



National Operational Guidance



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

Developed and maintained by the NFCC



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IO1: Evidence based risk planning

The origins of the requirement for fire and rescue services to have risk management plans lie in the 2002 Bain Report. One of the recommendations stated, "Government should instruct each fire authority to develop a Risk Management Plan that will save more lives and provide better value for money". It went on to recommend that the plans should be consulted on and that Chief Fire Officers should be empowered to implement their authority's plan. This replaced a system of national standards of fire cover that had been in place since the 1930s.

The requirement for risk management plans did not make it into primary legislation, however the 2004 Fire and Rescue Services Act does mandate the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework. This sets out the priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities 'in connection with the discharge of their functions'. Fire and Rescue Authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions.

Since 2004 there have been a number of National Frameworks. The current one for England was published in May 2018. It says that each fire and rescue authority is required to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan. It then lists out the attributes of the IRMP which include up to date risk analysis, how prevention, protection and response activities will be used and how resources will be allocated. Covering at least a three-year time span, the IRMP must be consulted on publicly and when finalised easily accessible.

Since the first draft IRMPs were created in 2003/4, fire and rescue authorities have developed their own styles, approaches and content for plans to reflect local risks and approaches to allocating resources. With the closure of HMFSI around the same time, scrutiny of IRMPs beyond the local population via the periodic consultation exercise, fell to the Audit Commission. It published a number of reports into fire and rescue service modernisation and the practice of risk management planning. Once that was abolished by the Coalition Government in March 2015, the LGA stepped in with a peer review process and there was no national scrutiny.

Identifying the lack of national scrutiny as a problem, the Conservative Government in 2017 extended the powers of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary to take on fire and rescue service inspection. Mandated through the 2017 Policing and Crime Act, HMICFRS now inspects fire and rescue services and looks at IRMPs as part of this process. The first inspections took place during 2018/19.

Inspection of fire and rescue services took place in three tranches. HMICFRS published an overarching summary report for tranche one and two, recognising that all fire and rescue services



have a published IRMP but, “The quality, quantity and timeliness of the information contained in them varies significantly”. There is little consistency in the way IRMPs are developed and the evidence on which they are based makes it difficult for comparison between fire and rescue services. HMICFRS reference the NFCC’s Community Risk Programme and how that will assist in creating guidance to ensure greater consistency in the future.