



Meeting	Service Leadership Team	Agenda Item No.	4 d
	Performance & Resources Board		12
Meeting Date	11 May 2021		
	28 June 2021		
Report Author	Jenny Smith/ Colette Black		
Presented By	Colette Black, ACEO – People, Values and Culture		
Subject	Employee Engagement Survey		
Type of Report	Decision		

RECOMMENDATIONS

Approval is sought on the following recommendations:

1. Action plan case studies – a programme of updates via internal communications channels to demonstrate ‘I see action taken as a result of this survey’.
2. Systemic issues workshop – senior manager workshop to explore and progress concerns about trust, fairness and management style that impact on our Service culture.
3. Utilise HMICFRS survey feedback findings to further inform the People Strategy action plan.

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this paper is to provide analysis of feedback from our 2020 employee survey Ignite 2020; note actions taken to date and articulate the next steps.

BACKGROUND

The employee survey was undertaken in December 2020 with 56% of our workforce responding. The feedback showed that our strategy and actions are making a positive difference and gave clear areas of feedback to consider.

An on-line dashboard enabled senior managers to analyse their data to identify employee concerns and enable a more productive Service by removing local barriers to effective ways of working.

A pulse survey confirmed our senior managers have now all reviewed results with their teams, are currently working on local action plans, and feeding back where there are

systemic issues to be progressed. Continued monitoring of local action plan progress is in place and will be updated to SLT regularly.

Concerns were expressed in the survey feedback around wider issues of trust, fairness, blame culture, inclusion and management style, requiring a more strategic response. These will be factored into the People Strategy action plan as previously agreed (SLT item 4h, 31 March 2021).

The lowest score was regarding our people seeing visible change as a result of their input. The second lowest was “senior managers do what they say they will do”. A key enabler in building trust is to demonstrate that the Service (and in particular our senior managers) listen and act on feedback. This paper therefore proposes approaches to deliver visible changes and build confidence in senior management.

OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

It is proposed to adopt the following approaches:

1. Action Plan Case Studies

Senior managers to communicate ‘case study’ stories showing how simple changes at team level can improve employee experience. This communicates across the Service that feedback drives improvements and senior managers do what they say they will do.

Examples of actions currently in progress are:

- understanding better what other teams do to build a better understanding of how to deliver effective service provision (*Finance and Pay*)
- empowerment to make decisions and carrying out duties without fear of getting things wrong (*Performance and Data*)
- communicating change planned as part of the People Strategy action plan to colleagues so they have confidence they are being listened to and improvements underway (*Operational Training*)

2. Systemic Issues Workshops

A series of workshops for senior managers (ELT) to undertake further analysis of systemic issues identified and identify appropriate responses. The issues are highlighted as “Explore” at Appendix A, which provides a deep dive analysis of the survey results.

For example:

<p><i>Explore</i></p> <p><i>Leaders – what might ‘right opportunities to learn and grow’ might look like? Are we missing opportunities for shadowing? Sharing information better? More external networking opportunities?</i></p> <p><i>Leaders – what would the ‘right development to perform your management role well’ look like? Is it formal training? More or better coaching (from your line manager or an external coach)? What could informal opportunities look like?</i></p>

*What would opportunities to learning and grow look like for our managers?
What are they asking for? What are the barriers?*

The report also notes areas with excellent practices that leaders can use to share and learn from.

These areas of excellent practice will be communicated prior to the workshop, so that those managers can share what actions taken (or things that are in place) that has contributed to their positive responses, for managers with less positive responses to consider implementing

3. Incorporate HMICFRS Covid survey feedback

During lockdown HMICFRS commissioned a separate survey which included a number of questions relating to culture. Analysis of this report compared findings and confirmed similar concerns on trust, blame culture and management style, and provided additional insights in possible factors.

For example, survey question ‘Bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated at ECFRS’ (16% disagreed) had a similar finding to HMICFRS with 10% respondents reported feeling bullied or harassed at work in the previous 6 months via the HMICFRS survey, but further identified “terms of contract and part-time working were often the source of bullying”.

It is proposed to use the HMICFRS feedback to further inform the People Strategy action plan. An analysis of HMICFRS report is held at Appendix B.

BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

The benefits of this approach are in ensuring the investment in employee survey is maximised by accelerating employee engagement activities to improve employee satisfaction and be an ‘employer of choice’.

Risk PVC0001 - there is a risk that when are our people do not feel valued in the workplace they are less likely to be committed or active advocates for the service, leading to increased absence rates, poor productivity, regretted attrition, increased levels of informal or formal grievance, disciplinary or performance management cases.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

None. This decision is not anticipated to have an impact on any of the following protected groups as defined within the Equality Act 2010:

<i>Race</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Religion or belief</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Sex</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Gender reassignment</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Age</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Pregnancy & maternity</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Disability</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Marriage and Civil Partnership</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	<i>No</i>		

WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

There will be workforce engagement with employees via the normal communication channels (e.g. The Shout, 60 second briefing) and with managers via Manager Briefing. There are continued conversations between line managers and their teams.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None that are specific to this report.

Appendix A

[Ignite 2020 Deep Dive Jan 2020](#)

Appendix B

HMICFRS survey had 4 response options: Agree, Tend to agree, Tend to disagree, Disagree in comparison to our employee survey which had – as previously – 5 response options: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree.

The survey was primarily to investigate how the fire sector in England responded to the Covid-19 outbreak and the challenges it presented, but included a number of more general engagement questions, which can be reviewed alongside our own annual survey findings, particularly on the themes of Culture and Values, Communication, and Training and Development.

HMICFRS compared ECFRS responses against a benchmark of all English Fire and Rescue Services combined, whereas our own survey benchmark was a smaller set of 12 Services, details of these are confidential to People Insights. The response rate however, was markedly lower (13% compared to 56%) with 191 ECFRS responses, therefore it can be considered that the data is somewhat less robust than our own survey.

Questions with similar subject areas in both surveys can be compared to triangulate the insights from our survey responses plus comments. Additionally where our responses were significantly different to the combined Fire Service response, this provide potential additional insights.

The report considered the following engagement areas of which those with asterisks were operationally specific and fall outside of engagement questions:

- Treatment at Work
- Communication to staff during Covid-19
- Values and Culture
- Fairness and Diversity
- Training and Personal Development
- Performance
- Learning and Development
- Health and Wellbeing
- Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination
- Safety and Welfare
- Covid-19 Safety and Welfare*
- Additional roles during Covid-19*
- Incidents*
- Operational Discretion

Overall, ECFRS responses more towards the mid-point responses “Tend to agree” and “Tend to Disagree” than the FRS benchmark, which when considered over the

whole question-set tended to be slightly more confident in responding across the spectrum – in other words, slightly more likely to answer as “Agree” or “Disagree” than “Tends to...”.

Positive responses (Agree and Tend to Agree) compared against the ‘All Service’ benchmark are as follows, with notable difference outlined in green where positive, and red where negative:

Section	All FRS response	Essex response
Treatment at Work	81%	78%
Communication to staff during Covid-19	90%	93%
Values and Culture	95%	81%
Fairness and Diversity	70%	63%
Training and Personal Development	78%	69%
Performance discussion	41% (<i>less than once a month</i>)	48% (<i>less than once a month</i>)
Learning and Development discussion	55% (<i>less than once a month</i>)	69% (<i>less than once a month</i>)
Health and Wellbeing discussion	37% (<i>less than once a month</i>)	40% (<i>less than once a month</i>)
Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination	21%	24%
Safety and Welfare	92%	91%
Covid-19 Safety and Welfare*	88%	86%
Additional roles during Covid-19	n/a	n/a
Incidents	83%	65%
Operational Discretion	82%	67%

Where our responses differed significantly further analysis was undertaken into the variances:

Values and Culture Questions

Senior leaders consistently model and maintain service values 73% agree

My manager consistently models and maintains service values 86% agree

My colleagues consistently model and maintain service values 86% agree -

Therefore a gap perceived in the behaviour of our senior leaders compared to manager and staff. What are our people seeing or not seeing?

The staff response is low against the FRS benchmark of 91% - Comments from our own survey indicate this is happening in pockets rather than across the board. How can we improve this?

Fairness and Diversity Questions

I feel I am given the same opportunities to develop as other staff in my service - 40% disagreed which is lower than FRS peers (31%)

I am treated fairly at work – there was a significant variance to this question - 40% disagreed compared to FRS benchmark of 31%.

Training and Personal Development

I have received sufficient training to effectively do my job - **24% disagree**, which is lower than the FRS benchmark of 18%

I am satisfied the level of learning and development available to me - **33% disagree** compared to 24% FRS benchmark

My service allows opportunities for my personal development - **35% disagree** against FRS benchmark 25%

Note - nearest comparator question from our survey is "I have the right opportunities to learn and grow at work" which has 21% disagree

Incidents

I am confident that my service listens to my feedback about operational incidents – **47% disagreed** compared to FRS benchmark of 26%

I am confident that my service takes action as a result of learning from operational incidents – **50% disagreed** compared to FRS benchmark of 23%

My service is interoperable with neighbouring services – **28% disagreed** compared to 12% FRS benchmark

The last incident I attended, where I was not in command, was commanded effectively – **14% disagreed** compared to 8% FRS benchmark

Operational Discretion

“If the incident required it, I am confident that I would be supported by my service if I use operational discretion “ This question had a significant difference in response:

33% disagreed compared to FRS benchmark of 18%

Nearest comparator question within the ECFRS survey is "I feel able to make decisions without fear of being blamed if things go wrong" with 24% responding negatively. This is supported by comments concerning 'blame culture'

These variances will be explored as part of the systemic issues workshops and where appropriate, actions to address will be incorporated into the People Strategy Action Plan.