



STAFFORDSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

HMICFRS Action Plan

FINAL Internal Audit Report 5.25/26

21 May 2026

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

An advisory review was undertaken following a His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection at Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service as part of the approved internal audit plan for 2025/26. The objective of the review was to review the five Areas for Improvement (AFI's) and the progress made since the HMICFRS inspection including whether sufficient evidence is in place to support those actions identified as completed. This has not included an assessment of the adequacy of areas reviewed and if this meets the requirements of the HMICFRS.

The five AFIs include Safeguarding, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Quality Assurance, Equality Impact Assessments and Talent Progression. AFIs are reviewed and signed off by the Service Delivery Board upon their completion.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service operates within a statutory framework set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and is overseen by the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority. Strategic direction and oversight are provided through the Commissioner's Office, with day-to-day operational responsibilities delegated to the Chief Fire Officer and the Service Leadership Team.

This review was undertaken on an advisory basis and has therefore not resulted in a formal opinion.

Conclusion

Overall, we found that the service has made good progress in addressing the AFIs reviewed, with actions completed and supported by appropriate evidence through established governance arrangements. Clear action tracking was in place, progress was regularly reported to the relevant boards, and formal sign-off was obtained from the Service Delivery Board. This included the introduction of strengthened quality assurance processes, assurance dashboards, mandated training requirements and increased awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service should continue to embed and monitor the effectiveness of the new processes moving forwards.

Review of HMICFRS Actions Against Evidence

HMICFRS Action	Responsible officer	Status update and evidence provided
<p>AFI One</p> <p>The service should make sure all staff understand how to identify vulnerability and safeguard vulnerable people.</p>	<p>Ian Read</p> <p>Head of Prevent, Protect and Partnerships</p> <p>(Area Manager)</p>	<p>An action tracker included five actions to facilitate completion of the AFI. Regular updates were made against the actions between December 2024 up to the sign off in 2026.</p> <p>We confirmed action 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D and 1E were completed this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting the proposed training plan to both the Safeguarding Board and the Prevent and Protect Board (P & P Board). • Implementation of the P & P board's decision to mandate Level 2 Safeguarding Training for all operational staff. • Tracking the effectiveness of the training via a survey of staff who have completed the training.
<p>AFI Two</p> <p>The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance (QA) process, so that staff carry out audits to a consistent standard (This AFI relates to Protection Activity).</p>	<p>Ian Read</p> <p>Head of Prevent, Protect and Partnerships</p> <p>(Area Manager)</p>	<p>An action tracker included five actions to facilitate completion of the AFI. Regular updates were made against the actions between May 2025 up to the sign off in 2026.</p> <p>We confirmed action 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d were completed and action 2e superseded this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of a quality assurance process for audits with compliance monitored through an assurance dashboard. • Updates provided to the Prevention & Protection Board (P&P) on progress • Monthly progress updates included within CPP (Prevent and Protect forum) performance updates.
<p>AFI Three</p> <p>The service should make sure all staff understand the benefits of equality, diversity, inclusion and positive action and their role in promoting them</p>	<p>David Fynn</p> <p>Equality, Diversity & Inclusion manager at Staffordshire Police & Staffordshire Fire.</p>	<p>We confirmed that the actions implemented to address AFI 3 have been completed this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) awareness sessions delivered across operational and support staff groups • The introduction of a structured delivery programme covering core EDI concepts such as positive action, unconscious bias, microaggressions, and the distinction between sex and gender, delivered through facilitated discussion, structured materials and interactive activities. • Attendance monitoring across wholetime, support staff and on-call personnel, with dedicated follow-up sessions planned to ensure full coverage. • Positive feedback collection from sessions having been consistently recorded

HMICRFS Action	Responsible officer	Status update and evidence provided
<p>AFI Four</p> <p>The service should make sure it has robust processes in place to carry out equality impact assessments and review any actions agreed as a result.</p>	<p>David Fynn</p> <p>Equality, Diversity & Inclusion manager at Staffordshire Police & Staffordshire Fire.</p>	<p>We confirmed that the actions for AFI 04 had been completed by the service this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of a strengthened quality assurance process for Equality Impact Assessments, with compliance now monitored through an established assurance dashboard. • Updates on progress to the relevant governance board. • Progress monitoring regular updates to Board as required.
<p>AFI Five</p> <p>The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.</p>	<p>James Bywater</p> <p>Head of Response (Area Manager)</p>	<p>We confirmed regular updates were made against the AFI between November 2024 up to the sign off in 2026.</p> <p>We confirmed the actions were completed this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Equality Impact Assessment being carried out to evaluate the introduction of the talent progression programme, • Service Delivery Board approval of the programme, • Production of guidance documents to support staff and management in use of the programme • Full implementation of the programme across the fire service.

GOVERNANCE

Service Delivery Board

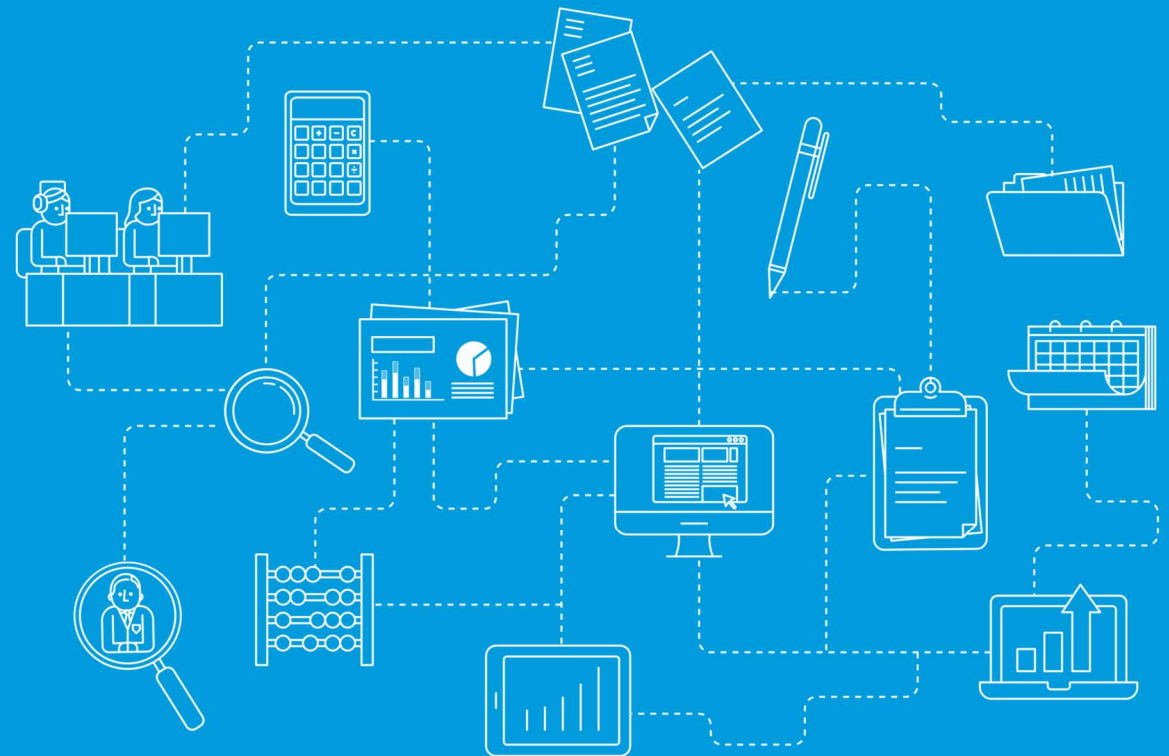
We confirmed that all AFIs tested during this audit were signed off by the Service Delivery Board in 2026 with justification for each provided within the meeting minutes.

This included regular reporting to the Service Delivery Board throughout the process of AFI completion to both update the board and seek approval for implementing new processes.

Accuracy of Reporting

We confirmed that the information provided to the Service Delivery Board by the action owners for sign off of the AFIs was in line with the evidence tested during the audit.

Appendices



APPENDIX A: SCOPE

The scope below is a copy of the original document issued.

Scope of the review

The scope was planned to provide advisory on the controls and mitigations in place relating to the following risk

Objective of the risk under review

To review the 5 AFI's and the progress made since the HMICFRS inspection including whether sufficient evidence is in place to support those actions identified as completed

When planning the audit, the following were agreed:

Areas for consideration:

- A clear action plan is in place in respect of the 5 AFI's which includes SMART actions, owners and implementation dates.
- For a sample of actions, the organisation has identified as complete we will undertake testing to ensure that sufficient evidence is in place to demonstrate delivery. As part of this we will identify if there are any gaps in the evidence to support achievement.
- Reporting and governance arrangements including sample testing of the accuracy of the information reported

Limitations to the scope of the audit assignment:

- We will not comment on the appropriateness of the action / response documented and whether this is sufficient to address the risk.
- Our review will not guarantee any future inspection grades.
- We will not guarantee that all actions will be fully embedded and continue to be in place.
- Testing will be undertaken on a sample basis.
- The results of our work are reliant on the quality and completeness of the information provided to us.
- This work was undertaken on an advisory basis and has not therefore resulted in a formal opinion
- Our work will not provide an absolute assurance that material errors, loss or fraud do not exist.

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