

# Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

## People Strategy 2018-22

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# Introduction

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to **working together, saving lives and reducing harm**. Our objectives and plans focus on home safety, road safety, assisting businesses, responding to emergencies, and protecting the wider community from the impact of major events.

In doing so we recognise the need to have a highly skilled and motivated workforce. The People Strategy draws out the main drivers for change over the next four years and how we will support everyone that works for us to maintain and enhance their achievements and help the organisation achieve its objectives.

Over the next four years we will continue to be more flexible in the design of duty systems and contract types. Working with a variety of partners we are providing a wider range of services to our customers and that has implications for professional development, wellbeing and how we work. If we are to build on our success we need to develop new leadership skills and attract a diversity of thinking and skills.

To help us define and plan improvements we have agreed six key areas:

- To recruit and develop the right leaders with the right skills to support organisational change and support community outcomes.
- To develop cultural values and behaviours which make Kent Fire and Rescue Service a great place to work.
- To develop ways of working that are able to respond to service needs (internally and externally).
- To provide excellent learning, training and education to ensure that a high quality service is provided to customers of all types.
- To provide support and guidance to everyone that works for us to maintain and improve their health and wellbeing.
- To strengthen our ability to provide an excellent service by creating a fair and inclusive place to work, with people who have a wide variety of backgrounds and skills.

## Consultation and Support

The successful implementation of this Strategy depends on the buy-in and energetic support of everyone concerned. We have therefore consulted widely and, as we take forward the Strategy, we will encourage everyone that works for us to get involved in implementing the action plan.

# The Evolution from the Workforce Strategy to the People Strategy

To support the development of the People Strategy 2018-22 it is helpful to reflect on how its development has evolved through the achievements of our previous Workforce Strategy. The previous strategy covered 2013-18 and focused on five key areas:

- Organisational Development (including succession planning and career management).
- Employee Development and Training.
- Flexible Resourcing and Workforce Planning.
- The Employment Package.
- Equality and Wellbeing.

## Organisational Development

This area focused on taking a planned approach to continuously improving organisational performance through the involvement of its people. It encompassed organisational change, culture, managing performance, employee engagement and communications.

Key achievements:

- We have developed our managers’ skills to support them to carry out effective performance management, e.g. “let’s talk” programme, behaviour framework.
- We carried out a cultural audit in 2015. As a result of this audit we have changed a number of our internal processes, e.g. promotion and selection, appraisal. The audit also identified the organisation’s desire to better understand and be involved in change initiatives, and this has resulted in greater engagement with everyone that works for us regarding change.
- We continued to seek to find ways to reduce the administrative burden on staff through a “Smarter Working” approach which has resulted in the elimination of application forms, paper appraisals and certain pay/claim forms.
- We have placed a greater emphasis on sickness management by supporting managers to understand their role in the process, educating them in the procedure and supporting them to take an early intervention approach. This is one of the main factors which has supported an overall reduction in our sickness figures.

### Sickness absence rate - % of time lost to sickness

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Operational*</b>	3.55%	2.86%	3.23%	2.67%	2.91%
<b>Service Support</b>	1.90%	1.35%	2.53%	2.36%	2.17%
<b>All Staff</b>	<b>3.25%</b>	<b>2.57%</b>	<b>3.11%</b>	<b>2.62%</b>	<b>2.78%</b>

\*On-call sickness is not included in these figures

## **Employee Development and Training**

In an environment of reducing operational demand firefighters have less exposure to emergency incidents than they have had historically and, with changing ways of working, they are less able to have time away from stations to attend formal training courses. With the increasing focus on collaborative working the role of a firefighter is significantly changing.

Key achievements:

- We have embedded the JESIP<sup>1</sup> principles into all our incident command training. This has included the inter-agency training of Corporate Management Board and all Brigade and Area managers. We have also embedded the principles into our tactical firefighting training.
- We have developed a more blended learning approach to training delivery, but there is more to do. So far, this has included the development of our suite of eLearning packages and encouraging experiential learning through station-based training and service exercises.
- We have placed emphasis back on carrying out the training, and only recording usable information for continued learning. After feedback from our customers, we have removed our personal competency recording system and linked competency sign-off to the annual appraisal process.
- We have, through collaborative working with SECAmb, widened our Emergency Medical Response capability using the existing skills of firefighters in this area, and provided additional refresher training to build confidence.

## **Flexible Resourcing and Workforce Planning**

Through the Variable Crewing project we have been able to explore different ways of working which bring about service improvement and effective resourcing models through the use of equipment and people.

Key Achievements:

- Flexible rostering has now been rolled out to all wholetime stations and Control. The introduction of this rota system has devolved responsibility for their crewing arrangements to stations. The system has enable the Authority to reduce its operational establishment and thus has generated a significant saving. The Table below provides details of the cost and staff savings made through this project.

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme – an approach to working collaboratively to resource multi-agency and/or complex incidents

## Savings Derived from the Flexible Rostering Project

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Total
<b>Station Nos</b>	586	574	541	521	503	494	
<b>Reduction</b>	-	(12)	(33)	(20)	(18)	(9)	(92)
	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)
<b>Staffing Budget</b>	22,851	22,185	21,049	20,015	19,368	19,035	
<b>Reduction</b>		(666)	(1,136)	(1,034)	(647)	(333)	(3,816)

- We have introduced a Central Resourcing team who support the day to day crewing deficiencies in an effective and efficient way.
- We have introduced a new peripatetic team, known as the 5<sup>th</sup> watch, who are used to “plug gaps” on wholetime stations. The deployment of the 5<sup>th</sup> watch to a station enables everyone based at that station to train as a team without making the fire engine unavailable.

## The Employment Package

In order to support the changing demands for the service and the changing shape of its workforce we recognised that we need to consider different contractual offers and to harmonise terms and conditions of employment. One of our drivers is for the Service to be considered an “Employer of Choice”.

Key achievements:

- We have reviewed our on-call contracts and introduced a number of initiatives to improve the availability and management of on-call stations. This has included the introduction of a managerial allowance which enables on-call stations to have wholetime managerial support, who provide operational knowledge through their greater exposure to incidents. We have also introduced a new enhanced pay scheme to support the crewing of on-call stations at risk-critical times, i.e. daytime hours.
- Historically we have a number of departments that have a mixture of Green and Grey Book staff, and this brings some disparities in pay and terms and conditions. We have proactively sought to harmonise these teams with the transition of a number of Grey Book roles to Green. This will however take time as we have chosen to do this through natural wastage. The Table below shows this gradual transition in our Community Safety and Technical Fire Safety teams.

## Ratio of Grey to Green in Community Safety and Technical Fire Safety

Ratio grey to green	01-Apr-10	01-Apr-11	01-Apr-12	01-Apr-13	01-Apr-14	01-Apr-15	01-Apr-16	01-Apr-17
CFS	32.8%	34.1%	34.1%	31.5%	31.1%	33.7%	31.9%	29.9%
TFS	49.0%	50.0%	46.2%	47.6%	46.3%	42.9%	42.2%	38.2%

- We have created a Day Duty system which eliminates the old Grey Book duty system known as 'nine-day fortnight'. In doing this we have harmonised working days across teams with a mixture of Green and Grey Book employees, i.e. Grey Book no longer work nine days in a fortnight, but they now work five days per week - the same as their Green Book colleagues.
- We have reviewed and removed the payment of communications allowance to Flexible Duty Officers. Also, with the introduction of new technology, we have sought to remove this allowance from those staff being paid it by issuing service phones with multimedia capability.

## Equality and Wellbeing

It is our aim to provide an environment where everyone that works for us is comfortable about who they are, is treated with dignity and respect, and recognises the value that difference can bring to the organisation. One of our top priorities is to support people regarding their health and wellbeing. We believe that a healthy working environment aids the health and wellbeing of everyone that works for us.

Key achievements:

- We have spent significant time in developing a number of psychological support packages for everyone. This includes an external service that provides a variety of different support options that can be tailored to an individual's needs. We have also focused on raising awareness of mental health and removing the stigma that surrounds mental health issues. To support this we have introduced eLearning packages and promoted individual's stories through case studies, with their permission. The impact of this has been that we have seen an increase in requests for help, and a wider conversation and acceptance of mental health issues.
- We have updated our sensitive data records. We carried out a campaign to increase understanding of why we gather and record this data. The result of this was that we had 70% of our people declaring their information, far more than previously.
- We know that our workforce is ageing and with this comes the potential for more injuries. We have therefore put in place a number of educational programmes to support people to maintain backs and upper/lower limbs, e.g. exercise videos, wellbeing clinics. Also through the Ops Capability project we have bought lighter and more portable equipment such as cutting gear and BA sets.
- Our establishment continues to be predominantly white and male. With limited recruitment into the wholetime role we have focused on recruitment to our on-call sections, volunteers and apprentices. In doing this we are starting to make significant changes to our profile as the Table below demonstrates.

	Jun 2011	Jan 2018
<b>Operational people that are women</b>	5.7%	6.8%
<b>Senior Management roles held by women</b>	25.0%	40.9%
<b>Those declaring disability</b>	5.3%	8.6%
<b>Ethnic Minority Staff</b>	2.8%	4.2%
<b>Staff declaring faith or religion</b>	72.3%	68.1%
<b>Staff declaring sexuality</b>	44.9%	68.8%

Through the implementation of the Workforce Strategy we have been able to put in place a sound foundation which has informed and supported the development of our new People Strategy. The People Strategy will now use this foundation, in conjunction with national and local drivers, to continue to support a workforce which is able to deliver the services required by the communities of Kent and Medway.

# The Key Drivers of the People Strategy

Our People Strategy is shaped by what we are trying to achieve in Kent, the expectations which the Government has for our sector, and other external change factors.

This Strategy aligns with the national workforce strategy. The national drivers as stated in the National Fire Chiefs' Council Workforce Strategy are:



The role of the Service has changed significantly in the past ten years with the overall reduction of fires, greater collaborative working with partner agencies, and an increased emphasis on national resilience. All of these shape how and what services we provide and how we support and train everyone that works for us to deliver them. This People Strategy therefore needs to consider our changing role in order to deliver what will be required of the Service in the next four years.

## Key Principles of the People Strategy

In order to support the delivery of this Strategy we have adopted and developed 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 everyone that works for us so they understand the needs and differences of our communities.
- Firefighter safety and the safety of everyone that works for us is important to us.
- We will provide clarity on the decision-making levels, accountability and processes without unnecessary hierarchy.
- We will provide clarity on whether our people have a consultative or decisive voice in each exercise or project.
- We will focus on clear and consistent communication of key messages using a wide range of engagement methods.
- We will develop an internal customer service culture and make processes easy to use for people, using self-service wherever possible, and encouraging an attitude of supporting each other to break down barriers between different areas of our organisation.
- We will support wellbeing and take specific actions to attack stigma about taboo issues such as mental health, transgender issues, and menopause.
- Leadership at all levels will understand situational needs – balancing authority, facilitation and coaching, and being a “change agency”.
- Career paths will be opened that more readily allow talent to rise to the most senior roles irrespective of their terms and conditions on entry.
- We will maturely recognise that failure is part of growth and learning and is to be welcomed.
- We will sharpen our focus on organisational learning so we learn lessons and use that learning to challenge underlying principles or processes.
- We will build trust between us all to allow constructive disagreement and challenge to be seen as part of a positive culture.
- We will provide learning and development which has a demonstrable impact in terms of behaviour change and is testable over time.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

**What do these terms mean in KFRS:**

**Equality** is defined in law (The Equality Act (2010), General Equality Duty, to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act) and is about ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are not treated less favourably on the basis of their specific protected characteristic, including areas of race, gender,

disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and age.

**Diversity** is about promoting and fostering everybody's right to be different, about being free from discrimination, valued as an individual, and having choice and dignity with a right to your own beliefs and values. 'Diversity' is a word that means 'varied and different'. Diversity, therefore, is about more than equality. It is about creating a culture which values individual differences and encourages people to be themselves at work.

**Inclusion** refers to an individual's experience within the workplace and in wider society, and the extent to which they feel valued and included. We also want to make Inclusion a reality and reach out to hard-to-reach communities and those who have hidden vulnerabilities, such as female genital mutilation, modern slavery, child sexual exploitation and many more.

Within this Strategy we want to encourage people to bring themselves to work without the need to hide their sexuality, mental health state, quirks, or individual traits. We want to build a representative workforce (gender and race particularly) and support the development of under-represented groups.

Diversity is a reality – Inclusion is a choice. The dictionary definition gives the clue to the principle: 'the act of including someone or something as part of a group, list, etc., or a person or thing that is included'. It requires an act to include. Therefore we want to promote behaviours which seek to include all in conversation, in opportunities, in offering an opinion. It also means working with partners to reach people in our communities who are vulnerable and ensuring that they receive our services.

We value diversity and we recognise that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge and culture, and that this difference brings great strength.

We believe that discrimination or exclusion based on individual characteristics and circumstances, such as age; disability; caring or dependency responsibilities; gender or gender identity; marriage and civil partnership status; political opinion; pregnancy and maternity; race, colour, caste, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sexual orientation; socio-economic background; trade union membership status or other distinctions, represents a waste of talent and a denial of opportunity for a great career.

In order to improve the way we deliver services to our communities we want to increase the diversity of our workforce. Whilst we have improved in this area, we know that we can do more and recognise that patterns of under-representation and differences in outcomes in KFRS can be challenged through positive action programmes.

# Inspiring Leaders

We need to ensure that we train and develop our leaders to support the delivery of this Strategy. Our Leadership Framework defines the qualities required at each level of management and offers a suite of learning and development opportunities which will support our next generation of leaders

## KFRS Leadership and Management Development Model – A Modular Programme



In setting this framework, we recognise that in our career we have never ‘made it’ or reached the finish line – there is always something we can focus on to improve. This means a change in focus from outputs to outcomes – leadership is not defined by what courses we have attended or what qualifications we have achieved, but instead by the difference we are making to the people around us and to the performance of the team and organisation. The framework brings together the ‘what and the how’, combining traditional operational and professional competence with behavioural expectations.

## How We Plan to Deliver the People Strategy

Over the next four years we want to continue our work in being more flexible, diverse, and integrated with partners, and professionally expert across a wider skill-set so we can create better outcomes for customers. We want people to enjoy their work and have fulfilling careers in KFRS and give their best.

We all want to achieve the best customer service for our communities and we have people who feel they want to provide that service. Effective delivery requires an increasing diversity of skills, ideas and people who then deserve to feel they can contribute, with equality and fairness as a given. Attracting applicants into our Service without attention being given to our culture and attitude to wellbeing will mean that we perpetuate problems or lose good people.

KFRS is not a single model employer with only office-based part- and full-time staff, thus there are unique challenges where we employ people in a range of on-call and part-time roles. We need to continue to work to be truly inclusive and adaptive and consider how the wide range of non-full time employed staff are incorporated fully, fairly and with due consideration into those plans.

None of this can be achieved without excellent leadership at all levels and the underpinning attention to processes and support mechanisms. The six areas of focus for this People Strategy are below.



It is believed that this Strategy will deliver the following measurable outcomes:

- To support the increased health and wellbeing of staff which will be seen through the reduction of long term sickness absence cases, reduction in PTSD cases, very low RIDDOR cases and the embedding of the philosophy of health and wellbeing in all working practices, internally and externally.
- To continue to ensure that the values of openness, honesty and trust are embedded into our culture, so everyone that works for us feels able to challenge, volunteer new ideas and feel heard.
- To ensure that unnecessary processes are eliminated and that we get the best use of resources.
- To ensure that everyone that works for us is trained to the highest level in order to ensure the services they deliver are the best that they can be.
- To create a work environment where everyone that works for us feels that they work in a workplace which is free from bullying and harassment, and considers us an Employer of Choice.

We wish to continue to develop and implement this Strategy with the support, buy-in and help of our staff. We see this Strategy as a live document that we will continuously review, amend and add to, but with strong governance arrangements so that the reasons for change, and the benefits sought, are set out at the beginning.

We also have a good working relationship with the local representatives of our recognised unions. We will continue to work with them in order to seek early resolution of issues and to support the delivery of this Strategy.

## Annex A: Action Plan 2018-22

Ref	Action	Owner	Target date
1	Be able to demonstrate the clear benefits of learning and how it adds value to the services provided to our customers.	Sue Flavin	March 2022
2	Continue to support the corporate wellbeing agenda.	Karen Irvine	March 2022
3	Ensure that everyone has the right skills to deliver the corporate plan.	Sue Flavin	March 2022
4	Ensure that the organisation recruitment processes provide a positive customer experience.	Karen Irvine	March 2022
5	Ensure that we keep up to date with changing technology and practices so that we can deliver effective and efficient learning.	Sue Flavin	March 2022
6	Procure and implement a new OH provider whose services will meet the needs of the Service and complement the corporate wellbeing agenda.	Karen Irvine	July 2018
7	Support and develop the organisation's understanding of Inclusion.	Karen Irvine	March 2022
8	Support everyone so they can deliver the diversification of our core services.	Karen Irvine	March 2022
9	Support the corporate focus on ensuring that services delivered by HR and L&D are customer-focused.	Karen Irvine	March 2022
10	Support the delivery of operational service by reviewing the On-call duty system.	Sue Flavin	March 2022

Ref	Action	Owner	Target date
11	Support the empowerment and devolution of our managers.	Karen Irvine	March 2022
12	Support the organisation through the procurement of a new time and attendance system, which will support the effective delivery of operational services.	Karen Irvine	March 2020
13	Support the organisation to become an Employer of Choice in order that it can attract and retain talent.	Karen Irvine	March 2022