

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service



About the customer (DSFRS)

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is responsible for ensuring that the communities of Somerset and Devon, including Plymouth and Torbay, are protected, and supported by an effective and efficient fire and rescue service.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) is the organisation put in place by the Authority to deliver its duties and responsibilities. DSFRS are the largest non-metropolitan fire and rescue service in England, covering almost 4,000 square miles. Protecting 820,000 households, 74,000 businesses and a further 1.1 million visitors a year. Their Service area has a network of over 13,000 miles of roads, 90% of which are smaller, rural roads and country lanes, and 659 miles of coastline. The Service has 332 emergency response vehicles and 1,915 dedicated staff.



Challenges

In 2019 the HMICFRS conducted an audit of DSFRS practices and pillars, resulting in a 'Requires Improvement' in the 'People' Pillar. The Executive Board supported the DCFO in commissioning a review of the Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) functions to improve efficiency and effectiveness and in September 2020 a third-party HR Company were commissioned to establish if the HR and OD functions reflected the needs of a modern Fire & Rescue Service. At the end of the review process it was summarised that the HR management framework required fundamental reform.

The key recommendation suggested a phased move to a new model of service delivery that included a single HR and OD with greater emphasis on partnering, collaboration, culture, behaviour, and talent management with OD and HR Business Partnering at its very core.

Delt's HR & OD Service Involvement

To support the direction and HR transformation, Delt Shared Services were engaged on an HR consultancy basis with work commencing in January 2021. During this time Delt's HR teams have driven a roadmap of change, ensured regular evaluation and supported the Service in their transformational reform. The Delt HR team has played a significant role in creating and maintaining the Healthy, Happy, and Safe at Work Culture that is a significant priority within DSFRS' People Strategy.

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Solutions provided by Delt

- Provided interim Head of HR leadership for 6 months to support the day-to-day operational deliverables whilst at the same time designing and implementing the transformation of HR services.
- Developed a Strategic Workforce Planning Framework with actions required to deliver the right people, at the right time in the right role with the right skills.
- Supported the implementation of several policies and procedures Discipline, Capability and Performance, Grievance, and Wellness; eliminating unnecessary escalations to formal grievances and employment tribunals.
- Redesigned the HR model to maximise capability and capacity required for a customer centric HR service through the adoption of a HR Business Partner (HRBP) model; enabling the strategic collaboration between the business and HR.
- Drove efficiencies and reform through structural changes and reassigning of workloads based on experience and skill sets.
- Sought opportunities to digitise wherever possible to cut back on laborious admin hours and realise efficiencies.
- Implemented formal and informal ways of work to establish tactical, operational, and strategic alignment against the delivery of both departmental and organisational objectives.

Delt have built a communication and engagement approach with employees, leaders and trade unions to enhance working relationship to ensure business changes are effectively communicated at both formal and information consultations and the HR Department are operating transparently and sharing information via the most appropriate channels.

Impact

The last 12 months have delivered a number of initiatives and working practices to establish the foundations for a successful transformation. As these practices become embedded they are fully prepared to realise all of the benefits of the transformation in the coming months and years.

The professional support, advice and leadership that Delt gave us was first-class. They directed their expertise and resources where we needed it most and prioritised key pinch points to reduce risk and to ensure we could operate more effectively. Although it was tough balancing the transformation with increasing business as usual demands, with Delt's support we now have a single People & Culture team that work as one to make sure that DSFRS is a great place to work. The HRBP model in particular has been a real success with managers across the Service, we have specialist capability in recruitment and Wellness, two areas of high demand, and we understand and can manage our workforce planning in a proactive manner. Although we are still on our journey of improvement, Delt gave us the kick start, controlled disruption and support that was needed.

Joe Hassell, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DSFRS

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Alternatively you can speak to a member of the team by emailing hr@deltservices.co.uk

