





PEOPLE STRATEGY

2018-2021



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 Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service www.rbfrs.co.uk



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STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of the RBFRS People Strategy is to support Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue staff to become the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver an efficient and effective service on behalf of the Fire Authority, to manage all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the people of Berkshire.

This strategy will be delivered across the three-year period from 2018-2021.





» CONTEXT

It has been nearly four years since the Fire Authority reset its strategic commitments to the people of Berkshire and three years since RBFRS published its last People Strategy and Organisational Development Programme; while the Service has travelled a significant distance on the journey of change and improvement, it is timely to review and reset.

The new People Strategy will replace the 2015-19 strategy and action plan identified as part of the Organisational Development Programme. This strategy has been created within the context of a number of both internal and external influencing factors. It is acknowledged that the external environment is very fluid at this time, but the Strategy is relevant at the time of writing and subject to annual review. The key influencing factors are outlined below:

Overview of Significant Internal Influencing Factors

Strategic Commitments and Three Core Themes

The Fire Authority's Strategic Commitments are due to be reviewed this year, but continue to provide the overarching direction for RBFRS. They are:

1. We will educate people on how to prevent fires and other emergencies, and what to do when they happen.
2. We will ensure a swift and effective response when called to emergencies.
3. We will ensure appropriate fire safety standards in buildings.
4. We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda.
5. We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.
6. We will work with Central Government to ensure a fair deal for Royal Berkshire.

There are three core themes identified in the RBFRS Corporate Plan:

- a) Fire Stations at the Heart of our Communities.
- b) Service Support – Capacity, Capability and Resilience.
- c) Culture – One Team Working Collaboratively for the People we Serve.





It is important that these are maintained going forward and the People Strategy must support their achievement.

Workforce and Culture

- Attraction rates vary significantly across the Service. We recently received 450 applications for wholetime firefighter vacancies, but we struggle to recruit to professional services roles, including communications, procurement, ICT and senior HR.
- We are working well in collaboration with our local fire and rescue services (FRS) colleagues to manage firefighter vacancies, but it can take over a year from advertising a vacancy to having a fully competent firefighter working on station.
- A recent recruitment campaign for station managers resulted in us only filling four out of the seven vacancies, with two external candidates and two internal candidates.
- Diversity of the workforce is not reflective of the communities that we serve. Our workforce monitoring information tells us approximately 80% of our people are male, compared to across Berkshire, where it is approximately a 50/50 male/female split for working aged people, and over 90% of all staff are white, compared to the population of Berkshire which is approximately 75%* white.
- Berkshire is an expensive County to live in. The average price of a three bed semi-detached property is over £400,000 and the average salary across the County is approximately £35,000 compared to £29,000 for both a competent firefighter and top of Grade 4 for support services staff. These reasons may contribute to why secondary employment remains high and in many cases, both parents share childcare responsibilities.
- There has been significant change in the membership and the roles that people hold within the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). In the last year, all three directors and the CFO are either new to the Service or have changed role and only two of the seven Heads of Service are still in the same role. These changes have in some cases caused further changes outside SLT.
- There is high union membership, especially by operational staff and terms and conditions for operational staff are negotiated nationally, giving little freedom for local arrangements.
- The recent change programmes across the Service created a level of uncertainty, which resulted in a period of lower productivity in some areas.
- We have seen tangible benefits in creating a dedicated Retained Duty System project group. Good progress has been made in growing the number of on-call staff and we have also seen an increase in availability.
- The establishment of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion forum from across all staff groups has proved positive. SLT recently agreed to consult the public on the following headline objectives:

Figure from National Office of Statistic 2011 census



- a. Increasing diversity of staff at all levels.
 - b. Leadership and corporate commitment: be strong and visible in our leadership and that all employees have confidence in our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
 - c. Improving our service delivery by knowing the communities we serve.
 - d. Promoting a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Establishment of a workforce planning board and the development of a model for assessing our potential retirement profile has greatly improved our ability to manage our operational people resources, but more work is required to look at professional support services roles. We can see from our expected retirement profile that we will lose a significant number of our operational middle managers over the next 18 months.
 - We do not actively succession plan for key roles and talent management is an area for development.
 - Initial work was carried out to create a behavior charter, but this has not been embedded in the Service. Leaders from across the Service are still keen to see behaviours form part of the discussion on how we work.

Ways of Working

- We now have a number of successful examples of collaborative working from tri-service shared building, to joint procurement and shared training. We are developing a future programme of collaborative projects.
- Improving ways of working was identified as an area for development in the previous People Strategy and some progress has been made, but we still have in excess of 400 policies and many of the existing ways of working still rely on reasonably low-tech solutions. Several attempts have been made to embed business process improvement techniques, but due to lack of resource, progress has been slow.

Training and Leadership Development

- The RBFRS Vision is to have one team working collaboratively for the people we serve. We are half way through a comprehensive programme of leadership development for all our middle managers, which includes working with middle managers from the other two Thames Valley FRs. The programme is divided into three sections: leading self, leading others and leading the business. There are early positive signs that this is improving cross-functional and cross-service working.
- People within the Service are labeled by their different terms and conditions, including less positive language like 'uniform' and 'non-uniform'. This may prevent some from seeing the Service as a single-team, there to deliver a collaborative service to the communities of Berkshire.
- The last Peer Review identified that central training courses are reported to be of a high-standard and mechanisms are in place to evidence where training meets national standards. However, reviews of the NVQ process and assessing of operational competence have not yet been conducted. The team recommends that this work should still be a focus for learning and development. Both reviews are now underway, but are



only in the early stages.

- We have a successful core skills programme that is open to all staff which looks at developing the skills set of all staff. It includes aspects of wellbeing i.e. mindfulness and resilience and more business focused skills, such as procurement and project management.
- A member/officer protocol has recently been agreed to provide transparency and better understanding of the different roles and responsibilities each group has. We have also introduced a training session on working with fire authority members as part of the Core Skills programme.

Safety, Health and Wellbeing

- The Service has a well-developed Health and Wellbeing Action plan and we have seen a positive result on fitness and sickness absence. We have recently made a commitment to improve the mental health of every employee and volunteer across the service. In order to achieve this aim, the Mental Health Strategy will deliver a range of activity across five different strands of works, which are:
 - a. Tackling mental health stigma.
 - b. Improving workplace wellbeing.
 - c. Building resilience.
 - d. Improving access to information.
 - e. Improving pathways to support.
- The safety of our workforce remains a priority for the Service and firefighter safety is regularly reviewed at a senior level, as part of the Corporate Risk Register.

Overview of Significant External Influencing Factors

There have been a number of external reviews of the fire and rescue sector and external factors which impact on the People Strategy. These are discussed in brief below.





The Government Fire Reform Programme

The then Home Secretary introduced this programme in 2016. The aspiration of the programme was to create a more accountable, more efficient and professional fire and rescue service.

To help enable the programme, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 received Royal Assent in early 2017, which enables the transformation of local fire governance and seeks to drive greater collaboration. There are three pillars to the Fire Reform programme:

1. Accountability and transparency.
2. Efficiency and collaboration.
3. Workforce reform.

All three areas have been taken into consideration when creating a revised People Strategy, not just workforce reform.

The Thomas Review

Adrian Thomas was commissioned to carry out an Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England in February 2015. The report was not published until November 2016, but the recommendation has provided evidence and context for the Government's reform programme.

The review came to conclusions, findings and recommendations that impact on the following areas:

- The working environment.
- Documented conditions of service.
- Industrial relations.
- Duty systems.
- Management of the fire and rescue service.





The National Fire Chief Council's (NFCC) People Strategy

The NFCC was established in April 2017, and has been designed to provide the professional voice for public fire and rescue services. The NFCC People Strategy was developed in response to the Government's reform programme and the findings of the Thomas Review. The whole document forms a touchstone for the RBFRS People Strategy, but the key principles of the NFCC People Strategy (shown below) will also directly underpin our strategy.

Key Principles of the NFCC People Strategy

In order to support the delivery of this strategy, we have adopted the underpinning principles that are laid out in the national People Strategy.

These principles are:

- We want to be an Employer of Choice.
- We want to train our people so they understand the needs and differences of our communities.
- Firefighter safety and the safety of all our people is important to us.
- Clarity on the decision-making levels, accountability and processes without unnecessary hierarchy.
- Clarity on whether people have a consultative or decisive voice.
- A focus on excellent communication of key messages in an open way using a wide range of engagement methods.
- Developing an internal customer service culture – making processes easy to use for people, reflecting on self-service, wherever possible, through good offer of information and communication and encouraging an attitude of supporting each other – breaking down barriers between different areas of our organisations.
- Support for wellbeing and specific actions to attack stigma about taboo issues, such as mental health, transgender and menopause.
- Leadership at all levels, which understands situational needs – balancing authority, facilitation, coaching and change agency.
- For there to be more open career paths that more readily allows talent to rise to the most senior roles in FRSs irrespective of their terms and conditions on entry.
- Recognition that failure is part of growth and to be welcomed – fail fast, solve problems and work together to improve.
- A sharpened focus on organisational learning that seeks to both embed the learning of lessons and use that learning to appropriately challenge underlying principles or processes.
- Building trust in relationships to allow disagreement and challenge to be seen as part of positive culture and encouraging personal accountability in everyone.



Draft Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The National Framework was last updated in 2012 and the Government believe changes are needed, which warrant a full revision of it at this time to embed the fire reform programme, including the creation of a new inspectorate for fire and rescue services and the creation of the National Fire Chiefs Council. The Framework also reflects the provisions in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 on emergency services collaboration and changes to fire and rescue governance.

The key addition relevant to the strategy is the inclusion of a People Strategy, which explicitly states that a Service's People Strategy should take into account the principles set out in the NFCCs People Strategy and at a minimum cover:

- Improving the diversity of the workforce to ensure that it represents the community it serves; equality, cultural values and behaviours;
- Recruitment, retention and progression;
- Flexible working;
- Professionalism, skills and leadership;
- Training opportunities;
- Health, wellbeing and support; and
- A policy to tackle bullying and harassment.

Consultation has only recently closed, but it is unlikely this section will change significantly.

Draft HMICFRS Assessment Framework

In July 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC) remit was extended to include inspections of fire and rescue services in England. It is now called Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

This is the first inspection programme and framework for fire and rescue service inspections. It will assess and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue services in England. This includes how well we look after the people who work for the Service, which based on the draft inspection regime, means HMICFRS will look to gather evidence by focusing on responses to the following four key questions:

1. How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?
2. How well trained and skilled are FRS staff?
3. How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity?
4. How does the FRS develop leadership and capability?

Consultation has only recently closed, but it is unlikely this section will change significantly.



NFCC Professional Standards and Hackitt Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety

There are two additional external reports that as yet, have not been completed or made public. The first and probably more significant for this strategy is the Professional Standard work being developed by the NFCC. This is referenced several times in both the draft National Framework and the draft Assessment Framework, but little is known about what will be required at this time but it seems clear there will be an expectation to implement the standards.

The second is the final report from Dame Judith Hackitt's review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. This will provide recommendations based on learning in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire. This may make recommendations regarding the roles and responsibility of fire rescue services, which could affect recruitment, training and development of staff. When this report is published, requirements will be assessed and developed where necessary.

Apprenticeship Levy

UK Government have recently introduced changes to encourage employers in England to take a more proactive approach in employing apprentices. To address an expected national skills gap (by 2020), the Government have:

- Introduced the Apprenticeship Levy of 5% of your monthly pay bills less allowances which equates to just over £82,000 annually for RBFRS.
- Introduced Apprenticeship Standards (written by groups of employers known as 'Trailblazers'). The firefighter standard has just been completed.
- Removed the upper age limit and qualification level on who can undertake an apprenticeship, which means existing staff can also be apprentices.
- Introduced a Public Services target - 2.3% increase of new apprentice to starts in the workforce each financial year, which equates to 14 apprenticeships per year for RBFRS.
- Introduced the option for employers to become apprenticeship training providers. RBFRS have decided not to pursue this route initially, other than to support control room staff, subject to agreement by the joint committee.





Volatility of Funding

There is a strong relationship between funding and people; therefore, it is important to acknowledge the volatility of funding. The Service has recently agreed an increase in precept funding of 2.99% for 18/19. In doing so, it was acknowledged that funding for the coming years continues to be unpredictable and a key challenge for managing expenditure and there will be uncertainty around nationally negotiated pay. If the financial picture deviates significantly from current assumptions, the People Strategy may need to be revisited.

The Nolan Principles

The Nolan principles are the basis of the ethical standards expected of public office holders, and although published over 20 years ago in 1995, the seven principles still hold true. The seven principles of public life applies to anyone who works as a public office-holder and this extends to RBFRS. The seven principles are:

1. Selflessness.
2. Integrity.
3. Objectivity.
4. Accountability.
5. Openness.
6. Honesty.
7. Demonstrate leadership in support of the principles.





» STRATEGY

The People Strategy provides direction for RBFRS for the next three years and takes into account the internal and external influencing summarised in previous sections and is underpinned by the principles of the NFCC People Strategy.

This aim of this People Strategy is to improve the Service we provide to the communities of Royal Berkshire by:

- Increasing the emphasis on our responsibilities as public servant.
- Developing and valuing our people.
- Driving personal leadership.
- Attracting talent.
- Increasing diversity.
- Working in collaboration.
- Improving ways of working.

For the benefit of the communities we serve, we have identified six overarching objectives to allow us to achieve the purpose and meet our aim:

We will...

1. Recruit, train and develop people to ensure we create a safe, professional and capable workforce, who can provide a fit-for-purpose service, 24/7, 365 days a year.
2. Increase the diversity of our workforce to better represent and therefore, serve our local communities.
3. Develop people and recruit talent to take personal responsibility for leadership in the organisation to ensure a public service ethos, support collaboration and effectively deliver service improvement.
4. Develop a diverse and inclusive 'one team' culture where everyone's contribution is valued and positive behaviours are used to describe how we work together.
5. Change policies, processes and systems to ensure they enable and support the delivery of a fit for purpose, efficient and effective service to the community.
6. Continue to support both the physical and mental, health and wellbeing of our people.





» ACTION PLAN

The action plan below identifies key actions that will support delivery of the six overarching objectives. Any sub-strategies developed as part of the action plans will form appendices to this overarching People Strategy. This includes existing relevant strategies i.e. Mental Health Strategy.

Many of the actions need more detailed planning work, including assessing the sequence of activity. Actions will be scheduled initially based on priority and available capacity, but it is important to note that this is a three-year plan and sequencing may change and other actions maybe identified as progress is made.

1. Recruit, train and develop people to ensure we create a safe, professional and capable workforce, who can provide a fit for purpose service, 24/7, 365 days a year.

This objective seeks to deliver both our statutory responsibilities identified within the national framework and our legal and legislative responsibilities as an employer.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective include:

- a. Reviewing our recruitment lifecycle from pre attraction, to induction; consider target audiences, communications techniques for early engagement with communities, technology to assist the application process, criteria for selection and time from advert to induction.
- b. Reviewing role profiles for all staff to consider and future potential changes to role maps.
- c. Continuing to support the Armed Forces Covenant, by seeking to increase our level of award to gold.





- d. Embedding the workforce-planning group to enable intelligence-led decisions, which means we have the right staff available in the right places, at the right time across all staff groups.
- e. Continuing to develop the workforce planning model used to assess changes in operational staff to cover all staff groups.
- f. Continuing to focus on increasing and improving capacity and availability of staff on the retained duty system.
- g. Improving processes for monitoring crewing availability.
- h. Supporting recommendations from IRMP to help evaluate impact of alternative crewing models or duty systems.
- i. Continuing to actively engage with all representative bodies.
- j. Implementing Professional Standards.
- k. Working in collaboration to ensure the guidance, training and learning tools created by the National Operational Guidance (NOG) programme is implemented into the Service.
- l. Implementing the recommendations of the NVQ review.
- m. Implementing recommendations from the review of assessment of operational competence.
- n. Continuing to develop and refresh the core skills programme to ensure it meets the current needs of the Service.
- o. Implementing the recommendations from the review of operational assurance.
- p. Implementing Behavioural Health and Safety to support the empowerment of decision-making by staff.
- q. Conduct an equal pay review and benchmark this against previous survey findings.





2. Increase the diversity of our workforce to better represent and therefore serve our local communities.

Based on the current workforce statistics, it is clear that our workforce is not reflective of the communities we serve. There is a risk that we are not attracting the best people to work for the communities we serve if we don't make the Service accessible to all.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective include:

- a. Working with Leonard Cheshire to roll out a disability awareness workshop to all hiring managers.
- b. Continuing to support the Leonard Cheshire Change100 programme to work with disabled graduates on a 100-day intern programme.
- c. Continuing to support the EDI forum and deliver against the objectives agreed through public consultation.
- d. Continuing to work with community groups to identify pathways to recruitment.
- e. Establishing relationships with local schools and colleges to attract local apprentices.





3. Develop people and recruit talent to take personal responsibility for leadership in the organisation to ensure a public service ethos, support collaboration and effectively deliver service improvement.

This objective seeks to address some of our current challenges with succession planning and managing through change, building leadership capacity in a collaborative environment and maintaining focus on why we are here, which is to deliver a fit-for-purpose public service to the communities we serve.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective include:

- a. In order to attract and retain talent we will be reviewing our total benefits packages, market supplements rates and examine what flexible arrangements are available to all staff groups.
- b. Rewarding staff for excellence in public service, leadership, collaboration.
- c. Reviewing promotion processes and establish mechanism to proactively manage succession planning from both inside and outside the organisations.
- d. Seizing opportunities to attract talent into the Service at all levels.
- e. Developing career pathways across all staff groups across the organisation.
- f. Developing an apprenticeship programme to develop existing staff.
- g. Continuing to develop the middle managers development leadership programme and align developing leadership programme from the NFCC.
- h. Continuing to support national development programmes such as Executive Leadership Programme (ELP).
- i. Developing and implement a supervisory level leadership development programme.
- j. Supporting personal development by implementing a bursary scheme.
- k. Creating a framework for coaching and mentoring.
- l. Creating a core skills training session for collaboration skills.





4. Develop a diverse and inclusive 'one team' culture where everyone's contribution is valued and positive behaviours are used to describe how we work together.

The objectives seeks to advocate the benefits of diversity and inclusion. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated in RBFRS, but we have to acknowledge that right now we don't always know if it is occurring. We want to encourage openness and value our differences. By defining what RBFRS staff think are positive behaviours, we want to make it easy to see what a 'one team' culture looks like. Working as a single team all pulling in the same direction must benefit the communities we serve.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective include:

- a. We will have zero tolerance against bullying and harassment towards RBFRS staff.
- b. Providing alternative ways for people to feedback workplace concerns that increases the openness of the Service.
- c. Building on the existing behaviours work to develop a behavioural framework, which through consultation can form part of the PDI process and ensure there is a common understanding of what positive behaviours are.
- d. Updating corporate communications to move away from language that describes people by what they wear or what their terms and conditions are.
- e. Developing internal communication, including reviewing the Communication and Engagement Strategy.
- f. Developing a programme of staff engagement, including running regular annual staff surveys.
- g. Creating opportunities for cross-functional working through the projects and programmes of activity.
- h. Supporting the continued use of action learning for leadership cohorts.
- i. Where appropriate ensuring training is delivered to multi-functional groups.
- j. For significant recruitment and selection campaigns, ensuring representation from a cross-section of managers.
- k. Achieving Investors in People to help monitor the effectiveness of action plans.





5. Change policies processes and systems to ensure they enable and support the delivery of a fit-for-purpose, efficient and effective service to the community.

Many of our policies replicate across the three predominant staff groups which can create unnecessary bureaucracy. We currently have in excess of 400 policies, which is in part, the legacy of years of hierarchal decision-making. Many of our processes are manual and previously, the technological infrastructure just wasn't there to support better electronic ways of working. We have tried and failed to implement business process improvement, but this time we will adopt a different approach. The aim is to empower people to deliver services to the community, which we believe will increase our effectiveness.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective include:

- a. Establishing a prioritised list of policies for review and developing a plan to remove or update policies with the aim that they will be principle based and where possible, sufficiently generic to cover all people regardless of terms and conditions.
- b. Reviewing terms and conditions to ensure they are fit-for-purpose for the communities we serve and fair and reasonable to RBFRS people.
- c. Working with external suppliers initially to undertake a programme of process improving which will ultimately lead to a culture of continuous improvement within teams.
- d. Developing additional core skills courses for continuous improvement and business process improvement.
- e. Aligning the ICT Strategy to enable the process improvement programme.





6. Continue to support both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our people.

We have an established Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, which has contributed to a reduction in sickness absence. We have recently created an award winning Mental Health Strategy, but we have only just started to implement the actions and we don't know if the great strategy will translate to better mental health and wellbeing. We recognise that during periods of change and uncertainty, workplace stress can increase and with an ageing workforce, the physical demands of the operational role have to be accounted for. We have already seen success in both areas, but it is essential we continue to support people.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective include:

- a. Striving to continue to reduce time lost to sickness absence and support employees to return to the workplace quicker following injury or illness.
- b. Maintain our strong performance in attaining fitness levels amongst operational staff.
- c. Developing and implementing recommendations based on feedback from the Health, Safety and Wellbeing staff survey.
- d. Continuing to implement the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.
- e. Implementing the action plan in support of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- f. Ensuring that our workplaces meet health and safety requirements and the design and refurbishment of buildings, wherever possible, meet access, gender and religious needs, together with the ability to support flexible working arrangements.

» **APPROVAL**

Approved by the Senior Leadership Team on 6 March.





» CONTACT US

IN AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency, dial 999 and ask for the fire service.

If you are inside a building when a fire starts, remember to get out, stay out and call us out.

Never try and put out a fire unless you have received sufficient training.

CONTACTING US WHEN IT'S NOT AN EMERGENCY

 Visit our website: www.rbfrs.co.uk

 Email us at: reception@rbfrs.co.uk

 Call us on: 0118 945 2888

 Write to us at: Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 7SD



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