

Essex County Fire and Rescue Services

People Strategy

2020-2024

Draft Version 8 (23 February 2020)

Document design will be added once content approved. Strategies will have a coherent look and key points will be illustrated.



Contents

Introduction

Principles

Culture – Engaged and Valued

Fair, Kind and Inclusive Workplace

Wellbeing, Health and Safety

Resourcing and Talent Management

Leadership and Development

Training

Introduction

Our People Strategy is key to delivery of our Fire and Rescue Plan. It is a key component of delivering the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) which sets out our core services; prevention, protection and response. Our People Strategy describes how we will continue to develop, value, attract, engage and care for our people so that we have a safe and diverse workforce who we enable to perform well in a supportive culture underpinned by excellent training

We do this so we have a modern, forward looking, innovative and collaborative culture that can anticipate and deliver against the changing needs of our communities so that our communities get a better service. We benefit from the skills, experiences and day-to-day knowledge of everybody working in the Service.

This Strategy sets out our aspirations as well as specific steps that are in place, or in development, to support our people in being the best at what they do so that we can support the communities we serve. At all times the Strategy seeks to enable our Service values:

- We are Open, Honest and Trustworthy
- We are Courageous in everything we do
- We work as One Team
- We are always Professional
- We Value the Contribution of all

Whilst developing our People Strategy 2020-24 we have been aware of the following inputs and intelligence:

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) national and local feedback regarding good practice and areas of development,
- The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) People Strategy,
- NFCC Guidance – Leadership Framework and Core Learning Pathways,
- The People Strategies of our blue light partners,
- Our Fire and Rescue Plan for Essex,
- The Integrated Risk Management Plan,
- Feedback from our Everyone Matters listening exercise.

Our People Strategy Elements



Principles

Our values describe the characteristics we expect from our people – they are guidelines that should direct our behaviour, and how we interact with others.

The principles of our People Strategy take this a step further. These principles should act as a guide for making people related decisions. The principles should be used to:

- Provide guidance on decision making for infinite variations of circumstance,
- Make flexible 'fair' rather than 'same' decisions, that are people, performance and service focussed,
- Avoid a 'box-ticking' approach to decision-making and compliance,
- Encourage the exercising of professional judgement and personal ownership.

Pictorial representation of decisions that are fair rather than the same to be designed in (see example below).

People

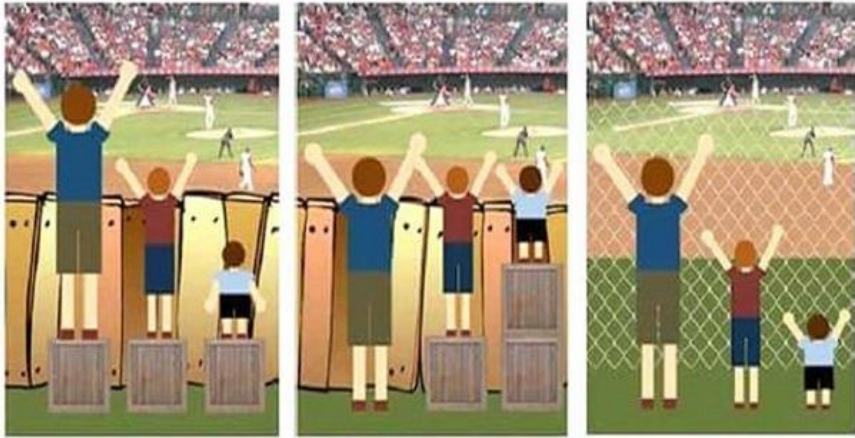
- Everyone Matters - our decisions value and include all of our people, our stakeholders, our community.
- Open and Transparent - Whilst respecting individual privacy we make decisions that are open and transparent, we know that generates trust.
- Fair - our decisions are fair, we know that this is not the same as being equal.

Approach

- We simplify process, adapt and adopt practice wherever possible.
- We are flexible in our use of policy and guidance.
- We take a people centred approach to use of technology - we aspire to take a 'digital first' approach.
- We communicate in a variety of ways to reach all of our people.
- We ensure that our organisational design is appropriate and encourages self awareness and positive behaviours that drive results.

Continuous Improvement

- We have a performance focus.
- We encourage personal ownership and accountability.
- We encourage innovation.
- We empower evidence-based decision making.



Equality/Same - Equitable/diff supports - Inclusion/Fairness

Culture

As detailed in our Fire and Rescue Plan, we are committed to promoting a positive and kind culture. This is so that we nurture a modern, forward-looking, innovative and collaborative environment which can anticipate and deliver against the changing needs of our communities.

Our Continued Culture Change Strategy sits within the People Strategy [CLICK TO A LINK \(appendix 1\)](#), and describes our approach to continuously developing a positive culture.

We know that when our people are genuinely valued in the workplace, they are more likely to be committed and active advocates of the Service. We recognise that we need to continue refreshing and reinforcing our expectations of behaviours.

We will:

- Ensure our values are at the heart of what we do and how we do it,
- Recognise our colleagues who make our Service better – whether that's through service delivery or living our values,
- Communicate in a way that is swift, open and trusted and has multiple ways to engage with people,
- Continually improve our services and underpinning processes,

- Support managers to motivate and manage the performance of our people,
- Recognise the benefits of reflecting the diversity of the communities we serve, striving for an inclusive workplace that utilises the diverse talents of our workforce,
- Enable strong effective leadership and development,
- Work towards being an exemplar for recognising and developing talent,
- Help employees to feel safe and valued, have a voice and are heard
- Empower our people to speak up on things that matter to them and they are listened to when they do,
- Identify ways to ensure it is easy to get things done and that the basics are done well.

These areas have become the work streams of our Culture Change Plan [CLICK TO A LINK \(appendix 1\)](#).

Working relationships

We will continue to work collaboratively with our people and our representative bodies.

We will:

- Recognise common interests and joint purpose,
- Behave respectfully towards each other at all times,
- Accept the need for engagement with all and joint consultation or negotiation with representative bodies where appropriate,
- Identify at the outset the appropriate timescale for discussion,
- Respect the confidential nature of sensitive information exchange,
- Actively work together to build trust and a mutual respect for each other's roles and responsibilities,
- Ensure openness, honesty and transparency in communications,
- Provide top level commitment to principles when agreed,
- Take a positive and constructive approach to industrial relations,
- Commit to early discussion of emerging issues and to maintaining dialogue in order to ensure a 'no surprises' culture,
- Commit to ensuring high quality outcomes.
- Where appropriate, seek to agree public positions.

Fair, kind and inclusive workplace

We believe that every employee has the right to be treated fairly, inclusively, with kindness, equality, dignity and respect. We are committed to providing a supportive and inclusive working environment to foster such a culture. Our Continued Culture Change Strategy details this further. [CLICK LINK](#)

We want our people to feel confident that ECFRS meets their needs and knows that we actively seek to remove hidden barriers to equality of opportunity such as recruitment, retention, progression and development. We recognise the value of all of our people.

We will:

- Inform and educate our people so that;
 - We are able to respond well to neurodiversity,
 - Diversity and inclusion are well understood,
 - We are able to challenge inappropriate language and behaviour when identified,
- Take positive action to enhance the diversity of the workforce to become more representative of the communities of Essex,
- Continuously monitor, review and improve our recruitment progression and retention approaches to

ensure they are accessible and support increased diversity and inclusion,

- Review the 'people impact' of all our policies to consider the potential for differential impact,
- Utilise external credible benchmarking tools to measure our progress and achievement,
- Create an environment that encourages people to speak up, have their voice heard and to feel safe and valued,
- Enable all staff networks to thrive so that they can share the lived experience that exists amongst our workforce and help the Service continually improve,
- Hold a regular Inclusion and Diversity Action Groups, chaired by our Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive Officer,
- Promote and enable flexible and agile working where operationally viable and promote different ways of working, such as mixed crewing,
- Tackle bullying, harassment and discrimination in a timely and consistent way,
- Ensure a fair and accessible whistle blowing and grievance policy so that people can raise concerns without fear of consequence,
- Involve, consult and inform our staff so they understand how they can contribute to our Service.

Our [Dignity at Work Policy HERE](#) describes what an inclusive workplace looks like and how our leaders, managers and colleagues, including Dignity at Work Champions, all have a vital role to play in creating this reality.

Our commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty as part of the Equality Act 2010 is demonstrated by our [Equality Objectives HERE](#) which are published on our website.

Wellbeing, safety and health

We are committed to ensuring a safe workforce where we value health, safety and wellbeing. We know this is critical to making Essex a safe place to live, work and travel; investing in wellbeing helps us to achieve increased organisational strength, performance and productivity. We are committed to better working lives.

Our approach to wellbeing will be reflected in the work that our people do, the environments that they work in, the working relationships they have and the demands placed upon them. We will also consider the impacts of change and how we manage transition and how we will reward and recognise effort and contribution. Each element of the People Strategy supports this.

We want our people to enjoy their work, have fulfilling careers in the Service, to live well, feel well and work well.

We will:

- Integrate wellbeing priorities in our Service culture,
- Enable consistent policies and approaches to wellbeing and health,
- Take a 'multi-agency/partnership' approach to wellbeing,
- Collaborate locally and nationally to ensure good practice, experience and learning are shared and developed,
- Develop our services to include

Health and Safety

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Physical Safety

Financial Wellbeing

- Flexible Benefits
- Employee Discounts
- Retirement Planning

Good Lifestyle

- Fitness
- Healthy Eating

Our high-level plan details these [CLICK HERE appendix](#)

Our plan will continue to have 3 key elements:



- ***Informing and reassuring through a continual process of providing information and resources;*** enabling our people to make the best choices they can about their wellbeing, enabling them to reach out and seek help.
- ***Educating and enabling by building on information to embed knowledge;*** this is particularly important for our managers and supervisors – those who are day-to-day in contact with their teams and who interact with them in both work and, at times, social settings.
- ***Supporting and treating through early intervention and the commencement of recovery;*** enabling people to return to the workplace with the necessary support. We will also engage with the NHS where appropriate to ensure that the individual obtains the best medium to long term care.

We will:

- Do all that we can to support our people in managing and being aware of their physical and mental health,
- Continue to provide a professional occupational health service, providing health screening, occupational health and medical referrals, fitness, counselling, advice and health promotions,

- Strive to improve and maintain the physical and psychological wellbeing of the workforce, encouraging employees to take personal responsibility for their wellbeing and mental health,
- Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling,
- Provide employees with good working conditions and ensure that they have a healthy work-life balance and opportunities for development,
- Promote effective people management through line managers and supervisors,
- Monitor employee physical health, mental health and wellbeing and increase transparency through internal and external reporting,
- **Work with partners regarding financial wellbeing.**

The action plan for delivering this can be found **HERE (appendix 2).**

Resourcing and Talent

We are committed to ensuring that we have the right people and skills to deliver the best service to our communities in Essex.

Our resourcing strategies will deliver the commitments set out in the Service's Fire and Rescue Plan, specifically ensuring that:

- Resourcing challenges are addressed in critical areas and that the Service is efficiently staffed,
- Arrangements are put in place which will facilitate direct entry and fast track development and progression.

Our aspiration is to be an employer of choice.

We will:

- Develop strategic workforce plans and approaches to predict demand and to attract and retain the right people and skills. Our latest workforce plan can be found [HERE \(appendix 3\)](#),
- Review and update all recruitment, resourcing, talent manager and pre-employment policies and practices that are people centred and meet the needs of our Service,
- Use technology and a digital first approach to provide a great candidate experience and will implement an applicant tracking system that automates allowing recruiters to focus on the candidate-led approach,
- Develop a set of measures and metrics to ensure Resourcing and Talent decisions are evidence-based and

can deliver measurable Service performance improvements,

- Optimise resources by establishing make/buy/reduce principles.

Talent Attraction

People will feel that the Service is a place where internal and external talent is recognised and proactively supported.

We will:

- Implement intuitive candidate-led online applications and digital on-boarding portals,
- Create a values-led approach to language and branding to attract candidates whose personal qualities, values and attributes match those we are looking for,
- Improve the candidate experience and our recruitment and attraction approaches,
- Establish a consistent approach to advertising for every role.

Assessment

We will:

- Continue to develop and implement a suite of assessment materials and methodologies that ensure inclusive, robust assessment of candidates for all vacancies,
- Ensure that our selection methodology places values, leadership capability and technical skills at the heart of the assessment process,

- Regularly undertake an evidence-based review of selection approaches, taking into account external research and findings and appropriateness of assessment methods for each role.

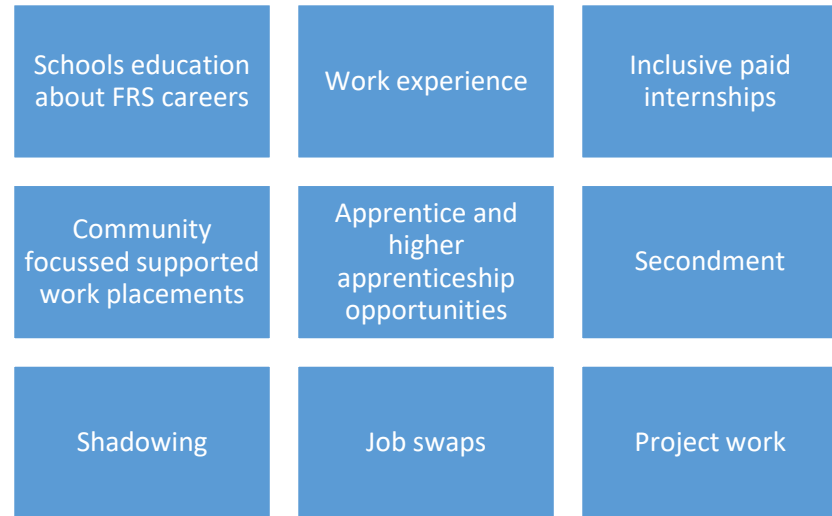
Enabling Growth and Development

We will:

- Review our talent pool approach to create a clear distinction between recognised potential and individuals ready for the next role,
- Design and develop internal and external talent pipelines, including work experience, interns, apprentices, and community placements alongside experienced internal and external candidates.
- Give access to a range of development activities including internal and external development secondments, shadowing and project work.

The plan for doing this can be found [HERE](#) appendix 3.

Design to be added in which demonstrates development activities – basic example in blue.



Leadership and Management

We will support and develop our people so that we have strong, effective leadership now and in the future.

Our people will feel that our leaders and managers role model positive behaviours and have effective management and communication skills.

We will:

- Adopt the NFCC Leadership Framework and Core Learning Pathways,
- Offer development opportunities that link to each element of the Framework and Pathway,
- Run a programme that introduces managers to a people centred philosophy that prioritises positive behaviours, staff motivation, engagement and personal accountability,
- Develop a performance approach that includes feedback at all levels, so that managers are encouraged to understand and reflect on their individual and collective capacity to influence people around them through their conscious and unconscious behaviours,
- Commission the next phase of our leadership and management development training including rounded feedback, a coaching approach and solutions focussed thinking,
- Explore opportunities, such as a direct entry scheme and fast track internal development, to address future leadership challenges in specific areas of the Service. We will continue to ensure that all staff have the right operational skills and competencies.

- Ensure we have in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

The plan for developing this can be found here (appendix 4).

Training

We are committed to ensuring that the Service has a competent workforce and that we can provide assurance of that competence. We offer training opportunities so that all of our people have the skills and behaviours they need to flourish and remain safe in their work. Our training incorporates a range of development activities including; coaching, mentoring, learning events, secondment, face-to-face training and e learning.

We will ensure that we always deliver to the following core principles:

- The training we offer is suitable for all,
- We develop the skills the Service needs now and in the future,
- We support the continuous professional and personal development of our people,
- We have a system in place that offers regular assurance and proof of competence, by individual, at all levels of the Service.

Our training is offered in four areas for all of our people:

1. **Leadership Development** – Developing leaders and managers role model positive behaviours and have effective management and communication skills.
2. **Professional Development** – Developing our people in their roles. This includes development opportunities for all of our people in inclusion, diversity, living our values and our behaviours. These opportunities will be offered alongside development linked to talent pool or professional qualifications required for career development within existing professional groups.
3. **Personal Development** – Development that is not required for current role but that is relevant to our Service and personal career aspirations within our Service.
4. **Core Training** - Statutory and mandatory training that is directly relevant to current role or that is a qualification or skill listed as essential in current person specification.

These four elements; together with the Operational Training described in our Operational Training Strategy, ensure that all of our people, at all levels, have the skills and training they need to flourish and remain safe in their roles.

We will:

- Develop new training programmes, reviewed annually, to ensure that they meet development needs identified through appraisal and department planning,
- Review our training plans to ensure that we offer essential skills including inclusion, diversity, behaviours, performance management, industrial relations, and handling discipline and grievances,
- Hear the voice of our people, as learners, through the Learning and Development Advisory Group and other feedback mechanisms.
- Offer training that suits a variety of learning styles,
- Use our quality assurance framework [CLICK THROUGH \(appendix 5\)](#) and our People Impact Assessments to ensure the quality and inclusivity of all training across the Service,
- Explore ways of using technology more effectively so that training and development opportunities can be offered at times that work for the learner,
- Support succession planning - developing people with potential to fill key roles,
- Review the training that we consider mandatory.

Operational skills training

The Operational Training Strategy can be found here [CLICK THROUGH \(appendix 4\)](#).

The three pillars of our Operational Training Strategy: training, assessment and verification, together with functions fulfilled by

the Director of Operations and Operational Assurance colleagues, ensure that all firefighters are competent.

We will:

- Continue to deliver the operational training plan which can be [found HERE](#).
- Train - Provide our operational workforce with the appropriate operational training and development to enable individuals to demonstrate that they are competent in role,
- Assess- Assess the competence of the operational workforce against the relevant standards e.g. role maps and National Occupational Standards (NOS),
- Verify - Verify that the operational training and assessment of operational competence provides the Service with the assurance that the operational workforce is competent.

Our operational training has received investment so that we can:

- Enable the majority of training to be maintained via local station-based training,
- Deliver core acquisition and specialist training centrally, with,
- Group Trainers supporting and enabling local station-based training.

Performance Outcomes and Indicators

Element	Aim	Measures
Culture – Engaged and Valued	We have positive, modern, forward looking, innovative and collaborative culture that anticipates and delivers against the changing needs of communities in Essex.	Employee engagement index Engagement with reward and recognition schemes
Fair, Kind and Inclusive workplace	Our employees are treated fairly, inclusively, with kindness, equality, dignity and respect.	Improved diversity within workforce Employee engagement with ‘inform and educate’ strands Use of grievance processes
Wellbeing, Health and Safety	We have a safe workforce and support health, safety and wellbeing.	Number of occupational health referrals Number of safety events
Resourcing and Talent Management	We address resourcing challenges in critical areas and that the Service is efficiently staffed.	Decrease in our vacancy factor Number of temporary promotions Number of people in talent pools ready for succession
Leadership and Development	We have strong effective leadership in place.	Access to leadership and development courses

Training	We have a training plan in place which enables leadership, professional and personal development alongside core training.	Training plan is in place Training is accessed regularly by colleagues

Governance Model

The People Strategy Board meets quarterly and provides strategic advice and oversight of ECFRS people strategy, policy and practice, to ensure that the Service is effectively managing in line with our core vision and values

Review

This Strategy will be reviewed annually in line with the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Further information

The high-level plans that transform this People Strategy into action can be found [HERE](#).

Queries about any element of the People Strategy can be address through your line manager or through your Human Resources Business Partner.