



Community Compass Advisory Group

Summary Minutes: 11th February 2025

MS Teams



Attendees – Non ESFRS attendees names redacted

Chair: KD

CS

TCG

JM

JS

DFCO David Norris ESFRS

Amy Morton- ESFRS

Dan Jensen ESFRS

KS

LAL

MA

NG

Natasha Barr ESFRS

Dan Jensen ESFRS

Welcome & Introductions.

KD led round table introductions, welcomed all advisors to the Community Compass Advisory Group (CCAG) And offered to share her email with all advisors to contact outside of meeting.

Action 05 DJ circulate Chair email post meeting.

Actions from previous meeting

Action 01: DJ to invite all advisors to apply for role of Chair/Co Chair and organise subsequent advisor ballot.

- DJ updated that this was organised during period of December 2024 and January 2025. KD and CW confirmed as Co-Chairs of CCAG on 13th January 2025.

Action 02: DJ/AM Ascertain the number of candidates who have attended 'Have a Go Days' and successfully completed the recruitment process, compared with those who did not.

- DJ updated that complete records were not available from the 2021 process to accurately determine this information. Where records do exist, success rates are approximately 20% for candidates who attended Have a Go Days. DJ stated that the 2025 process will include more robust data collection to include all stages in the recruitment process – not just those which are part of the National programme.

Action 03 DJ/AM Identify which stages of the recruitment process, candidates from ethnically diverse backgrounds were screened out and ascertain the reasons where possible.

- DJ updated that candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds left their recruitment journey at various stages of the process. There were no identified 'pinch point's where these candidates were disproportionately more likely to leave the process compared with other demographic groups – including those which were also subject to a positive action focus, female and LGBTQ+ candidates, respectively.

Advisors Comments

Advisors emphasised the importance of retention and progression for people from visibly diverse backgrounds, they need to feel supported, valued and encouraged at ESFRS.

Advisors asked how applications of people from neurodivergent (ND) backgrounds compared with the other areas identified for positive action – and what measures were in place to support their application, including mitigation measures to overcome 'stigma' to report. NB updated there were a variety of support measures in place to support neurodivergent candidates and colleagues: Including buddying, neurodivergent e-learning, screening via external providers and application of adjustment passports. There was also acknowledgment

around language and how ESFRS describes ND as a separate and distinct area from disability. TCG highlighted that within FRS people with ADHD/ASD were associated with much higher risk of suicide than other groups.

Advisors asked how ESFRS were planning to encourage recruitment for candidates from diverse backgrounds and suggested outreach activities into schools as part of a long-term programme to inspire younger girls from an early age to consider a career in FRS. DJ/NB described the current focus of the campaign would be to encourage women to apply for the role. This is because female firefighters within ESFRs showed the highest disproportionality compared with other characteristics. They also described several outreach strategies and online events to encourage women/girls to consider a career within FRS – including an ongoing cadet's programme and a wider 'community engagement' programme via Safer Communities team.

Action 06: NB to follow up with TCG post meeting to consider wider role of ND coaching/support within ESFRS including suicide prevention strategies.

Action 07: DJ Circulate adverts and details of online events to advisors prior to recruitment launch.

Action 04: DJ request details regarding refugee organisations & working contacts.

- DJ gratefully received contacts and signposting information for refugee and migrant support networks and duly reached out to promote the current recruitment campaign.

Overview of ESFRS sexual harassment guidance and policy

NB Described ESFRS response to recent UK Government legislation updating the Equality Act to ensure that organisations take proactive steps to combat incidents of sexual harassment (SH) within the workplace. NB described the rollout of a dedicated campaign to embed prevention strategies into ESFRS, designed to raise awareness and understanding of staff obligations within a 'psychologically safe space context.'

These included an internal communications campaign strategy, bespoke e-learn training modules and engagement from senior leaders. These strategies were supported by a new policy framework and investigation procedures including, specific development training for managers and a dedicated guidance 'toolkit' to help colleagues identify and mitigate aspects of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Advisors Comments

Advisors thanked NB and felt ESFRS approach had been thorough. They asked if considerations had been made concerning interactions/overlaps/differences involving homophobia, bi phobia or transphobia etc to other relationship dynamics and whether misandry had been a consideration as well as misogyny. NB stated that this work encompassed all areas where an asymmetric power/privilege dynamic may be a factor not just between men and women, they noted that some further research would be done to include reference to misandry prior to final publication. Mindful that this topic area was nuanced and part of a much broader conversation which was taking place societally.

Advisors asked if ESFRS had conducted any related research around staff being victims of domestic abuse and what support they had received. NB stated that although ESFRS did organise awareness activities in this area, no formal research had been conducted among staff. They highlighted that while support would be available, associated stigma could be a factor hindering people coming forwards, this reluctance would be exacerbated where both parties were employees of the same organisation.

Advisors asked how the service would respond to those occasions where people witnessing SH or other bad behaviours remain silent and, by their inaction facilitate ongoing bad behaviour. NB sought to assure advisors that this had been a consideration throughout the process, embedding the ethos that *'it's about being good when you are not being watched'* into this whole suite of activity. Care had been taken to ensure that a 'safe space' environment to foster and uphold psychological safety was created- including the anonymisation of whistle blowers where appropriate.

Standing Agenda Items

ESFRS Service Overview

Finance

DFCO updated that the ESFRS budget for 2025/26 fiscal year had been agreed and assured advisors that the priority was to maintain operational service provision at its current level. DFCO stated that financial certainty would allow the Service to plan its midterm strategy over the next 3-5 years. They clarified that the strategy is authored in consultation with representative bodies such as the Fire Brigade's Union (FBU) alongside a robust

equality impact assessment process. These plans would be available for public consultation by end of 2025 and submitted to the Fire Authority for approval on 2026.

HMICFRS

DFCO described the recent inspection process conducted by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services. This was the final part of a rolling 3-year cycle and sought to audit all aspects of ESFRS performance in relation to our effectiveness, efficiency and how well we look after our people. The inspection process lasted throughout January and ESFRS were expecting an interim report in April 2025 and would update advisors in due course.

Wholetime Recruitment Update

AM updated on progression of the recruitment process since the previous meeting, providing an overview of the timeline and describing how the various stages of the recruitment process between March and September would unfold. These stages were intricately choreographed and included pre campaign advertising, Positive Action strategy, online and physical assessment, including 'have a go days and final interview.

Any other business

- Interview panellists' expression of interest: DJ outlined the interview process which would be taking place between 29th June and 11th July and requested advisors who may be interested in being part of this to contact them directly.
- JM raised the importance of gender-neutral facilities at fire stations for those colleagues who were transitioning or transitioned and did not feel comfortable openly sharing facilities within a purely male/female context. They asked what assurances the service could provide for the transgender community? That ESFRS was a safe space where colleagues were free from harassment because who they are? DFCO agreed and noted that this request would fit within a broader conversation about creating and supporting a 'safe spaces' culture within ESFRS more generally and recommended this be part of a substantial agenda item for the next meeting.
[Action08:DJ/AM ESFRS Safe Spaces as substantive agenda item next meeting](#)
- KD recommended that for future CCAGs, advisors arrange a pre-meet 30 minutes before the meeting starts to consider any topics or agenda items–Independent of ESFRS facilitation.
- KD requested that future meetings are accompanied by associated documents at least one week prior.
- KD requested that full list of dates is provided ahead of time to allow participants to plan.