



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

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Freedom of Information request reference number: 7249.2

Date of response: 17 April 2023

Request:

A copy of the LFB summarised, depersonalised review of report 'An Independent Review of People Services at The London Fire Brigade, By Dr Jenny Simnett, 31 January 2023'.

Response:

Please find attached copy of the summary of findings from the Independent Review of People Services at The London Fire Brigade.

This document is a depersonalised review of the report produced by Dr Jenny Simnett on 31 January 2023 entitled '*An Independent Review of People Services at The London Fire Brigade*'.

The release of the full report has already been considered in a previous FOI response published here:

https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/media/7436/72491_response.pdf

We have dealt with your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. For more information about this process please see the guidance we publish about making a request [on our website](#).



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

An Independent Review of People Services at London Fire Brigade

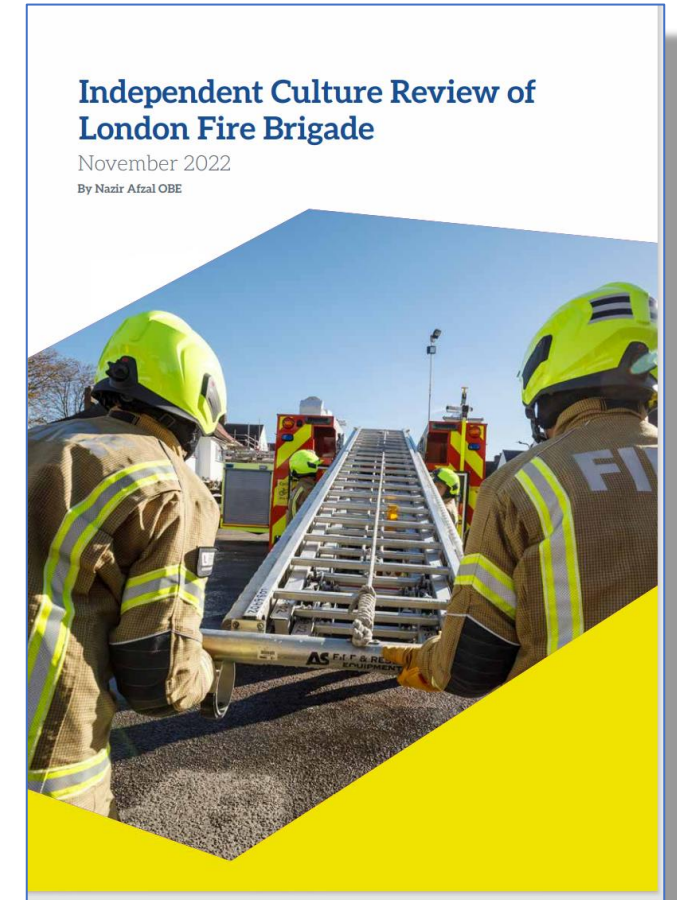
Summary of Findings

March 2023



People Services Review February 2023

- **Dr Jenny Simnett** was appointed as an independent consultant following the Independent Culture Review to conduct a review of People Services.
- Between 22 December and 31 January, Jenny met with over **120 people** across Operations, Control and all FRS directorates, including People Services. Jenny also observed many meetings, boards and team meetings, including being beamed into several fire stations.
- She consulted **all key interfaces** with People Services, including trade unions and employee support groups.
- She received **live demonstrations** of all people systems – both existing and anticipated.



Good practice to celebrate

We have many **experienced and talented staff** who are committed to LFB and work hard to navigate our hierarchical and bureaucratic culture

There are **areas of good practice** which are commended by colleagues:

- Outreach
- People Partners
- People data
- Wellbeing
- Counselling & Trauma Services
- Leadership Academy

One of the positives is that there is great talent and a huge appetite to solve the issues, but it needs to be collaborative from across the organisation and focus on outcomes.



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Findings



12 themes

People
Strategy

OD & culture

Learning &
professional
dev

Change
management

EDI &
wellbeing

Recruitment

People data &
digital strategy

HR policies &
case
management

Workforce
planning

Rebuild trust
and reputation

Promotions

Learning and
Development

We need to rebuild trust in and the reputation of People Services

Findings

- There is **no single People Strategy**, instead activities are driven by at least five separate plans. This leads to confused priorities, project overload, lack of outcomes, poor implementation, and long delays. Responsibilities also overlap between teams or there are gaps.
- There are too many meetings and too much reporting, at the expense of effective delivery and outcomes
- There is a need to be more **transparent and fair** around processes like promotions.
- **Knowing who can help** and **long delays** in process are the loudest complaints.
- People Partners have been **well-received**, but their roles need clear boundaries
- **Projects move slowly** with a lot of stakeholder engagement and disagreement. Striving for consensus means there is often a focus on an ideal outcome that is hard to reach.
- There is a **mismatch** between the number of projects and the amount of resource available. Many projects do not have priorities and are not well managed.
- People want **cover over holiday periods**, in a 24/7 service

- There is a **lack of workforce planning**; the workforce planning project completes in August, but has so far only agreed a scoping workshop
- There is **no dedicated workforce planning system**; we should choose between buying an off the shelf system, or adding a module to iTrent
- **Brigade support services** are required to deliver improvements, particularly from ICT.

- People systems are **outdated, not actively managed and not integrated**.
There needs to be a strategy or plan around people digital or data.
- There is low confidence that **iTrent** will launch on time in April 2023
- Not enough **communication** to prepare the organisation for launch
- HR system **contract management** must improve, with an accountable person or team in place.
- **Reporting** is becoming onerous can distract from delivery, as it does not inform decision-making.

- **New EDI assessments** are criticised as ‘test first and train after’
- Not enough organisational learning or external benchmarking on **EDI**
- **Togetherness Strategy/Board** now cancelled and was seen as ‘over-engineered’
- **Outreach have shifted metrics** on new FFs – now there needs to be **close collaboration** between Recruitment and EDI
- Lack of **understanding of neurodiversity** both across LFB and in People Services. People Services strategy must focus on neurodiversity explicitly.
- Perceptions of insufficient focus on **prevention of mental health issues**; although there’s a new Mental Health Policy as part of the Wellbeing Strategy

- **Change** does not happen quickly enough at LFB and is not managed well, with deadlines often missed. Project management culture needed.
- **Delays** are caused by over-zealous stakeholder engagement; unclear processes; a strive for perfection; and poor project management
- Things are **over-complicated** when something simple would do the job
- People Services are not using Transformation's **project management toolkit**, and greater awareness is needed across the Brigade

- Teams within OD & Culture should be **better aligned within their department**, with a clear remit and responsibilities.
- **Performance** needs to be managed better – the performance management process is still paper-based and manual, although it will move to iTrent
- **Talent management** and **succession planning** need improvement
- **Leadership development** programmes are effective, and training is well-developed
- **LFB Behaviours** are Compassion, Togetherness and Accountability – not enough priority is given to togetherness and accountability

HR Policies & Case Management

Findings

- Only **25% of our 113 policies** are used regularly. They are all too long and complicated and should be more user-friendly
- **Long delays in case management** cause significant emotional pain to staff members. Line managers have a lack of confidence and there is a lack of structured and confident advice
- There is **no early resolution** or formal mediation service
- **Helpdesk colleagues** are often purely signposting staff elsewhere, rather than progressing or resolving the issue

- **Operational staff are frustrated by aspects of the scheduling and delivery of training**, such as training on off-duty days, night training, travel to faraway locations, last minute changes and changes to the nature of the training
- **Mandatory training is incomplete**, not monitored or enforced, and **completion rates** of cyber security and data protection training is poor
- There is no **bite-sized line manager training** which could be done on the job by managers, including on fire stations

- The **recruitment process** is not fit-for-purpose; there are delays, insufficient communication and the process is split across three teams
- Consequently, there is duplication across the organisation where some departments have set up their **own recruitment process**
- The **marketplace** for some roles is challenging with a war for talent and increased salaries



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Recommendations



Recommendations summary

These recommendations provide a new framework to operate within: a single strategy underpinned by plans and priorities; improved culture, focused teams with a clear remit, lean processes, effective policies and systems and an increased capability to resolve issues.

We'll be starting with two priorities which address our most pressing challenges:

- Improved workforce planning
- Improved employee relations

Recommendations

- Align **all team plans to an overarching People Strategy**, which has SMART objectives, and supports and is aligned to CRMP
- **Team plans** should address the recommendations in each area, for example Training, Workforce Planning, Reward, Recruitment etc.
- **Prioritise projects**, allocate project managers, identify adequate resources and develop SMART action plans with planned stakeholder engagement
- **Clarify and reconfirm team remits** and areas of responsibility
- Create a new **internal customer proposition**, including timescales and contacts

A strategic solution for workforce planning

Recommendations

- We should decide whether to procure a **separate application for workforce planning** or add on a module to iTrent
- An identified **project manager** should lead a small cross-functional working group to assess the top three workforce planning systems used by other brigades, then carry out a high-level comparison of their features/functionality and see what most closely matches the needs of the LFB.
- Consider **cost and speed** of implementation, especially to minimise the dependency on ICT support which is overstretched.

Promotions

Recommendations

- As staff perceive the promotions process to be biased and unfair, this should be reviewed
- A new process is required, which should be demonstrably fair, involve external scrutiny and should be trusted by staff

Employee relations case management

Recommendations

- **Clarify the roles** of HR Adviser, Line Manager and People Partner in respect of case management on one page to show the different accountabilities
- **Unblock and accelerate** the longest running and most severe ER cases
- **Develop HR Advisers** into generalists on core policies but also with a specialism
- Develop 20-minute-long **bite-sized learning on issue resolution** for both employees and line managers

Consolidate and simplify HR policies, so there are fewer, more accessible and coherent policies

Recommendations

- A **short template**, with a one-page process map, FAQs and form to trigger the process
- Focus on the **most used policies**
- **Separate out grievance** from bullying and harassment
- Relaunch policies in parallel with **line manager training**
- The responsibility for the creation, use and review of policies should sit in a **single team**

Bring disconnected IT systems together, add functionality and optimise self service

Recommendations

- Create a digital strategy covering **all HR systems and contract management**
- **Plan and resource iTrent** user training, champions or super users, an implementation plan and future development of iTrent
- **Review all People Services reporting output** by analysing each report by purpose, audience, producer, review forum and dependent decisions
- **Engage with ICT** to ensure that People Services is included in the organisation-wide dialogue on digital strategy.

Streamlining of key HR processes

Recommendations

- **Consolidate** activity into ideally one recruitment team
- **Streamline** and automate the recruitment process; create a process map
- **Prioritise** all open positions as high, medium or low
- Use more **functionality** of the Applicant Tracking System to realise more benefits
- **Redesign the EDI training** and assessment so it is more effective
- Create a one-page checklist for **induction and onboarding**
- To be followed by promotion and other HR processes