



**SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT CULTURE REVIEW OF LONDON FIRE BRIGADE –
GAP ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLANNING**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR
TO THE AUTHORITY**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to brief the Committee about the recently published Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade (LFB) and outline the actions being taken and planned by the Service in relation to the Review's recommendations.

2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Commissioning the review was a recommendation of an internal investigation within London Fire Brigade into the death of a firefighter in development, Jaden Matthew Francois-Esprit, who tragically took his own life in August 2020. LFB have stated that before Jaden's death they knew there were longstanding issues with poor culture and behaviour at the Brigade and they had made many attempts to address these issues, but without success. LFB commissioned this review to give current and former staff and community groups a chance to give their feedback on LFB's culture, and get independent analysis so that LFB can improve.

2.2 The Independent Culture Review is a thorough examination of the culture at LFB, chaired by Nazir Afzal OBE. Over a period of twelve months, he and his team heard from more than 2,000 current and former members of staff and community groups who shared their experiences of the Brigade. At the end of this period Nazir Afzal and his team wrote a report explaining their findings: [Independent Culture Review | London Fire Brigade \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/independent-culture-review/)

3 INDEPENDENT CULTURE REVIEW OF LONDON FIRE BRIGADE (LFB)

3.1 The report paints a picture of poor behaviour and painful experiences over many years. LFB have acknowledged that this makes the report a difficult read for the Brigade and for the communities they serve. It highlights that women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic, LGBTQ+ and neurodiverse staff experience

poor treatment and do less well in their careers with LFB. Issues were also identified with leadership, and with staff fearing to speak out about abuse.

Additionally the report includes examples of behaviour towards members of the public which LFB acknowledge are completely unacceptable. The Commissioner of LFB, Andy Roe, and his leadership team have sought to reassure everyone that having commissioned this independent culture review they now fully understand the issues and have plans in place to address them.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW

The Review report contains 23 recommendations, which are set out in Appendix 1 to this report, and cover a wide range of issues from 'adopting a zero tolerance policy for bullying, racist and misogynistic behaviour' to 'consider introducing body worn video for fire safety home visits' to 'investigate the root causes for LFB FRS staff being significantly more impacted by stress, anxiety and depression in comparison to their national colleagues'. All 23 recommendations are listed in the **Appendix** to this report.

LFB have published a list of immediate actions they are taking in response:

- We're taking a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and bullying. Anyone accused of this behaviour will be immediately suspended and dismissed if the accusation is upheld.
- We're introducing a new External Complaints Service so that staff can feel safe to speak up and cases will be handled objectively and confidentially
- Our new External Complaints Service will be carrying out a historic case review where all bullying, harassment and discrimination cases at London Fire Brigade, completed in the last five years, will be reviewed.
- We're reviewing all our people-related processes to eliminate discrimination, including involving independent people to make immediate improvements where practical.
- We're making it much easier and quicker for staff to access help and support. Our people provide an essential emergency response service and are frequently exposed to traumatic incidents, which requires improved support.
- We're making a permanent shift in our approach to leadership. It is the responsibility of our leaders to set and uphold high standards, so those leaders who do not value transparency, accountability and fairness will no longer have a place in the Brigade. We also expect our leaders to own their past mistakes.
- Accelerating work to pilot body worn cameras for staff to ensure respect is shown to the public at all times
- Encouraging members of the public to report any poor behaviour to us on our website. Complaints about staff will be investigated by our Independent Complaints Service
- Creating an independent audit committee to measure our progress.

RESPONSES TO THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW

- 3.2 Following the publication of the report, in addition to the response from LFB itself there were formal public responses from the Fire Minister, the Mayor of London, the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Fire Brigades Union and Asian Fire Service Association, amongst others. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue announced that they were moving LFB into their category of 'Enhanced Monitoring', having previously been rated as 'Requires Improvement' for People in 2019 and 2021.

4 GAP ANALYSIS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Whilst TWFRS has been rated 'Good' for all pillars of inspection, including People, in both 2019 and 2022, the publication of the Independent Cultural Review of LFB provides an opportunity for all Fire and Rescue Services, including ours, to check ourselves against the findings and recommendations of the report, in order to identify where there is any evidence of similar problems and, importantly, to ensure that the Service has appropriate and proportionate measures in place.
- 4.2 In the light of the previous inspection outcomes the Service considers that it has a good level of self-awareness, but in order to improve this further and obtain some independent expertise, during 2022 the Service decided to commission an independent cultural audit, as part of procuring and deploying a new employee survey tool. The procurement exercise is almost complete and it is expected that a contract will be awarded in February 2023 and that work will commence in March 2023. Intelligence and feedback gathered through the audit, and the recommendations of the independent provider (occupational psychologists) will be fed into the Service's Inclusions and OD plans.
- 4.3 Since the publication of the Independent Cultural Review of FLB the Service has embarked on a considered exercise to take each of the 23 recommendations and identify against each one (i) any evidence of similar issues in our Service, (ii) any actions that we have in place/underway/planned to address the recommendation, and (iii) any gaps or potential blind spots we may have.
- 4.4 This exercise will take some time as it needs to be reality checked with a range of stakeholders, such as our Staff Network Groups, for completeness and transparency.
- 4.5 A further report will be presented to the next meeting of the HR Committee about the progress of this exercise.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from the content of this report. Improving the Service's performance and progress around EDI and culture

change will assist with managing any risks associated with discrimination in employment or service delivery.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The ability of the Service to develop and benchmark its work around Inclusion should have a significant and positive effect on fairness and equality across the organisation.

8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members are recommended to:

- a) Note the content of the report
- b) Receive further reports / updates as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Link to the Review report:

[Independent Culture Review | London Fire Brigade \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/independent-culture-review)

APPENDIX

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT CULTURE REVIEW OF LONDON FIRE BRIGADE
<p>Recommendation 1: All managers should adopt a zero tolerance policy for bullying, racist and misogynistic behaviour in the workplace and appropriate disciplinary action must be taken to root out a toxic culture.</p> <p>Outcome 1: EDI training for managers and an independent complaints service.</p> <p>Outcome 2: Managers can identify inappropriate behaviours and values and act decisively to tackle them.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Consider anonymised reporting of incidents relating to bullying, misogyny and racism. In a closed team-based culture individuals /groups can and have become stigmatised for reporting poor behaviour or bad experiences.</p> <p>Outcome 3: Staff can report incidents anonymously with no fear of the repercussions.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Consider historic review of complaints about bullying, racism and misogyny over the last five years. This would establish a team to determine whether further action is necessary in cases where justice has been denied.</p> <p>Outcome 4: Review past cases and ensure all complaints over the past five years have been managed appropriately and the correct sanctions applied and where not an appropriate remedy has been introduced.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Recognise the ‘Safe to Speak’ programme is not sufficiently trusted and that further policies and dedicated resources are needed to make it easier for people to report clear examples of racism, misogyny and bullying of staff.</p> <p>Outcome 5: Ensure staff are confident to speak up when they witness or experience racism, misogyny or bullying.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: In conversation with the workforce and stakeholders, develop Brigade values that are ‘public service’ first, underpinning how we behave within the organisation and towards our public and partners. These values should inform the core code of ethics, recruitment, promotion, discipline, talent management, industrial relations, staff engagement, leadership development and strategic planning.</p> <p>Outcome 6: Eliminate the potential for bias or unfair treatment. Outcome 7: For this to be successful the values must be visible in everything from the most strategic plans through to staff appraisals. They must run as a golden thread through recruitment, promotion, discipline, talent management, Industrial Relations, staff engagement. All of which must be transparent and open to challenge. Action must also be visible where there have been transgressions.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Build a culture dashboard of LFB stations and teams that uses a mix of metrics to assess whether these are red, amber or green on a scale of risk where the working environment is concerned. The worst offenders (red) will demonstrate toxic behaviours, while at risk stations (amber) will demonstrate some areas of concern, and good practice stations (green) will demonstrate a healthy and supportive culture. Data to use includes grievances, staff turnover, exit interviews, people survey data, diversity and more. Use these dashboards to proactively address problem teams and identify and learn from good practice.</p>

<p>Outcome 8: The Brigade can identify where toxic culture is a threat and managers take swift action to address it. Good practice is identified and shared, so that others can learn from it.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Develop a robust mechanism for measuring LFB culture, which operates on an ongoing basis using a number of tools and metrics, including big data, social media, exit interviews, complaints levels, turnover etc. Outcome 9: LFB can monitor the health of its culture on an ongoing basis and take action to address emerging issues.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Consider introducing body worn video for fire safety home visits. Outcome 10: Drive up standards of behaviour and professionalism. Outcome 11: To be rolled out across station and inspection teams</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Ensure there are secure facilities for all women in stations. Outcome 12: Afford greater dignity for all staff.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: Borough Commanders should build a better understanding of and closer relationships with their local communities, which should include learning from them and seeking the input of diverse staff and the communities themselves. Outcome 13: Borough Commanders will own and implement their local Borough Community Risk Management Plan, informed by the community and local partners. Outcome 14: By 2024, local fire stations are seen as a community resource. Services are shaped by a deep understanding of local community needs.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: Recruit and progress firefighters who reflect and can demonstrate their commitment to London's diverse communities. Outcome 15: All Brigade staff understand London and its communities and are proud to serve them. Diversity is visible in all levels in the Brigade.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12: Improve post-incident care by providing a named person to members of the public directly impacted by an event that required LFB attendance. Outcome 16: Members of the public affected by incidents are provided with an LFB Family Liaison Officer who offers sensitive and compassionate support. This increases community trust and confidence.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13: Consider ways to integrate Head Office with operations immediately, and longer term when the lease of the Unions Street HQ expires in 2027. Outcome 17: Senior leaders work alongside operational and control staff regularly. Senior leaders are visible and regularly demonstrate their commitment to Brigade values and their understanding of the workforce at all levels.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14: Improve the fairness and transparency of senior selection panels by appointing independent chairs and panel members and asking all candidates and panel members to declare any interests, including membership of the Freemasons. Outcome 18: Ensure there are transparent processes around ethics and conduct that reassure staff and communities that selection processes are fair. Selection data demonstrates that no groups of people experience bias in the process.</p>

Outcome 19: LFB staff declare potential conflicts of interest and memberships of any organisation that may conflict with our values and expectations.

Recommendation 15: Increase the focus on mental health prevention by providing training for leaders and managers to identify and respond to stress at work; to understand their role in creating healthy cultures and understand the connection between inclusion and wellbeing

Outcome 20: Training is delivered across all leadership roles. By 2024 - leaders and managers build and maintain inclusive, healthy and high performing teams. They can spot the signs of stress and anxiety and know their team members well, understand sources of stress and where more specialist support is needed to maintain or restore individual health and wellbeing. This is well funded, well signposted, well known and well used. The link between inclusion and wellbeing is well understood, and wellbeing metrics are integrated into culture measures.

Recommendation 16: Gather better information on employee red flags that signal the need for early intervention to prevent deteriorating mental health.

Outcome 21: Staff are able to spot red flags that indicate deteriorating mental health and know how to access appropriate support for those at risk.

Recommendation 17: Investigate the root causes for LFB FRS staff being significantly more impacted by stress, anxiety and depression in comparison to their national colleagues and design wellbeing interventions that address these issues directly.

Outcome 22: Ensure the sources of stress for FRS colleagues have been identified and appropriate support introduced to reduce occurrences Outcome 23: By April 2024 the particular workplace sources of stress for FRS colleagues have been reduced, so that stress, anxiety and depression are at or below national levels. Outcome 24: FRS staff are an integral part of the LFB community and their knowledge and expertise are valued and rewarded.

Recommendation 18: Make it a priority to try to understand the reasons for suicide by ensuring that a clear and robust system of reporting is established. Capture the learnings in a Guidance document that includes a communication plan and action plan to support staff in the event of a colleague's death by suicide.

Outcome 25: In the event of a suicide, the Brigade is prepared to act promptly and compassionately to offer staff information and support. LFB gathers and records information to build an understanding of the issues and design interventions to address them.

Recommendation 19: Review the triggers that are needed to generate interventions to support mental health and wellbeing. A more detailed critical incident log of all firefighters will show what they have been exposed to and indicate where wellbeing support is necessary.

Outcome 26: Ensure LFB has a clear understanding of the range of incidents their staff are exposed to and systematically reaches out to those who could be particularly at risk. There is a range of easy to access support and all colleagues are offered a comprehensive programme of support for their mental health.

Recommendation 20: Conduct an independent review of People Services resourcing and provision to improve the professionalism and effectiveness of the service and deliver leading-edge HR solutions that managers and staff trust.

Outcome 27: Ensure your HR service is valued and respected by all colleagues and plays an integral role in maintaining an inclusive culture.

Recommendation 21: Create an HR Data Analytics Strategy and develop HR data analytics skills. Use data to design and implement People Services' strategies, policies and practices (including the 'Togetherness Strategy'), as well as lead the organisation in the desired cultural change.

Outcome 28: The LFB people strategy and underpinning decisions will be evidence based and will use data to support a process of continuous improvement across people management practices. Outcome 29: LFB staff will always understand why decisions are made that affect them at work.

Recommendation 22: Create an LFB workforce planning strategy to support the 'Togetherness Strategy', using data to link practices to long-term goals and outcomes. This will understand the reasons why BAME staff and women are significantly under represented in the organisation in comparison to their White, male counterparts, and design interventions to improve this ratio. It will also deliver positive action to ensure talent at all levels is identified and, where appropriate, fast track development programmes enable people to fulfil their talent, particularly underrepresented groups.

Outcome 30: LFB's recruitment and promotion processes are reviewed and revised. Outcome 31: By April 2024 LFB are trusted by all colleagues. The selection of leaders is a transparent, well understood process based on merit, capability, and demonstration of clear, well-communicated values. Many colleagues across all levels help to select LFB leaders and there is never any doubt that leaders are in post because they are the right people for the role. Outcome 32: Within 5 years - LFB's workforce composition better reflects the communities they serve at all levels, including a diverse talent pipeline for the most senior leadership roles.

Recommendation 23: Investigate the root causes why BAME staff are more likely to raise a grievance and twice as likely to be subject to disciplinary hearings in comparison to their White counterparts. Review the ways in which grievance and discipline policies are currently used and received by staff with protected characteristics across all occupational groups.

Outcome 33: Ensure LFB has a clear approach to responding to inappropriate behaviour that everyone trusts, understands and acts upon. Groups will use this in numbers that reflect their representation in the workforce. LFB staff subsequently feel confident in, and protected by, policies and systems to be able to raise concerns regarding other people's behaviour; they know they are safe and that their complaints will be taken seriously.