



**Norfolk Fire
and Rescue Service**
www.norfolkfireservice.gov.uk

People Strategy 2023-26



Norfolk County Council

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Introduction.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the residents of Norfolk. As an organisation that relies heavily on the skills, dedication, and expertise of its workforce, NFRS recognizes the critical importance of developing and implementing an effective People Strategy. This strategy aims to attract, retain, and develop a diverse and talented workforce, fostering a culture where everyone is valued and supported, and which prioritises wellbeing and performance.

NFRS recognises the importance of attracting individuals with the right values and skills. The People Strategy will do this through targeted recruitment campaigns, robust selection processes, and the promotion of NFRS as an employer of choice, ensuring a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the community it serves.

The wellbeing and engagement of NFRS employees are fundamental to their performance and overall satisfaction. The People Strategy will support the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of the workforce by providing access to comprehensive wellness programs and fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment. Regular employee feedback and engagement initiatives will be implemented to ensure that the workforce feels valued and involved in the decision-making processes.



Continuous learning and development opportunities are essential for the professional growth of NFRS employees. The People Strategy will focus on identifying and addressing skill gaps, providing relevant training programs, and creating clear career pathways within the organization. NFRS will actively encourage and support employees in acquiring new competencies, enabling them to perform their roles effectively and progress in their careers.

NFRS acknowledges that a diverse and inclusive workforce enhances its ability to serve the community effectively. The People Strategy will promote equality of opportunity, ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds have fair access to employment, development, and advancement within the organization. NFRS will create an inclusive culture that values and respects individual differences, fostering an environment where everyone feels empowered to contribute their unique perspectives.

Effective leadership and talent management are vital for the success of NFRS. The People Strategy will focus on developing strong leaders, providing them with the necessary support and resources to inspire and motivate their teams. It will also emphasize the identification and nurturing of high-potential individuals, ensuring a robust pipeline of talent for future leadership positions.

The NFRS People Strategy outlines our commitment to its workforce and its recognition of the critical role employees play in fulfilling its mission. By prioritising attraction, retention, wellbeing, development, diversity, and leadership, NFRS aims to build a highly skilled, engaged, and inclusive workforce capable of meeting the evolving challenges of the fire and rescue service. This People Strategy will not only benefit the employees but also contribute to the safety and security of the Norfolk community.



Vision and Mission.

NFRS is at the heart of protecting communities. We exist to make our county as safe as possible.

Our mission is to make Norfolk a safer place through:

PREVENTING
fires and other
emergencies

PROTECTING
people, buildings and
the environment

RESPONDING
to fires and other emergencies
when they arise

We will deliver our vision by...



Having a service that remains relevant, capable and agile to Protect Norfolk as best as it can.



Supporting our communities to reduce risk by educating and advising them.



Responding to incidents, ensuring we have the best people, equipment and technology to be able to do this.



Investing in our greatest asset - our workforce - to ensure they are engaged, supported and connected

Our workforce.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has a critical role in the emergency service response in our county, playing a vitally important part in protecting our communities, properties and countryside. It is our people that make that happen and it is thanks to their professionalism, dedication and preparedness that the harm caused by fires and other emergencies is reduced most recently, the damage created by wildfires was not more significant, and lives were not lost through our staff's actions.

Our people have a wide variety of roles, working patterns and terms and conditions, with people on differing schemes including Grey book, Green book and Gold book and volunteers. However, they all contribute to delivering our service to the public so regardless of individual circumstance, we want to ensure an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and has the opportunity to develop their skills and career with Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service.

Workforce demographic data (all figures are %)

Age range	Service level	Wholetime	On-Call	Other
Age 16-24	2.61	3.30	3.95	0.00
Age 25-35	24.71	23.08	30.70	12.64
Age 36-45	28.10	32.23	32.68	13.22
Age 46-55	29.15	36.26	25.44	28.16
Age 56-65	11.63	5.13	6.36	32.76
Age 66 and over	3.53	0.00	0.88	13.22
Gender – Female	16.6	7.33	4.61	51.72
Gender – Male	83.27	92.67	95.39	48.28
Ethnicity – white	98.92	99.12	98.59	100
Ethnicity – other	1.08	0.88	1.41	0.00
Disability – Undeclared	91.90	98.17	98.25	69.54
Disability – Not disabled	7.45	1.47	1.32	28.74
Disability – disabled	0.65	0.37	0.44	1.72

We recognise the importance of putting in place and delivering a high-quality People Strategy which enables our workforce to be supported in their roles. We aim to have a Fire and Rescue service which is more professional, high performing and continues to attract, value and care for our dedicated people.

Our strategy is informed through our workforce planning, NCC Employee Survey findings, His Majesty's Inspection of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services survey findings and reports, NFCC people programme and our response to the recent challenges that we have faced together as a service.



Our aims for our People Strategy.

- We will continue to create an inclusive culture where our people are valued, developed and recognised with equality
- We will build a more diverse workforce so that we can represent the community we serve and support more effective engagement
- We will arm our people with the tools they need to manage their own resilience and support those whose mental health is impacted.
- We will do all we can to support colleagues and to try and prevent mental health crisis, whatever the cause of the crisis. We are putting together a refreshed strategy and practical plan around mental health and getting expert advice on what will work. This strategy will include a range of things from access to professional services to social and sporting events.
- We will promote the benefits of physical activity for all staff, especially in the group environment, and ensure that good physical health is role modelled at all levels of the organisation.
- We will work towards developing mechanisms which allow us to succession plan and develop our talent more effectively
- We will develop our leaders to deliver our people priorities and build a high performing culture
- We will develop a recruitment and retention strategy which promotes diversity and more effective onboards our new staff
- We will continue to invest in our professional development so our staff maintain their competence and confidence
- We will continue collaboration with our staff and representative bodies to ensure our staff are deployed in the most effective way and are fully engaged in any changes affecting them.

Driving forces for change.

- The HMICFRS spotlight report on values and culture in fire and rescue services includes clear recommendations for improvement.
- Wellbeing support for mental health is insufficient for our workforce and specialist support is needed for mental health
- Delivery of our Community Risk Management Plan until 2026
- Our strategic priorities around People, Prevention, Protection and Response
- Continuing efficiencies as part of our business planning cycles
- Ageing workforce and longer working lives potentially impacting on ability to fully perform operational roles
- A workforce which does not entirely reflect the communities which we serve
- HMICFRS inspection regime – NFRS were rated as requires improvement for all four ‘people’ questions.
- Home Office fire reform agenda



Equality, diversity and inclusion.

EDI underpins everything that we do as a service and all of the elements of our strategy. Norfolk County Council sets the Council's objectives for equality, diversity and inclusion and we are committed to delivering these, as well as our own EDI priorities for our service, as specified in our EDI strategy 2023-26, which includes:

Priority 1: Increase the diversity of our workforce, so that we better reflect the local population

Priority 2: Ensure that people who represent a minority in their team are supported and valued

Priority 3: Develop our capability on EDI – our knowledge and professional curiosity – and ensure that our physical infrastructure can support our increasing diversity

We will use the EDI maturity model, workforce data and staff surveys to assess how well we are doing.



The six core elements of our People Strategy.

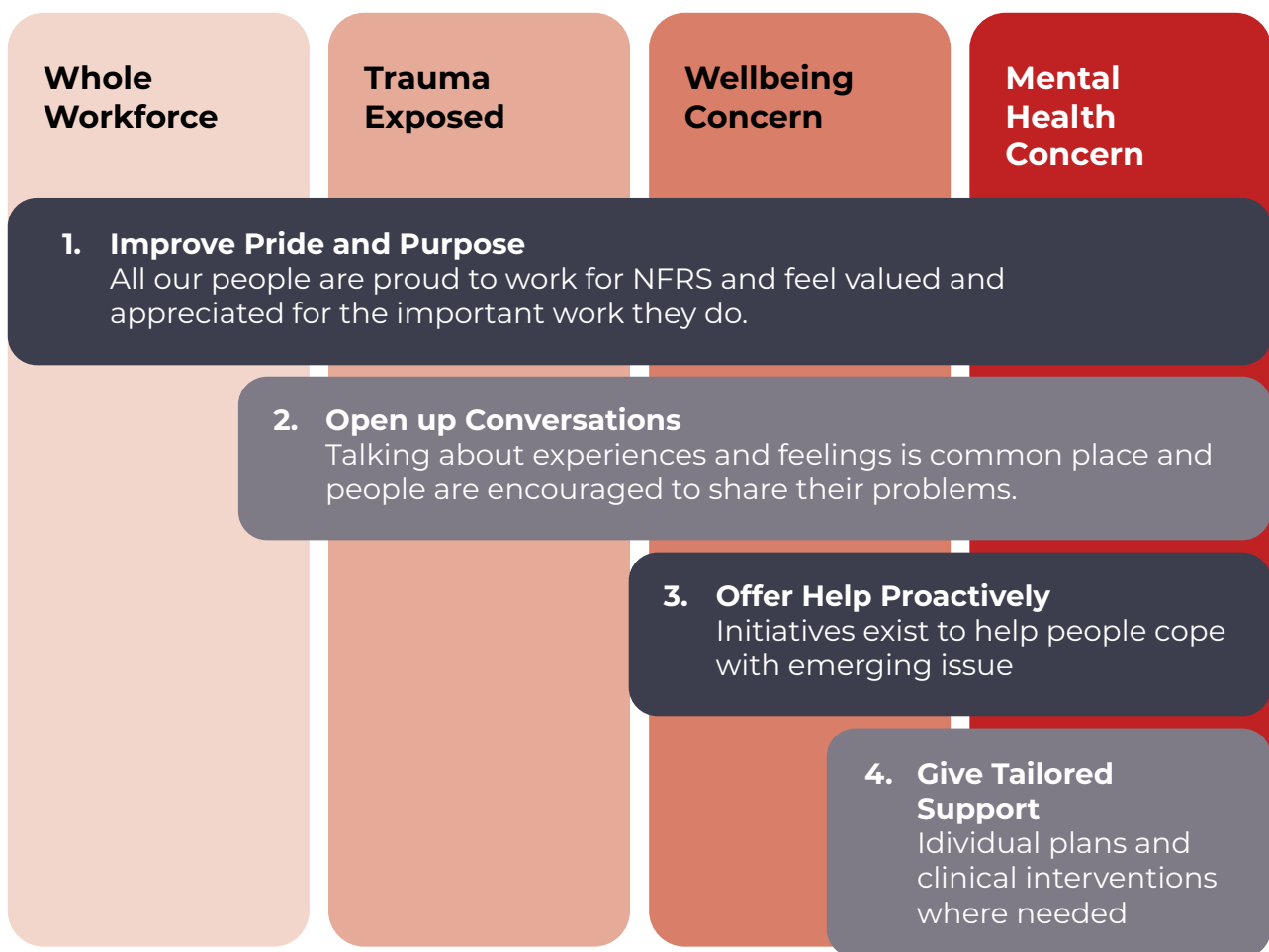


1 Wellbeing

We understand that the challenges our workforce face often involve traumatic incidents or working with people in challenging circumstances and can impact mental health. We are committed to improving our wellbeing offer as our number one priority to support our dedicated workforce whilst they are active within the service and as they transition out of the service.

The past year has been particularly challenging for all of us in NFRS, following the death of three of our colleagues. Suicide prevention is a key outcome on the service risk register and a programme management office has been set up to drive forward immediate improvements aligned to this. This will feed into our longer-term wellbeing improvement work.

We will support our people to manage their personal resilience and provide a diverse wellbeing offer which is co-designed with our people. We will better support our people to recover from sickness and injury, helping people to return to work and gain support in doing so. Our vision for wellbeing is built on four key themes across our whole workforce.



We know we can and must do more to support our dedicated people across the entire service.

Our three phase approach to wellbeing is outlined in our wellbeing plan 2023-26.

We will use the wellbeing maturity model and the measures set out in the wellbeing plan to assess how well we are doing.

2 Culture, values and behaviours



We are devoted to continuing the excellent progress we have made in creating a more diverse and inclusive organisation with successes such as our award-winning recruitment campaign to build on.

We won't tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination in any form and continually review our feedback mechanisms to ensure our people can raise concerns in a protected way. We will challenge anyone who acts outside of expected behaviours and will use existing performance and discipline procedures where appropriate. We will build a culture where people trust our managers, grievance procedures or confidential reporting systems and are confident telling us if they experience unwanted behaviour.

We endeavour to communicate to our people in a way which values the differences across our organisation and places compassion at the heart of everything we do.

We produced our cultural framework through engagement with our staff and we use this as our guide on behaviours expected from our people. We have worked to embed this across the service but it is recognised that this has not always been successful. We must also recognise the national drive to establish the core code of ethics as a consistent approach to ethics, values and behaviours across all FRSs in England. Therefore, during 2023/24 we will recruit a fire ethics and culture transformation manager to help us ensure that our cultural framework feeds into our adoption of the core code and that this becomes embedded across all levels of the service.

We want to make sure that we recruit the right people, who will fit into our culture. Therefore, we will ensure that our values and behaviours, and the code of ethics are embedded into our recruitment practices and that our pre-employment checks reflect legislative requirements and national guidance.

We will outline our approach to driving cultural improvement in our cultural plan.

We will use the code of ethics fire standard, rates and outcomes of grievance and discipline procedures, and staff surveys to assess how well we are doing.

3 Leadership

We want to ensure that everyone in our service works together to keep each other and the public safe. Leaders at all levels will lead by example and build a culture which supports the wellbeing of our people and delivers excellence to our communities. They will be supportive and role model the right values without being afraid to challenge behaviour and performance when they need to, having open conversations to resolve challenges and offer coaching and support to their teams.

Although we have adopted a hybrid working model since the end of the Covid pandemic, we expect leaders at all levels to be visible. Informal team catch ups, wellbeing chats and open office doors are all important to show our teams that managers aren't there only for performance conversations. SLT members will visit stations and teams around the county, middle managers are expected to make regular visits to the teams that they manage and we will review the best communications channels to reach all of our staff.

We want our staff to feel engaged, supported and heard. We will do this using a variety of methods including leadership visibility, displays in the workplace, What's Hot, electronic messaging and social media, the annual NCC staff survey and regular temperature check surveys.

We recognise that stability is a key part of good leadership. During early 2023, the director's new senior leadership structure will be stabilised and substantively appointed to. This will allow substantive appointments throughout the organisation. Temporary posts will be used only where necessary to support emerging workloads.

We want our leaders at all levels to feel empowered and will work to build a culture where everyone understands their delegated powers and responsibilities and is confident in their decision making.

Our model for effective leadership will be the NFCC leadership framework.



We will use the leading the service fire standard and staff surveys to assess how well we are doing.

4 Developing leaders

If we want effective leaders at all levels, we must develop them. We want to ensure everyone has access to develop their skills and career and will provide a range of opportunities to improve and advance to more senior roles. We will develop tools and practice to support talent growth and succession planning to ensure we are developing people with the right levels of professionalism, skills and leadership for the future of the service.

We will produce a talent management plan which will describe our leadership development offer and improvement process. We will use the leading and developing people fire standard, the leadership development and talent management maturity models, percentages of staff with leadership qualifications and staff surveys to assess how well we are doing.

5 Recruitment

We aim to recruit high-quality people who perform to the best of their ability and have pride in the fire and rescue service. We are committed to providing equality of opportunity to our residents and to maintaining a workforce which reflects the demographic make-up of the population of Norfolk, while also continuing to provide opportunities for current employees. Our recruitment practice supports our commitment to building a culture of inclusion, empowering all colleagues to thrive and feel a sense of belonging here at NFRS.

We will do this through fair and clear recruitment and selection processes with effective onboarding into the service, using the most appropriate routes into the organisation. We will provide a recruitment service, either internally or through HR shared service, linked to our workforce planning to provide a timely and seamless process for our managers which minimises vacancies and puts the right person in the right place.

We will produce a recruitment plan to describe our recruitment systems and improvement process, and how we will achieve our EDI aspirations. We will use the recruitment maturity model, vacancy rates, and workforce data to assess how well we are doing.

6 Workforce planning and competence

We want a workforce that has the professionalism, skills and leadership to deliver a high quality, effective and efficient public service. To do this, we must ensure that we match our people resources to the risks identified in our CRMP, understand the competencies needed for them to perform their roles effectively, and plan to recruit, train and promote them in the right way.

Our existing workforce is an ageing demographic and many of our senior managers have the option to leave the Service in the next 3-5 years. We have gaps in our on-call capacity and have a rolling programme of recruitment.

With this in mind, we want to be able to take a proactive approach to workforce development to ensure we have sufficient capacity to deliver our service and that we are enabling flexible working where we can. We will employ a workforce planning and competence manager to ensure that we have the right people in the right place with the right skills to deliver excellent services to the public.

To deliver our Community Risk Management Plan, NFRS recognises the need to continually evolve and improve the way in which we conduct workforce planning. We need to plan for, and attract a diverse capable workforce, well-led, developed, skilled and engaged to deliver the outcomes needed to serve the communities of Norfolk and to contribute to the wider requirements of National Resilience.

We understand that many of our staff want to contribute to multiple aspects of the service and we recognise the benefits of utilising established skill sets across multiple roles. We also recognise that there is an impact on individual wellbeing if work life balance is not well managed. As part of our workforce planning, we will monitor working hours for staff with two or more contracts with us and will consider the impact of secondary employment on our full-time staff and primary employment for our on-call staff.

We will produce a workforce plan which will describe our objectives and actions to deliver an effective workforce planning function. We will use the leading and developing people and operational competence fire standards, learning organisation and blended learning maturity models, and mandatory course attendance rates to assess how well we are doing.

Measuring our success.

In addition to the qualitative self-assessment through fire standards and maturity models, we will use a range of objective and subjective measures to know that our People Strategy is having a positive impact. These will be described in our subject specific plans.



Workforce Data.

In addition to the above we plan to include regular workforce data reporting into our Senior Leadership Team Performance Management to regularly review patterns, exceptions and improvements.

We are working on making a greater range of workforce data available to our managers and leaders to support them with leading and developing their teams.



Staff Voice.

Our annual Employee Engagement survey ensures that we listen to what our staff tell us about their working life and make places to improve their experience. Statistical analysis by our external survey partner identifies the key drivers of employee engagement for NFRS. Through our annual survey action plans and related work, we expect results to show continual improvement.

We also use other sources of data to inform our strategy and planning such as:

- Health and Wellbeing engagement surveys
- HMICFRS staff feedback survey
- Feedback through SLT visits to stations
- Feedback via our union partners
- Feedback and findings from grievances
- Engagement with wellbeing champions
- Temperature check staff surveys

