

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service: Introducing 360 into a Smaller-sized Service



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Their support was amazing. They spared us the challenge of having to figure it out alone."

Tina Draper, Head of Training and Assurance, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

The context: A tight timeframe for action

The HMICFRS Report into Culture and Values recommended that all Services implemented 360-degree feedback for senior leaders and managers.

For a relatively small Service such as Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, this could have resourcing challenges such as sourcing a relevant and robust 360 questionnaire, managing the administration of roll-out, completion and report generation and feedback results to each of the participant managers and leaders.

The solution: Outsourced management and sharing resources with a neighbouring Service

Head Light's Fire Edition of its 360 was selected together with its outsourced, managed 360 service.

The team at Bedfordshire also joined with colleagues from Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to share training provided by Head Light in how to understand and interpret the 360 report, how to provide feedback and frame the results and how to dig deep into detail and different presentation options. In short, they developed an in-house pool of trained feedback providers building on the coaching and facilitation skills they already had.

Both Services decided to provide feedback to each other's leaders and managers that sat below the most senior leadership team. It meant that these participants were supported by those that understood the challenges of a Fire and Rescue Service but were not part of the organisation.

For the most senior group, including the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Area Managers and Corporate Officers, and for whom the feedback might be most sensitive, Head Light's highly experienced 360 psychologists were brought in to provide this. The team decided to issue the report to the participant prior to the feedback session to allow for the entire session to focus on exploring the results deeply, understanding their meaning and planning next steps.

The team developed standard documents to support the implementation to ensure the same messages and explanations were received by all. They also took ownership of drafting all communications supporting the 360 programme.

Head Light took on the management of the set up and implementation of the programme.



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People have warmed to 360."

Tina Draper, Head of Training and Assurance, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, comments: *"The programme would not have gone as smoothly without the team at Head Light. Their support was amazing – and so responsive.*

"They supported us throughout, answered questions whenever we had them and spared us the challenge of having to figure it out alone. We have seen how it can be done and how we might move forward."

The outcome: From perceived 'tick box' to perceived value

Initially seen as a potential 'tick box-only' exercise, Tina highlights that *"the real value has been recognised once people have had their reports and are going through them alongside a trained feedback manager. People have warmed to 360."*

Going forward, the team are looking at ways to manage the larger numbers of managers needing feedback, exploring a general group feedback session that introduces the report and then supports individuals with their specific questions and queries separately.

Takeaways

Phase the feedback so not everyone is taking part at the same time.

A small service means that often the same people are invited to feedback on others in a short timeframe. It can lead to a bottleneck Of feedback not being provided, or feedback fatigue.

Invest in preparing standard documents.

Crib sheets for feedback, tips on who to ask for feedback and detailed responses to answer the question 'why 360?' allow for a professional, joined-up and shared message across the Service.

Reimagine how to make 360 work in practice.

Outsource where you can if you don't have the capacity to manage the programme. Share resources with other Services. Explore how group feedback can be built into the programme to free up resources.

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