



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
Fire and Rescue Service

# Cultural Improvement Plan



# Introduction and Background

This cultural improvement plan for North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) has been developed to address the cultural themes highlighted in the recent cultural review report commissioned by NWFRS and delivered by CREST. Building on the progress already made, the plan focuses on strengthening areas such as accountability, transparency, and leadership behaviours. It outlines practical actions to enhance trust, promote fairness in recruitment and promotion, and invest in the ongoing development of all staff.

In addition, the plan seeks to further support a diverse and inclusive workforce, reinforce health, safety, and wellbeing, and ensure that processes for managing misconduct and grievances are fair, consistent, and effective.

While recognising the significant cultural improvements achieved since the appointment of the current Chief Fire Officer in June 2021, the plan also acknowledges that some behaviours continue to challenge progress. Continued focus and commitment will be essential to sustaining and embedding positive cultural change across the organisation.



# Key Objectives

1. To build a workplace culture that is open, accountable, inclusive, and supportive, where positive practices and improvements become part of everyday working life.
2. To continue acting on the areas for improvement highlighted in the CREST report, along with feedback gathered through internal mechanisms.
3. Implement clear, targeted actions to guide and support these improvements.
4. To make sure responsibilities for delivering each part of the plan are clearly understood and well supported by relevant committees.
5. To monitor progress through ongoing strategic reviews, with regular updates provided to the Culture Improvement Board to ensure the plan remains effective, responsive, and aligned with organisational priorities.



# Key Strategic Themes

## Bolstering Accountability and Building Trust

**Context:** The CREST report highlighted opportunities to improve accountability, leadership visibility, and decision making. It also noted that greater transparency and clearer communication could help strengthen confidence in senior leaders' commitment to ongoing cultural improvement.

### **Actions:**

1. We are committed to leading positive cultural change by example, promoting openness, accountability, and humility in everything we do. This includes learning from the past and continuing to build trust through consistent actions that reflect our shared values.
2. Exploration of a Performance Monitoring Officer role and Cultural Champions will be undertaken, alongside consideration of working with independent culture-change specialists to support continuous improvement and inclusivity across all levels of the Service. This will include reviewing tools such as 360-degree appraisals to promote open and constructive feedback.
3. Engagement with staff groups and departments across the organisation will continue, enabling us to gather feedback and keep this Cultural Improvement Plan live and responsive. Progress against key recommendations will be shared openly so everyone can see how we are moving forward together.
4. We will continue to welcome and encourage Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) members to take an active part in NWFRS processes and working groups, supporting shared learning, greater transparency, and enhanced accountability.
5. The Core Code of Ethics will be implemented, ensuring its principles are embedded across all aspects of our work.

# Ensuring Recruitment, Promotion and Transfer are Fair and Transparent

**Context:** The CREST report highlighted that some staff have concerns around transparency and understanding of positive action, promotion, and transfer processes. These concerns include perceptions of potential bias and uncertainty about fairness. This feedback provides an important opportunity for us to strengthen trust and clarity across the organisation.

## Actions:

6. We will develop and publish a clear Strategy that sets out NWFRS's approach, particularly in recruitment and selection, to improve understanding of why diversity matters and how positive action supports a fair and inclusive workforce.
7. We will increase awareness of positive action initiatives and track progress
8. We will establish a transfer policy and review all promotion policies and procedures to ensure consistent feedback and introduce a more robust evaluation process, including options for independent quality assurance of promotion and transfer decisions.

# Investing in Every Individual's Development

**Context:** There is a recognised need to strengthen training and development opportunities across all staff groups. In particular, colleagues have highlighted opportunities to enhance people management skills and to ensure that corporate staff have equitable access to development and progression opportunities alongside operational staff.

## Actions:

9. We will review and enhance corporate staff development pathways, incorporating staff feedback, recognising existing skills and accredited learning, and promoting opportunities for horizontal progression.
10. The appraisal policy and process will undergo review to strengthen their focus on continuous professional development. This may include exploring options such as short-term detachments or job swaps with other services, and introducing a system to track development requests following appraisals.
11. Options for offering targeted training for managers will be explored, helping them identify and respond effectively to welfare concerns, including those related to mental health, neurodiversity, and work-life balance.

# Fostering a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce

**Context:** We recognise the importance of strengthening our approach to diversity, inclusion, and ethical leadership. There is an opportunity to broaden the public image of the fire and rescue service, increase diversity of thought and experience, and consider adopting the Core Code of Ethics ensuring these principles are fully embedded in everything we do.

## Actions:

12. A review of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training content and delivery will be undertaken, taking account of staff feedback and recommendations from the All Wales PODG and its 2025–2030 strategy. This will include incorporating mandatory training on neurodiversity and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV).
13. We will review operational competencies and succession planning for senior roles (Strategic Manager/Area Manager and above) to explore ways of opening opportunities to a wider and more diverse pool of candidates, including those without traditional firefighting backgrounds.
14. The potential introduction of a reverse mentoring scheme will be explored to help reduce hierarchical barriers, encourage open dialogue, and support mutual learning across all levels of the Service.
15. We will take steps to ensure Integrated Impact Assessments are meaningful and completed at the very start of any new policy, strategy, plan, or major decision to understand potential impacts early, so we can make informed, fair, and inclusive choices. We'll also review our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion data practices to keep meeting legal requirements and the expectations of our people.
16. Proactive work through social partnership with representative bodies via the Joint Consultation & Negotiation Committee (JCNC) will continue, supporting shared projects that contribute to cultural growth and inclusivity.



# Improving Health, Safety and Wellbeing

**Context:** Staff have shared concerns relating to health and safety, particularly following changes to auditing processes and the disbanding of the Professional Service Standards (PSS) department. There have also been comments about the need for greater focus and capacity in safeguarding, more consistent support for colleagues on long-term mental health leave, and reassurance around speaking up without fear of negative consequences.

## Actions:

17. A review of health and safety arrangements will be considered, including trends before and after the disbanding of the PSS department, to ensure robust and effective practices remain in place.
18. We will review our safeguarding policy and processes, including capacity, training, and staff understanding of when and how to raise safeguarding concerns.
19. Wellbeing roles such as Blue Light Champions and Colleague Support roles will continue to be promoted and supported, strengthening the network of peer support.
20. We review current provisions of the management of long-term sickness and implement any improvements identified.
21. Confidential channels for raising concerns, including internal mechanisms and SafeCall will continue to be maintained and promoted, with ongoing efforts to build awareness of how to use them. Support for those who raise concerns will also be reviewed, and learning and good practice will be shared appropriately to reinforce continuous improvement.



# Improving Misconduct and Grievance Handling

**Context:** Concerns were raised about underreporting, inconsistent responses, and limited transparency around outcomes, leading to perceptions that certain behaviours were not always addressed appropriately. Additionally, there were concerns about potential disproportionality in how proceedings were managed.

## Actions:

22. We will seek to implement best practice standards, including the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Fire Standards on staff disclosure, complaints, grievance handling, and misconduct management. This will include ensuring that investigations are completed regardless of whether staff leave the Service, and that decisions are made in line with employment law and fairness principles.
23. External investigators will continue to be engaged for complex cases, ensuring misconduct matters are handled consistently, transparently, and lawfully through a robust case management system. Alongside this, ongoing development and diversification of internal panel members (including FRA) will be prioritised.
24. We will continue to make use of external mediators for complex cases, while developing the use of in-house mediators for other matters to encourage early, constructive resolution and learning.
25. We will continue to review discipline and grievance data to identify trends, learning opportunities, and any potential disproportionality relating to protected characteristics. This information will also be reported to the Welsh Government on a regular basis to support accountability and transparency.
26. Sharing learning from misconduct cases will be introduced, promoting continuous improvement while protecting privacy and sensitivity.
27. Policies relating to complaints, discipline, and grievance procedures will be reviewed and updated, ensuring they are clear, fair, and inclusive. The use of exit interviews and other feedback mechanisms will also be evaluated to ensure they support transparency and provide valuable insights reflective of the workforce's diversity.

