker
- Launch of a COVID-19 specific section on the intranet <http://intranet/our-service/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Launch of a wellbeing hub on the intranet giving information on mental health and wellbeing, physical, financial and child wellbeing, bereavement support and domestic problems <http://intranet/our-service/wellbeing/>
- Enrolment of employees in a (Coaching Culture) Mindset Module Programme including a wellbeing module and a thriving during isolation module
- Letter to all employees about expectations during COVID-19 pandemic
- Letter to all employees following the death of FF Baker with a leaflet detailing information on wellbeing support services
- Letter of thanks to all children for supporting their parents (employees) to do their job during the pandemic
- Email from the Inclusion Custodian for mental health and wellbeing to Heads of Group in May 2020 detailing all the support, information and resources available to support people with their wellbeing during the pandemic to aid (manager/employee) conversations.
- Circulation of a new 24/7 wellbeing single point of contact available via Cambridgeshire Constabulary; contact details were also published on intranet wellbeing hub pages.

10. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 An equality impact assessment, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, is carried out as part of the activities described within this report.

11. OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 The review group felt that in view of the evidence available and especially in light of the current pandemic conditions it was not necessary to make any recommendations at this time however Councillor Harford wishes to make the following observations.

11.2 Talking about change, particularly of culture, is easy but putting it into practice is much more difficult. When an organisation says all the right things but doesn't act on them employees will pick up on this and become disengaged; more than that, it has the potential to diminish their trust in and respect for those making those claims. She felt that CFRS were **authentic** in their commitment and this is particularly evidenced in the employee engagement rates and ongoing activities highlighted at Paragraphs 5 and 6 above. No evidence of a toxic workplace (alpha office, under performance, micro management, negativity, leavism (phenomena of employees using available leave entitlement schemes to have time off when in fact they are too unwell to work) were found.

11.3 Given the increased importance being placed on mental health and wellbeing, Councillor Harford was satisfied that the risks to employees are recognised and that preventative measures are increasingly being identified and implemented to manage them. The breadth and range of support is at a level that is not evidenced in many other comparable organisations and crucially is seen as being of sufficient importance to merit continuous improvement.

11.4 HMICFRS has announced it will inspect CFRS in October 2020 to ascertain its response and learning in the current COVID-19 pandemic conditions. The required self-assessment, which includes a number of questions relating to wellbeing, has been submitted, a Member briefing is planned for late September and the (virtual) inspection and interviews are being scheduled by HMICFRS. The outcome of this inspection will be available at the end of the calendar year. There is no doubt that this pandemic has put an additional strain on the emergency services however the evidence found during this review should give the Authority confidence it is looking after its people and striving to do more.

11.5 The Service must continue to engage with and encourage feedback from staff via appropriate means (employee surveys), analyse the results promptly and integrate actions into strategic documents for example, the IRMP.

11.6 The Authority has regular opportunities to provide support through its review of strategic documents and the importance of Member commitment to providing that support cannot be overstated.

11.7 Overall the review group commend CFRS for its commitment to high performance which currently sees it occupying a place at the forefront of the sector and the family group.

12. CONCLUSIONS

12.1 CFRS has set out clearly its vision of putting people at the centre of everything it does and how it will look after its employees including their mental health and wellbeing. The People Strategy and activities that fall under it, contribute to the strategic objectives, have (senior) sponsors (and champions) and governance oversight.

12.2 It is a self-aware, learning organisation that can evidence it takes action to address areas of improvement highlighted to them for example, in inspection reporting. It is prepared to ask difficult questions and take action on feedback where appropriate.

12.3 In recent years, cognisant of the national picture within emergency services, it is making mental health and wellbeing a priority to support employees which in turn should contribute to organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

12.4 The Service can demonstrate it has a (largely) wide ranging and inclusive culture that provides a welcoming place to work for the widest variety of people. It is working towards a positive wellbeing culture by acknowledging and striving to close gaps.

12.5 The Service has a generally positive relationship with representative bodies and staff associations. HMICFRS inspectors found examples of regular engagement and evidence of negotiation to resolve concerns (5 to 4 watch duty system), as well as evidence of feedback influencing changes within the Service (On-Call standby policy).

12.6 The review group, whilst concerned about the state of the emergency services overall in terms of mental health and wellbeing (MIND report), is satisfied that CFRS is committed to doing all it can to mitigate the risks, especially in respect of trauma and organisational culture and priorities. It acknowledges the rapid expansion of the range of support available and that the organisation has been agile enough to meet demand in the pandemic.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact Officer
Various	Hinchingbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon	Deb Thompson Deb.thompson@cambsfire.gov.uk 07775731629

Further Information on National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) People Programme

People Programme

Investing in people by providing good practice guidance, tools and improvements at a national level for local implementation. The programme has clear cross-cutting objectives focusing on supporting a positive working culture by inspiring distributive leadership, embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do, finding and nurturing diverse talent, and caring for the health and well-being of our staff.

We will support the continuous improvement of workforce performance through; quality assuring the competency of our workforce, providing high quality training and development, and duty systems that are best matched to the risks within our communities.

We are in the second phase of the programme and are now focusing on cultural reform and strengthening leadership. Complementing this important work, we are also working on diversity and recruitment alongside enhancements to competence that include embedding apprenticeships and rethinking duty systems.

Along with producing tools and guidance, we have started to map Fire Standards against the programme and have begun drafting the first of these.

People Strategy

The NFCC People Strategy (2017-2022) responds to recommendations for workforce reform and draws out the main drivers for change over the five year period and the impact they have on our people. Over this period we will develop flexible duty systems, contract types, and how we work together on the day to day activity. The evolving role of fire and rescue services in working in partnerships has implications for professional development, well-being and organisational culture. If we are to build on our success we need to develop new leadership skills and attract a diversity of thought and knowledge. We have agreed six key areas to help us define and plan improvements.

People Products

The NFCC has products on On-Call recruitment, FRS Learn, Apprenticeships, Leadership, Model Policies and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. These are model policies designed to promote good practice and efficiency across the UK FRS sector using a 'do it once' approach.

The NFCC aims to produce five such policies per annum.

Further Information on MIND

MIND, a mental health charity in England and Wales, has published findings from its research on wellbeing and mental health support in emergency services. Mind has been providing a dedicated programme of mental health support to 999 staff and volunteers across the sector since 2015. The 2019 research received over 5,000 respondents across police (41 per cent), fire (20 per cent), ambulance (28 per cent) and search and rescue services (11 per cent). Research from Mind reveals that emergency services staff and volunteers are over twice as likely to say that their service encouraged them to talk about their mental health, compared to four years ago. Wellbeing and mental health support in emergency services;

- 64 per cent of emergency services personnel said they felt encouraged to talk about their own mental health, compared to 29 per cent in 2015;
- 53 per cent said their service supports people with mental health problems well, compared to 34 per cent in 2015;
- 65 per cent reported they were aware of what support was available to them to help them manage their mental health, compared to 46 per cent in 2015;
- 59 per cent felt that attitudes towards mental health at their organisation were changing for the better;
- 45 per cent reported to have 'good' or 'very good' mental health and 21 per cent reported having 'poor' or 'very poor' mental health, compared to 53 per cent and 14 per cent in 2015 respectively;

Search and Rescue volunteers report the best mental health (69 per cent stating it is 'good' or 'very good') while ambulance personnel reported 'the worst' with only 34 per cent stating it to be 'good' or 'very good'. The top three reported mental health problems were depression (48 per cent), anxiety (48 per cent) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (21 per cent); 'excessive workload' remained the most frequently cited cause of poor mental health among respondents. 'Trauma' moved up from fifth place in 2015 to second place in 2019. These were followed by 'pressure from management', 'long hours' and 'organisational upheaval.'