

Greater Manchester Police, Fire & Crime Panel

Date: 19th March 2025
Subject: GMFRS Professional Standards Team
Report of: DCFO Ben Norman
Report Author: AM Jim Willmott

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the implementation of a Professional Standards Team within GMFRS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Panel are asked to note the contents of this report and provide any feedback.

CONTACT OFFICERS

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Equalities Impact, Carbon, and Sustainability Assessment:

N/A

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

N/A

Financial Consequences - Capital

N/A

Financial Consequences - Revenue

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

N/A

TRACKING/PROCESS		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		No
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		No
TfGMC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
N/A	N/A	

INTRODUCTION

1. In March 2024 a new Area Manager (AM) role was created within Service Delivery (SD) with responsibility for SD Support, The Hub and the development of a Professional Standards function.

HMICFRS REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

2. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published the Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services report in March 2023; and the Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services in August 2024.
3. The Values and Culture report recommended that consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in service (or from an external service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved.
4. The recommendation was cemented in the Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services; which recommended that chief fire officers should make sure their services create or have access to a dedicated professional standards function to oversee the investigation of concerns raised.
5. At the point of the reports publication GMFRS had already committed to the creation of a Professional Standards Team.

PROGRESS

6. The creation of the Professional Standards Team compliments GMFRS' long standing commitment to an inclusive culture, building on the existing work which has seen a 50% reduction in cases and case handling times.
7. A strategy and plan were put in place to develop and implement the team in September 2024. This was focussed on three key areas: setting the standards, supporting our people and upholding the standards.

8. In September 2024 a SLT meeting paper outlining the proposal to create a Professional Standards Function was approved with a recommendation to incorporate both 'Grey' and 'Green' book staff to ensure the team was reflective of the wider Service. The team structure comprises an Area Manager Head of Professional Standards, two professional standards and managers and four professional standards leads.
9. The first elements of the team were recruited in October 2024 with plans in place to fill the final two positions by the end of Q1 25/26 in preparation to undertake all disciplinary processes and investigations with an anticipated cut over date of 1st April 2025.
10. The team are currently working with People Services to review policy and procedures and provide training for frontline managers, beginning with Service Delivery Crew and Watch Managers on the forthcoming development days.
11. A Professional Standards Policy setting out the structure, purpose, role and responsibilities of the team and providing clear delineation between the Professional Standards Team and the Employee Relations Teams has been created and was approved by SLT in January 2025. It describes the principles that the Team will work to when dealing with the formal stages of processes and sets out a person-centred approach with welfare and wellbeing a key consideration. An Equality Impact assessment has been completed for the policy with input from and in consultation with the staff networks.
12. The key objectives of the Professional Standards Team will be to:
 - Provide better support and guidance on low level discipline management and development plans.
 - Train and support managers in expectations, accountability, standards and managing discipline.
 - Improve standards and accountability by providing clear expectations and improved learning.
 - Introduce a dedicated team of investigators ensuring faster, streamlined prescribed processes and outcomes.
13. The team will continue to work with colleagues in teams across the Service to review people related policies and develop training, setting the standard, supporting staff and managers ahead of taking responsibility for all disciplinary processes.