

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service: Building the Momentum to Cultivate Leadership Development



"360 helps people to look at their development and supports conversations around careers and progress."

Lucy Taylor, OD Business Partner, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service

The context: Continued commitment to the use of 360

For many years, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has understood the value of 360-degree feedback and made use of the services from Head Light.

A customised 360 questionnaire had been used alongside coaching with its most senior leadership team and also with middle and supervisory level managers pre-and post-development course to ensure development is sustained.

360 is well-regarded across the Service. Lucy Taylor, OD Business Partner, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, comments:

"360 is viewed very positively by our people. Indeed, we receive requests to take part in a 360 outside of our regular programmes! It's seen as a way to give – and receive – honest and confidential feedback and it plays a valuable role in our appraisal conversations."

The solution: An updated questionnaire and a process that works for the Service

The Service already used a 360 questionnaire that Head Light had configured to reflect its values.

Head Light made small updates to this questionnaire to accommodate new thinking, as well as comments made in the HMICFRS Report.

Importantly, the Service decided to adopt, for its executive board and senior management team through to the station manager, Head Light's 360 questionnaire that has been developed specifically for fire and rescue services – aimed specifically at the strategic leader.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service chose not to give individual facilitated feedback. Instead, over the years, they have invested in helping participants to understand and make sense of their own reports. They will all have been taken through a sample report and the sections, results, formats and interpretations explained. They know what to expect and how to read the report.

This is not carried out blind. The reports generated are 'quality checked' before being released to the individual. It means any areas which might be difficult to understand or sensitive to read are flagged up beforehand. Each report is released with the offer of coaching, follow up or mentoring by a trained person. To date, no-one has come to the team to say that they do not understand the report.



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The Service also uses the 360 to help those newly promoted into a new role. After some time in the role, the 360 can offer them the confidence, motivation and insight to look at how they are doing – and how others are seeing them.

The outcome: The foundation for appraisal and building capability

360-degree feedback is not seen as a tick box exercise but as a catalyst for growth. It lays a solid foundation for the appraisal conversation to explore performance and leadership. It spotlights the areas of strength and those that need some development.

"Using 360 has definitely improved the conversations during appraisal. It helps people to look at their development and supports conversations around careers and progress. It gives insight into how well people are performing when new in role, and flags areas they might consider."

Key recurring themes are looked at across the Service. When a specific area is flagged for a particular location, group manager sessions might be held to explore the topic and look at ways to improve.

Takeaways

Build some self-sufficiency by helping participants understand the structure of the report.

Share the sample report with participants prior to their own report to build familiarity. Invest in explaining how to understand, approach, read and interpret the report. Offer coaching and support for those that want it.

Educate people on who to invite and how to feedback.

360 feedback is as good as the feedback provided. Take time to help participants understand who best to invite to give feedback. Also guide feedback providers on how to give feedback.

Be prepared to adjust timelines.

When participants or feedback providers are uniformed staff who are working shift patterns, completing even a 10-minute questionnaire can fall to the bottom of the 'to do' list. Be prepared to chase, follow up and change deadlines if needed. Build this into your overall plan.

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