

Andy Roe  
London Fire Commissioner

The London Fire Commissioner is the  
fire and rescue authority for London

Date: 25 November 2022

Nazir Afzal OBE  
sent by e-mail

Dear Nazir,

I would like to thank you, and your team, for the dedication and hard work to deliver the review which I requested into our workplace culture. I commissioned this review into our culture because I want to improve it for the people who work here and the communities we serve.

I am grateful for the compassion, humanity and thoroughness you have showed listening to over 2000 of our staff and community groups. The report contains accounts of shockingly poor behaviour and painful experiences over many years. I know this will be a distressing read for our staff and the communities we serve. I am deeply sorry for the harm that has been caused.

I completely accept the 23 recommendations in your report and I write to you to set out our plans and the action we intend to take. I will be fully accountable for improving our culture.

Like most people, I joined the fire service out of a sense of duty to serve and protect people in their time of need. In my twenty years of being a firefighter, I have seen countless acts of bravery in our operational response to emergencies. Working for London Fire Brigade should be a positive and safe workplace for everyone and it is crystal clear it has not been.

There is no place for discrimination, harassment and bullying in the Brigade and from today it will be completely clear what behaviour isn't acceptable and what the consequences will be.

We accept your analysis of our colleagues' experiences. Women, Black, Asian, minority ethnic people, members of the LGBTQ+ community and those with neurodivergence have experienced poor treatment and do less well in their career with us. This is unacceptable and will change.

The report confirms that the disadvantage and discrimination that affects our staff does not translate into our operations and does not impact on the way we prevent and respond to incidents. This confirms with what we know about firefighters responding professionally and equally to all types of incidents. However, I take little comfort from this, given the extremity of our own staff's experiences.

We must – and will – purge unacceptable culture from the Brigade. I am taking immediate action which addresses the core problems and makes the Brigade a safer place to work and safer for Londoners. Change starts today.

We do not tolerate discrimination, harassment and bullying. We are being completely clear about what behaviour isn't acceptable, and what the consequences will be. Anyone accused of discrimination, harassment and bullying will be immediately suspended and dismissed if the accusation is upheld.

We're also introducing an external complaints service so that staff can feel safe to speak up and cases will be handled objectively and confidentially. This service will also review all our cases from the past

five years. Our policies are being reviewed to so we can make profound change to our culture and a fundamental challenge to the structures and values that have allowed these behaviours to persist.

The change must be led from the top, which is why I and my fellow leaders need to reflect on the contribution we've made to the challenges we face. We're introducing immediate changes and any leaders who do not value transparency, accountability and fairness will not have a place in the Brigade. All senior leaders will be undertaking inclusive leadership training and I will be visiting staff to talk candidly and about the review and our expectations.

Your report highlights examples of totally unacceptable behaviour from some staff when dealing with the public. So, in addition to these changes, we will pilot providing staff with body worn cameras to provide necessary reassurance whilst we carry out Home Fire Safety Visits and we encourage members of the public to report any poor behaviour to us on our website. Anyone behaving unacceptably will be dismissed.

I am deeply sorry for the harm that has been done and we're committed to change. As you know from our discussions, I want to be judged not on words but on our actions and today starts a long road in changing our culture and rebuilding the public's trust.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Roe', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Andy Roe**  
London Fire Commissioner