



Community Compass Advisory Group

Summary Minutes: 27th May 2025

Online via MS Teams



Attendees -Full Names Redacted

Chair: CW

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|----------|----------|
| KD | NG |
| CS | JM |
| EP | KS |
| TCG | GG |
| TA | VS |
| JD | KL ESFRS |
| DN ESFRS | JH ESFRS |
| DK ESFRS | AM ESFRS |
| DJ ESFRS | |

Apologies

LAL
MA

Welcome & Introductions.

CW led round table introductions and welcomed all advisors to the meeting .

Actions from previous meeting

DJ updated on the following actions:

Action 05 DJ circulate Chair email post meeting. This was an ongoing offer made by KD to advisors participate pre meet opportunities ahead of forthcoming CCAGs. To date, no uptake has been made- DJ will recirculate invite with the May minutes.

Action 06: NB to follow up with TCG post meeting to consider wider role of ND coaching/support within ESFRS including suicide prevention strategies. Meeting was arranged for 28.05.25

Action07:DJ Circulate adverts and details of online events to advisors prior to recruitment launch. Adverts circulated prior to publication: Adverts were circulated. DJ apologised that there was no opportunity for advisors to amend prior to publication owing to tight schedules of the current recruitment process.

Action08:DJ/AM ESFRS Safe Spaces as substantive agenda item next meeting. With agreement of Co-Chairs, agenda item was broadened to focus on external safeguarding and prevention to more widely reflect ESFRS community role. DK head of Safety and Prevention invited to attend.

ESFRS: Prevention and Safeguarding

DK introduced themselves as Head of Prevention and Safeguarding Lead for ESFRS and described how, despite this being a comparatively small department, supported by a cadre of dedicated volunteers allowed the service to achieve excellent results, which often set the benchmark standard for FRS's at the national level.

DK provided an overview of the comprehensive portfolio of activities which their department were responsible for, including how ESFRS integrated and worked closely with several community partnerships such as public health (including safety training for carers), local government, Sussex Police and by supporting Pride and other community events.

Alongside extensive work to improve and educate on road and water safety, DK described a broad range of other activity their department was responsible for, these included:

- 9000 Home fire safety visits conducted by ESFRS annually, 96% of which were referrals from partner agencies in response to vulnerability.
- The GP and ESFRS collaboration project, which allows GP surgeries to securely transfer contact details of more vulnerable patients through a data sharing agreement (compliant with GDPR protocols), facilitating subsequent 'Safe and Well' visits offered to those on the list.
- Ongoing work to support and engage with young people:
 - ESFRS recognises that Covid and post pandemic have had a significant adverse mental health affect on many younger people, leading to a 174% increase in referrals to 'Firewise', the ESFRS /local partnerships fire setting intervention team.
 - DK described wider youth engagement activity which included the 'Holiday Activity and Food' programme, 'Safety in Action' scheme (Year 6 Safety awareness) 'Watch Out'(5-day early intervention course to develop resilience, aspiration and self-awareness for younger people) and providing advice and equipment around home safety for young children.
- The Fire Cadets Programme is another important part of the ESFRS's community offering. DK described its broad reach, including working with neurodiverse young people, those with mental health issues and children referred from the Police Reboot scheme. Fire Cadets provided fun and challenging inclusive opportunities for young people to reach their full potential contributing to safer, stronger and healthier communities. There were currently three troops based at Eastbourne, Uckfield and Bexhill with 51 cadets aged 13 – 17 years.
- DK concluded by describing how ESFRS provided fire safety training for migrants as part of the services' support for Surrey and Sussex's migrant resettlement programme as well as Homes for Ukraine. Training sessions were delivered in all hotels in the service's area, housing young unaccompanied asylum seekers and for Afghan entitled migrants.

Advisor's comments

- Advisors thanked DK for their overview and agreed that there was a great deal of positive community activity which the Prevention team were involved with. Advisors asked how many cadets went on to become firefighters. DK noted that to date 3 cadets had progressed to becoming firefighters but stressed that the real power of the programme was to help prepare younger people with skills and confidence they could take into adult life. ESFRS aspired to widen its cadet programme – but as this was a voluntary scheme was dependent entirely on charitable donations to remain active.
- Advisors asked how ESFRS shared this success with other fire services nationally. DK responded that ESFRS was not protective of any content that could help to save lives and shared much of this information with others – ESFRS have won several awards based on the quality of shared preventative work it has carried out.
- Advisors noted that drowning is the leading cause of death among missing autistic children and young people when they go missing and asked if there were any special protocols in place to mitigate. DK responded that the procedures ESFRS employ have been adapted from RNLI best practice (who are the acknowledged experts in this area) in conjunction with extensive partnership working to ensure appropriate expertise is called upon in any given situation.
- With reference to the GP collaboration project advisors asked if it was GDPR compliant for doctors' surgeries to share patient information? DK responded that after consultation with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), this initiative was lawful as it used data shared by primary services with intention to keep people safe – assuming all the usual protocols around data security were followed. To date 10 GP practices across East Sussex were involved – usually in the areas of highest deprivation, health deprivation and fire incidents, ESFRS works closely with the Integrated Care Board to widen understanding and encourage referrals. ESFRS would then conduct a 'safe and well' safety visit of those referred and report their findings to the GP. This would support local GP's to hone their care and support packages around reality and reduce risk of fire and accident of some of the county's most vulnerable residents.

Staff Networks overview Fire Out and Gender Inclusion Network

DJ stated that ESFRS currently has four active staff networks whom the group would be meeting over subsequent meetings, these were Fire Out, Gender Inclusion Network (GIN), Enable and Faith in Fire. They described the broader roles the networks played to support and signpost colleagues and to inform the service

around wider aspects of policy and process which may have an impact on staff- all staff networks were represented at the service level EDI Group meeting attended by ESFRS senior leadership team. JH introduced themselves as co-chair of Fire Out, which is ESFRS's LGBTQ+ staff network. This was a joint network with WSFRS. JH describe the ongoing work of the network and their core mission to provide helpful support and advice, about all aspects and sexual orientation and gender identity with membership open to all. JH described upcoming events and activities including co-hosting forthcoming national LGBTQ+ staff network conference and ongoing involvement with local and Brighton Prides.

KL introduced themselves as GIN lead which aimed to support colleagues around all aspects of gender inclusion – they described how the network focus had moved away from being primarily about supporting women to be more inclusive of the male experience at work as well as those who identified as trans, non-binary and intersex (TNBI). KL overviewed some of the work activity of the network in recent months including a concerted effort to embed menopause support into all aspects of the service structure, introducing a formal menopause policy into ESFRS and aligning menopause within the workplace adjustment structure. KL stated that GIN was also keen to raise awareness of issues around male mental health, building resilience and encouraging conversations to take place within safe / supportive spaces

Advisor's comments:

Advisors asked how the staff networks measured success in their areas of work- to understand how their efforts were having positive effects on the service. KL and JH described several methods such as staff surveys, action logs relating to network delivery plans to measure their work but agreed measuring granular EDI success was quite a subjective exercise. Anecdotal evidence that messaging was reaching the wider service was implied as networks were taking more enquiries from staff then before. KD referenced their own professional experience of supporting EDI agendas within organisations and offered to provide some assistance in this area.

Standing Items

Service update

- DN provided an update on the recent HMICFRS inspection which took place in January and was the last of a cycle of three full inspections ESFRS had taken part in since 2018. These inspections measured how the service performed in understanding and managing risk, improving culture & behaviours, and managing its budget to provide the most cost-effective service. DN stated that ESFRS had received a draft report which was looking favourable, especially when viewed in context with the two preceding inspections and showed a progress in several key areas. DN acknowledged the efforts made by colleagues across the service to make those improvements and was pleased that these efforts appear to have been endorsed by HMICFRS. DN confirmed that the final report was due to be published in June and would ensure advisors received a copy when available.

Action DJ forward report link to advisors on publication in June

- DN reminded advisors that ESFRS would soon undertake its latest strategic review. This was a regular process where ESFRS consults with the public on its proposals for the next five years and how the service would distribute its resourcing to address risk in our communities. DN noted that the service was putting firm proposals together for 2026 and 2027 and outlines for areas of consideration covering 2028 and 2029. DN stated that it was difficult to plan too far ahead because of uncertainty, but felt it would be a useful if advisors supported ESFRS in shaping those priorities- especially by focussing on 2026-2027

Action DJ to create substantive agenda item Strategic review proposals 2026 and 2027

Any other business

- JM referenced their concern around the recent Supreme Court ruling which defined the protected characteristic of sex as entirely biological and based on their sex as defined at birth. They stated this would have major ramifications for the transgender community who were feeling especially vulnerable right now. They asked what ESFRS's response would be to the ruling when supporting staff and communities with TNBI backgrounds.

DN stated that ESFRS had acknowledged the ruling but would not be making any reactive responses until there had been authoritative guidance published by EHCR to inform public sector organisations such as ESFRS. DN sought to assure advisors that there had already been several consultations within

ESFRS involving staff networks, legal and the estates team alongside other stakeholders to ensure that our organisation complied with the law but remained inclusive and accessible to all. This approach included where possible, a commitment to ensure all sites would continue to have gender neutral changing facilities alongside those designated as male and female.

DJ noted that Justice Hodge of the Supreme Court expressly stated that gender reassignment remained a protected characteristic and that the principles of dignity, respect and inclusion would remain at the heart of everything ESFRS did.

Advisors thanked ESFRS for this response and for the visible allyship the service continued to provide to LGBTQ+ communities just by taking part in events such as Brighton Pride.

JM offered to share their contact details to support any member of ESFRS staff in confidence who wanted to help with any aspect of their gender identity journey.

- KH thanked staff and colleagues at Preston Circus for their enthusiasm to support the upcoming community based Triathlon event in Patcham taking place on June 7th they said 'One of the reasons why I'm on this committee as well is for racial inclusion around the recruitment process in East Sussex, Fire and Rescue, and one of the amazing steps forward that I think the Preston Circus team have taken is to take part in supporting this event. DJ thanked KH and said their thanks would be forwarded to the team at Preston Circus.

Next meeting: Tuesday 2nd September 1400-1600 MS Teams