

**FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES
National Employers
(England)**



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council



Consultation

Fit for the Future



Contents

Introduction	4
Ownership	4
Purpose	5
Context	8
Structure	9
Relationship to pay and terms and conditions for Firefighters	10
How to tell us what you think of Fit for the Future	10
Summary of improvement objectives	11
IO1: Evidence based risk planning	12
<i>Where we are now</i>	13
<i>Drivers for change</i>	17
IO2: Focus on improving competence	18
<i>Where we are now</i>	18
<i>Drivers for change</i>	20
IO3: National standards and guidance	21
<i>Where we are now</i>	21
<i>Drivers for change</i>	23
IO4: Innovative approaches to prevention	24
<i>Where we are now</i>	24
<i>Drivers for change</i>	26
IO5: Evolved role of protection	27
<i>Where we are now</i>	27
<i>Drivers for change</i>	28
IO6: Measuring benefits, evaluating activity	29
<i>Where we are now</i>	30
<i>Drivers for change</i>	30
IO7: Attracting employees	31
<i>Where we are now</i>	32
<i>Drivers for change</i>	33
IO8: Retaining employees	34
<i>Where we are now</i>	34
<i>Drivers for change</i>	34
IO9: Effective leadership	36
<i>Where we are now</i>	36
<i>Drivers for change</i>	37
IO10: Meaningful collaboration	38



<i>Where we are now</i>	38
<i>Drivers for change</i>	39
IO11: Organisational learning	40
<i>Where we are now</i>	40
<i>Drivers for change</i>	41
Evidence sources	42



Introduction

Please note that the engagement exercise for Fit for the Future has now closed. The responses have been gathered and we are in the process of analysing the feedback. You are, of course, still welcome to read and review the content published here. We are grateful for your time and feedback.

Fit for the Future is the product of many months of close partnership working between the National Employers (England), the NFCC and the LGA. It is the first time that we have come together in this way to consider what we all want the fire and rescue service to look like in the future and to acknowledge the challenges we face in getting there.

We do this by looking at what we have learnt from past experience and recognising that having come a long way, there are still areas where we must do more to improve.

It is this improvement that we set out here in Fit for the Future.

We are proposing eleven areas of improvement that span the breadth of fire and rescue business, from risk planning through prevention, protection, recruitment, retention and an inclusive culture right through to how we work with others to improve safety in our communities. Taken together, these improvement objectives describe the fire and rescue service we want to see in the future.

As you read through Fit for the Future, we ask you to consider whether you agree with our analysis and whether it resonates with your own thoughts and experience. You will see that we reference the events that have had greatest impact on our work and how we are learning from major incidents with of course the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower a major factor in our minds.

We hope you will read Fit for the Future with interest. We are looking to you to help us understand what barriers will prevent us from achieving the improvement objectives. With this knowledge, we can craft a new version of Fit for the Future that we can all subscribe to and work together to achieve.

October 2020

Ownership

This business case has been developed jointly between the fire and rescue service Employers (National Employers England), the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government



Association (LGA). All organisations recognise their separate roles in improvement in support of fire and rescue services. They also recognise the importance of working together to deliver the improvements that this case seeks to achieve.

- The National Employers have strategic responsibility to create an “enabling framework” that will allow local fire and rescue authorities to implement services that will reduce risk in their communities in the most effective and efficient way. To achieve this, they negotiate directly with national employee representatives, through the National Joint Council (NJC), to agree how employees’ roles should align to the delivery of these local services and determine national pay and terms and conditions that will support this. They also support fire and rescue authorities and fire and rescue services as they seek to implement change at local level.
- The NFCC represents senior managers who have operational responsibility to deliver the fire and rescue service in every part of the UK. The NFCC will provide evidence and advice to the Employers in support of new ways of working that will deliver this improvement.
- The LGA represents fire and rescue authorities who have the legal and democratic responsibility for fire and rescue services. The LGA works to support, promote and improve fire and rescue services through policy and improvement work. This work is directed by the Fire Services Management Committee. The LGA’s Fire Commission provides a forum for all fire and rescue authorities to discuss fire issues. The LGA works closely with the National Employers and the NFCC.

A key document will also be the development of a joint NFCC and National Employer (England) business case based on this evidence-based improvement narrative. The National Employers will use the business case and outcomes from this document to negotiate with employee representatives about the impact of the high-level improvements that are outlined in that narrative.

Purpose

Fit for the Future (FFf) lays out a proposal for establishing a common picture, or vision, for the future of fire and rescue services in England. Its purpose is to identify what needs to change, using a sound evidence base and then identify how that change could be delivered, by supporting its implementation across all services. This initial concept has been developed in partnership by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the National Employers (England) and the Local Government Association (LGA); however, engagement is continuing to refine its content so as to be acceptable to all who have responsibility for leading the fire and rescue service at strategic level. The idea is to have common agreement about what needs to improve and how the benefits of that improvement can be realised.

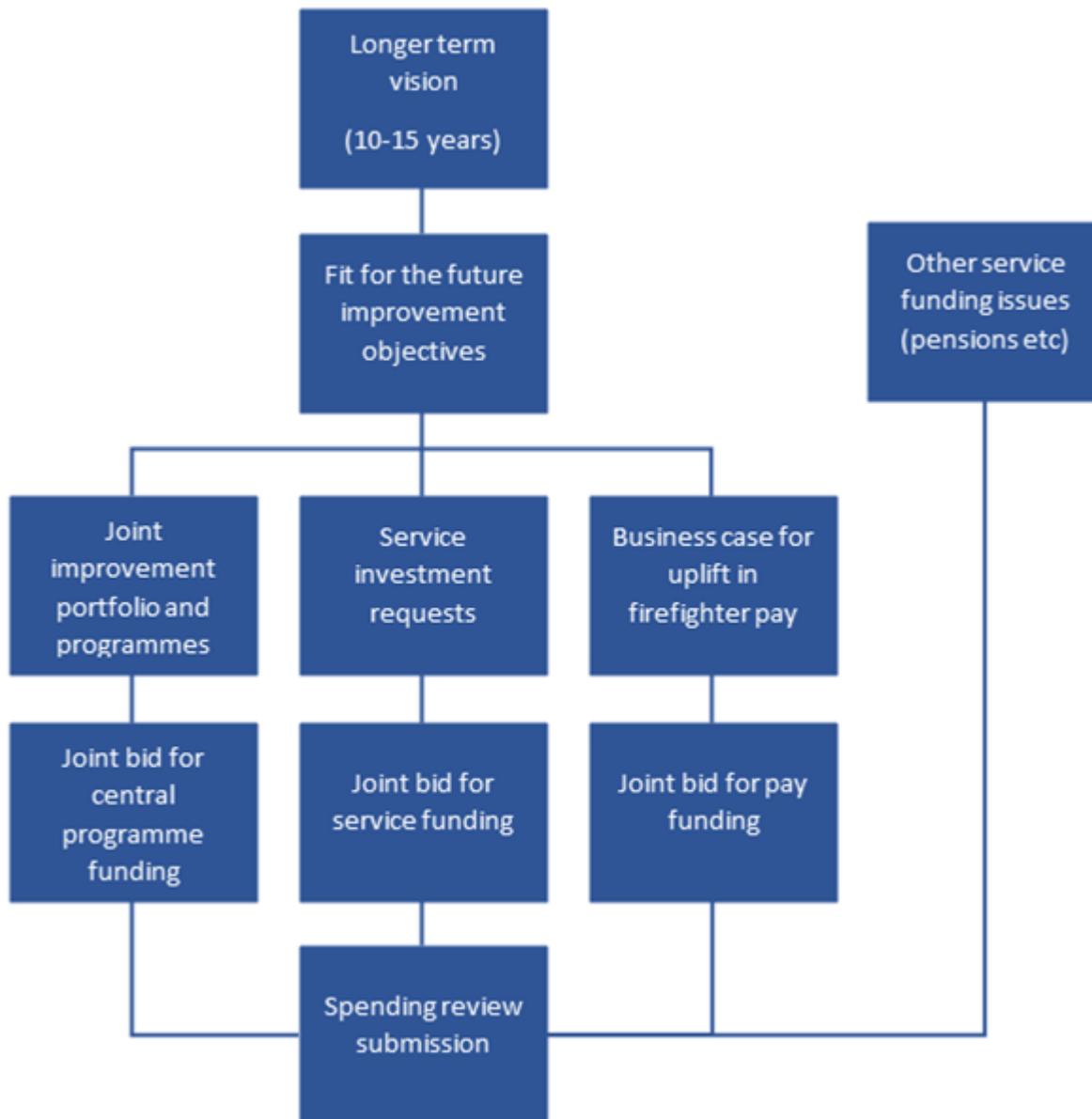


The risk profile that the fire and rescue service contributes to managing has changed over time, with some significant reductions in the likelihood of fire. There has, of late, been evidence of an upturn in the frequency of fires which is a cause for concern. The Grenfell Tower fire has again highlighted the high expectations of the public in terms of service delivery. Fire and rescue services could also play a greater role in the regulatory environment, all of which needs to be seen in the context of other drivers for improvement.

To identify overall areas for improvement the National Employers (England), the LGA and the NFCC have developed an approach that draws upon the available information about service effectiveness and efficiency from service reviews, inspectorate reports and expert commentary. It uses this information to create the common future improvement objectives that are set out in this document.

This approach and its outputs the [Improvement objectives](#). It is clear that the availability of some data, particularly at national level, can be patchy, particularly relating to the quality of service provided. The future of the existing common incident database (IRS) is also currently uncertain and needs to be resolved.

With a core, common suite of areas of improvement agreed across all parties, other strategic elements of the service can be aligned to support the delivery of the improvement. This would inform the overall funding and strategic direction of fire and rescue services.



As illustrated above, some of the key issues driven by this approach are:

- Production of central guidance, doctrine and tools
- Standards development
- Audit and inspection
- Pay and conditions for staff
- Adequate funding and investment

In this way, efforts can be focused and programmes and projects, including jointly, to deliver change can be funded and delivered. It is vital, however, to not see this proposal as another static “snapshot” of the improvements needed. Instead it should be regarded as the establishment of a changing picture of what is needed, always drawing on current evidence. As the evidence base



matures and changes over time, the focus for improvement may change. But new drivers for change can be seen in the context of existing evidence and data, rather than in isolation.

So, this is a proposal for the development of a system of evidence-based improvements, not a rigid setting of static objectives that is inflexible and unresponsive. Leaders in the service will need to continually review new evidence and make changes where appropriate, delivered locally through consistent Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP). Joint arrangements to do this will be put in place.

Context

This proposal is to identify how fire and rescue services can be made “Fit for the Future”. Its content all drives towards a future that serves people in every part of the community in England, wherever they live, work and take leisure.

Governance of fire and rescue services in England is devolved through the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to local fire and rescue authorities. The governance arrangements within those authorities follow a number of different models. Many of the services provided by fire and rescue services in response to community risks are common to all parts of the country. But each authority serves local people, in differing communities, which can create varying types and levels of risk and in different local contexts. Some elements of the service need to be tailored locally, to meet these local needs.

This places the statutory responsibilities for the provision of fire and rescue services to local communities in the hands of the local fire and rescue authority. Any improvement initiatives need to be seen in the context of this governance arrangement and has to be developed in collaboration with fire and rescue authorities throughout England.

Society is changing in different parts of the country in different ways. Fire and rescue services need to be able to reshape themselves to address societal changes, including population growth and movement, an aging society, health issues such as obesity and heart disease. Services need to take into account changes in context such as modern methods of construction technology and innovation. There are also the challenges posed by climate change leading to increasing risks of flooding, wildfires and water shortages. Services also need to be able to build upon their success in changing human behaviour and improve their contribution to a safer, more prosperous society. A role for fire and rescue services in the future that builds on the excellent work so far and continues to not only save lives, but that changes lives.

Societal changes are reflected in the risks that drive the activities of the fire and rescue service. Although many risks and some resultant activities are common to all fire and rescue services, no



one service is identical to another. Through consistent and robust IRMPs local risks need to be properly assessed to inform the deployment of services. Proposals for service delivery need to be carefully assessed and local public engaged to ensure the impact of the delivery of services is known and understood.

As well as tailoring services to meet local needs, all fire and rescue services need to continue to strive for excellence in their core functions and to meet their statutory duties. This includes preventing fires and other emergencies, protecting people from the effects of incidents that do happen and providing a timely, effective response to the highest standards of quality.

Fire and rescue services need to ensure that their responses are resilient and can respond in collaboration with others to demanding events such as wildfires and major flooding. The threat of terrorism is a sad reality that needs to be prepared for and the ability to respond, in line with civil contingencies and with partner agencies is vital.

Recent tragic events have challenged fire and rescue services and placed their operations under intense scrutiny. Both the Grenfell Tower Fire and Manchester Arena bombings demonstrated to the public that although fire and rescue services do respond to major incidents, they are organisations that need to continually learn, can reflect on their actions and implement change so that they can improve the delivery of their services.

Knee jerk reactions to reports that come after major incidents is something that fire and rescue services, as well as others in the fire sector and beyond should avoid. Recommendations for change, and for improvement (including those from HMICFRS) should be considered in the wider context of an evolving fire and rescue service. Improvement needs to be fed from a wide variety of sources and the response needs to be joined up and co-ordinated to best effect.

Structure

In order to make the areas of improvement clear to a lay reader, a narrative is needed that puts the need for improvement into context and explains why each area is relevant and important. The process that was followed in the creation of the narrative was to start with the evidence and then lay out a narrative based upon it. This does make the analysis process difficult to follow though. So, in *Fit for the Future*, the narrative is presented first and is cross referred to the evidence that supports each element. Accordingly, for each improvement objective:

- 'Where we are now' sets out the high-level narrative that provides an overview of the current situation at strategic level in fire and rescue services. The narrative identifies high level objectives for improvement, as it tells the story. These objectives, when taken together, seek to describe a desired "future state" for all fire and rescue services. The overall focus of this is



to deliver better outcomes for the public in all parts of the country in a way that efficiently uses public money. The narrative does not go into specific detail that drives every area of improvement because it would become too unwieldy to be useful. Instead, the evidence that supports each improvement objective is explored more fully in 'Drivers for change'.

- 'Drivers for change' explores the evidence that supports each improvement objective identified in the narrative. It triangulates different sources of evidence to make this as robust as possible. It draws on information from a tool designed to directly support this. An explanation of that tool – the Strategic Improvement Model - can be found at www.ukfrs.com. The datasets and sources are highly detailed and have been the subject of analysis by professionals from the National Employers (England), the LGA and the NFCC. Home Office officials have also made contributions and been involved in the analysis. The sources of information, datasets and analysis outputs are referenced alongside each objective. This section shows that a broad range of existing evidence supports each improvement objective.

Relationship to pay and terms and conditions for Firefighters

The improvement areas identified within this proposal are at service level and will be used in a variety of contexts. One of those contexts is to inform the pay and conditions of employees.

The National Employers (England) would need to negotiate with the Employee representatives any changes in roles, pay and other terms and conditions for Firefighters in England necessary to support these improvements. This will ensure that changes are rooted in providing improved services to the public, based on sound evidence and risk.

The implications of the improvement areas identified in this proposal on the roles of staff, along with the changes that need to be agreed and the value of the benefits of those changes is within a business case that is separate to this proposal. That business case will be made to the English government for funding to support an appropriate pay settlement for firefighters.

The general context and many of the issues identified in this document are faced by fire and rescue services across the UK, including within devolved government areas. There has already been engagement within and through the UK-wide NJC.

How to tell us what you think of Fit for the Future

Please note that the engagement exercise for Fit for the Future has now closed. The responses



have been gathered and we are in the process of analysing the feedback. You are, of course, still welcome to read and review the content published here. We are grateful for your time and feedback.

In the sections that follow, we present you with 11 improvement objectives. As you read through, we'd like you to consider how we can meet them and what may prevent them from being achieved.

When you are ready, we would like you to complete a survey to tell us what you think by prioritising a short list of perceived barriers. Please choose 1 for the biggest barrier, then 2, 3 and so on in priority order. This way we can more clearly understand what may prevent us from moving forward and consider the support needed to navigate these challenges.

In addition to prioritising the perceived barriers, we would like you to consider a further question related to the impact that Covid-19 may have on each of the improvement objectives.

The closing date for completing the survey was **19 November 2020**.

We are grateful for your time and help with the survey.

Summary of improvement objectives

[Improvement objective 1](#)

Fire and rescue services have evidence based, high quality and consistent risk management plans that encompass all aspects of service deployment and delivery, ensuring issues of local risk and ensuring they are resilient to national risks and threats including terrorism.

[Improvement objective 2](#)

Fire and rescue services refocus their investment in the selection, training and, development and support of employees to maintain, support and improve their skills and knowledge throughout their careers.

[Improvement objective 3](#)

Fire and rescue services have access to a comprehensive national infrastructure and repository of standards, guidance and tools that are embedded in their own local service delivery.

[Improvement objective 4](#)

Fire and rescue services support new and innovative ways to prevent fires and other emergencies.



Firefighters work with people who are at risk in local communities to make them safer in all aspects of their lives, not only from fire.

Improvement objective 5

Fire protection activity carried out by fire and rescue services is redefined and expanded by using new professional standards, competence requirements and training for firefighters and specialist protection staff assisted by a significant reallocation of resources through increases in productivity.

Improvement objective 6

The benefits of all fire and rescue service activity are measured and evaluated so that decision making about resource allocation can be improved.

Improvement objective 7

Prospective employees are attracted to fire and rescue services as an employer of choice where inclusive recruitment practices and the available diverse roles and responsibilities help the service manage risk in the local community.

Improvement objective 8

An inclusive culture is at the heart of every fire and rescue service. They are a welcoming and supportive place to work for the widest variety of people from all backgrounds.

Improvement objective 9

Political leaders, governments and fire and rescue service managers use a single leadership framework that sets out clearly a suite of service values, expectations and behaviours which all can promote and support. It is the basis on which fire and rescue services and all their employees operate.

Improvement objective 10

Working with others in all aspects of fire and rescue service activity is core business, based on solid evidence and data that determines the most efficient and effective use of resources to ensure firefighter and public safety.

Improvement objective 11

The National Employers (England), the LGA and the NFCC jointly own and maintain an organisational learning system that will promote continuous improvement at a strategic level.



IO1: Evidence based risk planning

Fire and rescue services have evidence based, high quality and consistent risk management plans that encompass all aspects of service deployment and delivery, addressing issues of local risk, ensuring they are resilient to national risks and threats including terrorism.

Where we are now

IO1: Evidence based risk planning

Risk management planning

Government sets out its expectations of fire and rescue authorities in England within a National Framework. Although compliance with the Framework is not a statutory obligation, due regard must be taken of its content. One clear expectation is that fire and rescue authorities in England produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) that sets out how they will deploy their resources to best reduce risks in their area. These plans should be driven by high quality data and analysis and be informed through public engagement so that the views of local people about planning proposals can be taken into account. This assesses the potential differential impact of their plans on all parts of the communities they serve. Both local and national risks as they apply to each fire and rescue service should be addressed within each IRMP. All aspects of service deployment and delivery, including prevention, protection and response need to be identified. This includes contributions to, and expectations of, national resilience arrangements.

The current system of governance, which delegates authority for risk management planning locally, has now been in operation for 15 years, since 2004. Much data has been generated in that time about its effectiveness and efficiency. During this period, government emphasis in the fire and rescue service has been on empowering local determination without significant national structure (localism)¹. It has also been a time of significant reduction in the funds available to the fire and rescue service (austerity)².

Identification of the hazards in local communities, assessing the risks and determining where and how fire and rescue resources should be deployed are a part of each fire and rescue authority's risk management plan. All of the issues in the narrative need to be considered as a part of those plans.

There is a high level of confidence in the fire and rescue service as the primary organisation to carry



out rescues. But all fire and rescue services operate in a local context in collaboration with other organisations, agencies and services. So, local agreements and partnerships are key to delivering joined up services that make a real difference to the lives of the people that each fire and rescue authority serves. Key amongst those agreements and partnerships are local resilience forums where local risk profiles and priorities are agreed. In line with the Civil Contingencies Act, as a category 1 responder, fire and rescue services need to play their part in planning to manage these major risks, including those caused by climate change, with other responding partners and reflect arrangements to do this in their deployment and response arrangements.

Included in those major events is the need to be able to respond to incidents that are caused by terrorism. Fire and rescue services have a responsibility as part of a joint emergency response to such incidents. There is a clear need to be prepared to deal with all types of such incidents and tackle risk in this context, as it has in many others. Employees need to be supported by clear, well managed arrangements including their safety and welfare.

Risk management plans do need to take into account the funds that can reasonably be made available to support them. They also need to consider the expectations and priorities within the government's National Framework. A number of sources of high-level evidence identify that risk management planning approaches could be made more consistent in future.

With support, the quality of risk management planning at a local level could be significantly improved. The NFCC's Community Risk Programme is aiming to do this with a view to delivering an outcome that will see:

- Consistent structure of IRMPs across the country
- Development of a common methodology that leads to a clearer understanding of the relationship between risks and resources
- A strong evidence base for activity using a wide range of data sources and analytical techniques
- Clear explanation of how local resources will be used efficiently to deliver the service required locally
- New and innovative approaches to service delivery to suit local risks and demands
- Plans that are meaningful and accessible to the general public

Rebalancing an approach to risk

The evidence within risk management plans (see [Drivers for change](#)) along with simple common sense, clearly points to the need to increase effort in prevention and protection activities. The incident that does not occur, or that is at least contained and confined, must be the primary goal of the service. This saves public money as well as people's lives. But many services have carried out local engagement with their communities on this issue and this simply does not reflect the generally held public expectation of the fire and rescue service.



As well as direct views from the public, all authorities also have some form of elected representation in their system of governance that sets strategic direction, whilst also representing the views of local people. The clear message from the public that the service consistently receives is that a high-quality fast response is what people want from their fire and rescue service. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have further reinforced this in their recent poll that has been conducted alongside the new inspection regime. In setting priorities within fire and rescue services political representatives need to balance the requirement to provide prevention and protection services with continuing provision of an effective response.

The Grenfell Tower fire and the response to the Manchester Arena Bombing, as well as other public inquiries and high-profile cases indicates an extraordinarily high level of public expectation of fire and rescue services in response to incidents of all types, no matter how extreme the circumstances. This level of expectation could easily distract from less publicly visible, but potentially equally important prevention and protection work. The simple fact is that, because of its visibility, the public generally judge the fire and rescue service by its response, not by its effectiveness in prevention and protection.

As a result, there is evidence in many services that resources in prevention and, in particular, regulatory protection work have been disproportionately reduced in an effort to maintain operational response. The effect on prevention and protection work has become evident with not just a flattening in the reduction of the number and impact of fires but actually an upturn. This change is undoubtedly a real concern and it is linked, by HMICFRS, with reductions in this part of the service. It is absolutely clear that the Grenfell Tower fire and subsequent Hackitt report firmly point to a significant need for improvements in the whole building safety system, including the fire and rescue service responsibilities within that system. This is addressed in detail in [Improvement objective 5](#).

Despite this disproportionate reduction of resources in prevention and protection - operational response resources have also been impacted and have been reduced across all fire and rescue services. The Grenfell Tower fire and subsequent Inquiry, alongside other recent major incidents, act as a stark reminder that although fires are less likely, their consequences can be tragically severe. When needed, a highly skilled, timely and effective response needs to be available. The need for sufficient response resources has to be balanced against the need for the response to be able to deal with the most difficult and challenging of circumstances. The service needs to significantly invest in the capability and quality of its response, including developing and assuring the ability of its Employees to deal with the most difficult of circumstances.

So, linking a reduction in the likelihood of fire directly to a reduction in the need for resources is far too simplistic. Both sides of the risk formula (likelihood and consequence) need to be considered to ensure that capacity exists to deal with what might foreseeably occur, when it does. This does not mean that fire and rescue services cannot improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their response capabilities. There is considerable scope for new thinking in deployment models that



better meet local needs that can maintain national resilience, as well as supporting prevention, protection, community resilience and safety.

It is consequence management that has been starkly criticised by the part 1 Grenfell Tower Inquiry report. Irrespective of the likelihood of a fire like Grenfell Tower occurring, there is a clear, stated expectation that the fire and rescue service should be able to foresee and respond to it in a flexible, coordinated and effective way. The Inquiry report makes clear that managing the consequences of an incident such as Grenfell Tower has far reaching implications for the culture, policies and resourcing of all fire and rescue services. It also has very wide reaching implications in respect of the recruitment, training and management of fire and rescue service Employees.

Whilst there is a need to look carefully at the deployment of operational response resources based on all aspects of risk, despite the recent upturn there is no doubt that over the last ten-years the volume of calls to fires has reduced. Meanwhile the demand for emergency response in some communities in the UK, in areas other than fire, continues to rise. Firefighters are already highly skilled and experienced in working in emergency situations and are able to respond quickly. With the right additional training and support, the fire and rescue service can actively intervene in these areas to save lives and improve outcomes for people.

One example of this is Emergency Medical Response (EMR). This approach mobilises firefighters in parallel with ambulance services to deal with medical emergencies, such as cardiac arrest or other types of trauma where early intervention can make a huge difference. The responses need to be made in partnership with other local agencies (in this case Health) in order to augment, not replace, other local emergency responses. These responses need to accord with applicable standards in this area of work and rely upon effective integration and partnership with the local health system.

There is currently no consistent national policy guidance as to how fire and rescue services can become involved in this type of work. Schemes have been developed in some parts of the country, most with the voluntary contribution of employees, who want to help people in their communities. The national position in relation to employee terms and conditions has been under discussion with employee and employer representatives wanting to be assured that appropriate competence requirements, professional standards and supporting training will be in place. They also want to safeguard the mental wellbeing of firefighters who may be responding in difficult, traumatic and unfamiliar circumstances.

As well as simply using the expertise of firefighters to manage other risks within their communities, there is a need to shape the allocation of working time to best meet those needs. A number of working patterns are used by fire and rescue services. These vary from wholetime employees, working on shifts to cover 24 hours a day, through to "on-call" employees who work a Retained Duty System (RDS). There are a number of variations between these systems that could be used to match the working time of employees to the risks they respond to.

The freedom to introduce new or different working patterns that support improved productivity



already exists. Changes to established working patterns need to be soundly based, however, rooted in evidence and supported by appropriate local discussion with employee representatives. This is a complex process, including within employment law and further guidance and support for change in this area will be needed.

On call firefighters, working the RDS, provide emergency cover to a large geographic area of the country. The long-term reduction in call rates has meant that some employees working the RDS have seen income levels falling off. New ways of using this group of committed staff to broaden their responsibilities and see that they are appropriately rewarded need to be found in order to support recruitment and retention. Joint work between the NFCC, Inclusive Fire Service Group and Home Office has also been driving new initiatives to address recruitment. Feedback from services involved in the NJC trials of wider work indicated improved availability as a consequence of involvement in those trials. This indicates the positive effect of an expansion of the role for RDS employees. However, there is a need to take this much further.

¹ Since 2004 the following no longer exist; a) statutory examinations b) the national core progression system of training c) Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, d) Inspection (recently replaced) e) Central Research & Development, in addition the Fire Service College was sold to the private sector in 2013

² Since 2010 firefighter numbers fell by 23% from around 42,222 to 32,320. As a result, fire safety audits have reduced by 36% since 2010 and the number of specialist fire safety officers have reduced by 28%.

Drivers for change

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.

IO2: Focus on improving competence

Fire and rescue services refocus their investment in the selection, training and development of employees to maintain, support and improve their skills and knowledge throughout their careers.

Where we are now



IO2: Focus on improving competence

Quality and competence

Expending significant time and energy on service deployment is appropriate because this determines a significant element of the required resources and costs of the service. In effect, though, efficient deployment only ensures that employees are available to deliver services, whether those services are in prevention, protection or response.

As outlined in [Improvement objective 1](#), to deliver the best outcomes for the public, the quality of services delivered by those who are deployed or mobilised has to be of at least equal importance. The government's emphasis for fire and rescue services over the last 15 years has been to manage services locally, with little in the way of central guidance and no inspectorate to give public assurance of consistency or quality. This has now changed with the introduction of the Fire Standards Board (FSB) and a redefined role for HMIC to become the inspectorate for fire and rescue services (HMICFRS). The most recent report on tranche 2 of HMICFRS inspections picks this point up strongly and makes a key recommendation about resourcing central support to aid improvement across all fire and rescue services.

In terms of response, the lack of national consistency in operational guidance was having an effect on the outcomes of incidents and on firefighter safety. As well as there being significant concern within the service, HM Coroners were levelling criticism at the service for the poor state of its national guidance. This led, eight years ago, to the creation of a programme of work to deliver new National Operational Guidance (NOG) that could be used by all services to deliver their response services to a consistent high-quality standard.

The NOG programme was delivered by a team that was governed by professionals, the LGA and central government all seeking to achieve an agreed improvement. It is the success of that collaborative programme that lies behind proposing a series of joint improvement objectives within this business case. These objectives need to be responded to in the same way as the issue of NOG was – through a programmatic, structured approach, jointly supported by service leaders.

Each fire and rescue service is responsible for the selection, training, ongoing development and support of its employees. The evidence of recent HMICFRS inspections indicates that many services could improve the way this is done. There is clear evidence that the operational competence of Employees delivering response services is no longer a matter of inconsistent or inadequate Operational Guidance. It is a matter of implementation and use of that Guidance in the way staff are selected, trained and managed to undertake their roles within all fire and rescue services. As well as continuing to maintain and develop operational guidance, central resources to lead implementation across all services is needed. In areas other than operations there is a need to improve the structure of training and development across all fire and rescue services.



The National Employers (England), the LGA and the NFCC recognise the vital importance of the people who work within fire and rescue services. In effect, the people that work in the service make the service what it is. Making sure the best people are available to fire and rescue services, ensuring they are supported, trained, encouraged and led to the highest standards. There is often criticism in some quarters of the role of Employee representative groups in fire and rescue services. Engaging closely with Employee representatives, in partnership, to address the common issues recognised by all is the best approach.

Employees need to have rewarding and relevant roles, work in a way that is safe; to be able to see that what they do makes a difference to their communities; and be supported by top quality training and welfare support. They need to be led consistently by high quality, well-motivated and competent managers. Each service must continue to strive to achieve all this. Appropriate levels of pay also needs to reflect the high expectations and skills of employees.

As previously described, the Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry Phase 1 report focuses heavily on the issues of staff competence and training. The recommendations focus on competence of staff working with high risk, high-rise buildings. The implications of this are, however, much wider. The expectations in the report can be more broadly applied to other buildings as the fundamental issue is about recognising, assessing and responding to risks. This and output from the first two tranches of inspection reports are stark reminders of the need to focus on not only developing competence but maintaining it through robust training regimes.

Training is only part of the picture, employees need to be able to apply the learning in a complex, rapidly developing and dangerous environment in partnership with other organisations.

Drivers for change

IO2: Focus on improving competence

The issue of operational competence emerged as a key finding in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report and in Dame Judith Hackitt's report into fire safety in buildings. While these reports were published relatively recently, the issue of firefighter competence is not new and can be found in the 2002 Bain Report as the extract from para 4.11 below demonstrates.

"Firefighters will be protecting and rescuing the community from a wide range of dangers. The Service will need a correspondingly wide range of skills and competences to meet these demands. It will no longer be the case that a single role, that of 'firefighter', can fulfil them all. Even the term is no longer appropriate to convey what they really do, though it is difficult to find a concise alternative."

Bain wrote about the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) which he believed would,



“have a profound and beneficial effect on the jobs of fire staff, their training, management and career prospects” (para 7.50). It originated in 1992 after the deaths of two firefighters highlighted that there were no occupational standards of performance. The roles of firefighters were defined within IPDS and set out in National Occupational Standards that still exist today.

With the advent of the National Operational Guidance Programme in 2012, the issue of competence was front and centre of work to develop peer reviewed, modern operational guidance for all fire and rescue services to use. By 2018, the Programme was complete and fire and rescue service across the UK looked, in various ways, to implement national guidance at a local level.

Sir Martin Moore-Bick makes 46 recommendations in his 2019 phase 1 report. In that he makes a series of recommendations relating to competence of firefighters when dealing with high rise buildings – both in terms of response to incidents but also in preventative work carried out on a day to day basis through inspections.

Dame Judith Hackitt published her interim report in December 2017 and final report in May 2018. To assist the process a number of working groups were established, one of which was focused on competence. The issue of competence went far beyond that of the firefighter and embraced all who are involved in the life cycle of a building. Since then, the Government elected in December 2019 confirmed in the subsequent Queens speech that a bill would be laid to create a new building safety regulator. The extent to which that will affect competence requirements for fire and rescue personnel more broadly is not yet known.

The inspection reports on the whole tend to criticise fire and rescue services for running down their fire protection activities, with not enough competent staff in place to meet the demands of inspecting at risk buildings in their areas. In addition, the inspectors found in tranche 2 that in many services recording, evidencing and assurance of staff competence were not robust (p.38).

IO3: National standards and guidance

Fire and rescue services have access to a comprehensive national infrastructure and repository of standards, guidance and tools that are embedded in their own local service delivery.

Where we are now



IO3: National standards and guidance

Quality and competence

Expending significant time and energy on service deployment is appropriate because this determines a significant element of the required resources and costs of the service. In effect, though, efficient deployment only ensures that employees are available to deliver services, whether those services are in prevention, protection or response.

As outlined in [Improvement objective 1](#), to deliver the best outcomes for the public, the quality of services delivered by those who are deployed or mobilised has to be of at least equal importance. The government's emphasis for fire and rescue services over the last 15 years has been to manage services locally, with little in the way of central guidance and no inspectorate to give public assurance of consistency or quality. This has now changed with the introduction of the Fire Standards Board (FSB) and a redefined role for HMIC to become the inspectorate for fire and rescue services (HMICFRS). The most recent report on tranche 2 of HMICFRS inspections picks this point up strongly and makes a key recommendation about resourcing central support to aid improvement across all fire and rescue services.

In terms of response, the lack of national consistency in operational guidance was having an effect on the outcomes of incidents and on firefighter safety. As well as there being significant concern within the service, HM Coroners were levelling criticism at the service for the poor state of its national guidance. This led, eight years ago, to the creation of a programme of work to deliver new National Operational Guidance (NOG) that could be used by all services to deliver their response services to a consistent high-quality standard.

The NOG programme was delivered by a team that was governed by professionals, the LGA and central government all seeking to achieve an agreed improvement. It is the success of that collaborative programme that lies behind proposing a series of joint improvement objectives within this business case. These objectives need to be responded to in the same way as the issue of NOG was – through a programmatic, structured approach, jointly supported by service leaders.

Each fire and rescue service is responsible for the selection, training, ongoing development and support of its employees. The evidence of recent HMICFRS inspections indicates that many services could improve the way this is done. There is clear evidence that the operational competence of Employees delivering response services is no longer a matter of inconsistent or inadequate Operational Guidance. It is a matter of implementation and use of that Guidance in the way staff are selected, trained and managed to undertake their roles within all fire and rescue services. As well as continuing to maintain and develop operational guidance, central resources to lead implementation across all services is needed. In areas other than operations there is a need to improve the structure of training and development across all fire and rescue services.



The National Employers (England), the LGA and the NFCC recognise the vital importance of the people who work within fire and rescue services. In effect, the people that work in the service make the service what it is. Making sure the best people are available to fire and rescue services, ensuring they are supported, trained, encouraged and led to the highest standards. There is often criticism in some quarters of the role of Employee representative groups in fire and rescue services. Engaging closely with Employee representatives, in partnership, to address the common issues recognised by all is the best approach.

Employees need to have rewarding and relevant roles, work in a way that is safe; to be able to see that what they do makes a difference to their communities; and be supported by top quality training and welfare support. They need to be led consistently by high quality, well-motivated and competent managers. Each service must continue to strive to achieve all this. Appropriate levels of pay also needs to reflect the high expectations and skills of employees.

As previously described, the Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry Phase 1 report focuses heavily on the issues of staff competence and training. The recommendations focus on competence of staff working with high risk, high-rise buildings. The implications of this are, however, much wider. The expectations in the report can be more broadly applied to other buildings as the fundamental issue is about recognising, assessing and responding to risks. This and output from the first two tranches of inspection reports are stark reminders of the need to focus on not only developing competence but maintaining it through robust training regimes.

Training is only part of the picture, employees need to be able to apply the learning in a complex, rapidly developing and dangerous environment in partnership with other organisations.

Drivers for change

IO3: National standards and guidance

Prior to the 2004 Fire and Rescue Services Act, there were national standards of fire cover which determined what appliances were sent to particular properties and the time they should arrive. With their origins in the 1930s, these standards were based on the characteristics of a property rather than the broader risk in an area. The Bain report looked at this arrangement and concluded that standards of fire cover should be replaced by a risk-based approach to fire cover 'as a matter of urgency'. Today most IRMPs include pre-determined attendance times for different incident types.

Nearly ten years later, Sir Ken Knight writing in his report for government mentions standards 14 times, looking at them in terms of equipment specification, occupational standards related to role and about the benefits of standardisation for collaboration. He also links the creation of standards



to efficiencies. His report came out in 2013 while the National Operational Guidance Programme was in its infancy.

In 2016 the Home Secretary spoke about the need for standards. "I welcome the Chief Fire Officers' Association's proposals to develop a coherent and comprehensive set of professional standards, building on the work of the National Operational Guidance Programme. There are many legitimate reasons why collaboration can fail - competing aims, conflicts of leadership, differing financial positions - but a lack of consistent professional standards is not one of them."

Later in 2017, the then Fire Minister, Brandon Lewis built on the 2016 speech. "I will be establishing a new professional standards body for everyone in fire and rescue which will build a comprehensive professional framework of standards for the service." He expected the new inspectorate to inspect against the standards created by this new body. The May 2018 National Framework states, "All fire and rescue authorities must implement the standards approved through this work and the inspectorate will have regard to these standards as part of their inspections".

The Fire Standards Board started work in 2019. It has an independent Chair and Vice Chair, with members drawn from the NFCC, the LGA, Home Office and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

The tranche 1 report from HMICFRS notes, "This problem (the lack of consistent data) combined with the absence of existing national standards, has resulted in local variations in almost every aspect of what each fire and rescue service does. The public can't always be sure they will receive the same quality of support from fire and rescue services or understand the justification for variations between areas. This situation needs to improve." The link between standards and service delivery, the development of risk management plans and demonstrating value for money for the public is clearly made by HMICFRS.

IO4: Innovative approaches to prevention

Fire and rescue services support new and innovative ways to prevent fires and other emergencies. Firefighters work with people who are at risk in local communities to make them safer in all aspects of their lives, not only from fire.

Where we are now



IO4: Innovative approaches to prevention

Prevention activity

The fire and rescue service has been striving to reduce risks in communities through a wide range of prevention work. There is no doubt that despite the recent upturn, the likelihood of incurring a loss from a fire has reduced very significantly in the last ten years. But we are now looking to the next step in prevention. There is certainly a correlation between the effort expended by the service and the reduction that has been achieved. It is challenging, by the nature of prevention to make a direct causal link between fire prevention activity and incidents that did not occur. This and other issues that surround evaluation are addressed further in [Improvement objective 8](#).

The work done by the fire and rescue service in prevention can largely and currently be categorised in two broad ways:

- **Direct intervention:** This involves identifying who is at risk and targeting direct safety advice to those at-risk groups. All fire and rescue services conduct Home Fire Safety Checks. These are generally targeted to achieve maximum impact, although the number of checks has been falling in the last five years, as services become more focused on those who are most at risk in our changing communities. In the vast majority of cases, risk control measures are installed during these checks (a domestic smoke alarm).
- **Upstream intervention:** The vast majority of fires are the result of some form of human factor, situation or failure. Certain groups of people can behave in a particular way or be placed in a particular situation that leaves them vulnerable. The fire and rescue service has been exploring ways to continue to reduce fires, alongside other social risks for certain groups. Examples of this are the involvement of the fire and rescue service with young people within their communities. Firefighters are uniquely respected as people who are there to help. This can be in stark contrast to the way that Police or other law enforcement agencies are regarded. Fire and rescue service engagement with young people has resulted in some very significant success stories and as well as improving fire safety has contributed to improving social cohesion, self-confidence and respect for authority.

More and more, these two categories of prevention work are being brought together in recognition that it is the same social groups who are a concern for many local agencies trying to improve community cohesion, safety and welfare. To be efficient, local services cannot work in isolation from each other. Collaboration is key with all investing in each other's agenda so that the overall outcome is achieved for all. This integration with other public service partners makes the fire and rescue service a part of the 'system' of public service with partners working together to use combined resources to address societal issues.

"Safe and well" visits are an excellent example of this. Health services, social services and fire services all recognise that the elderly frail is a significant "at risk" group. Some firefighters are



visiting older people to check on their health, welfare and ensure their safety from fire. This is being reciprocated by visits from health and social services who are dealing with health and support whilst also ensuring safety from fire. This builds on excellence in one of the core responsibilities and extends the reach of the fire safety and prevention message well beyond that which the fire and rescue service could achieve alone. This helps maintain the quality of life and reduce the cost of care in an aging population. Fire and rescue services want this type of work to continue, built upon and further extended

Questions are being asked about the value of some of these causation activities. Early evaluation work on safe and well visits has shown a positive economic impact and a wider evaluation is now beginning. The lack of cohesive, standard data combined with the issue of establishing the cause for the absence of something is making this very difficult to establish. The fact that it is challenging to prove the value of this work does not however mean that it doesn't have value, which is addressed in [Improvement objective 8](#). However, the situation is clearer in respect Emergency Medical Response where an independent national cost benefit analysis was commissioned by the NJC, undertaken by [New Economy](#) and provided to the Home Office.

Many fire and rescue services are already confident of the importance of this work, which needs to be allowed to continue. It should not be restricted to volunteers and needs to form a part of the basis for the way that resources are deployed within each IRMP. The freedom to do this and to expect employees to participate in these activities needs to be firmly established. This does need to be done, though, ensuring that the justification for such work is rooted in evidence; that what is asked of employees is reasonable within their roles, skills and training; is supported by appropriate professional standards; and going forward is specifically included within the IRMP.

Drivers for change

IO4: Innovative approaches to prevention

In 2004 the Fire and Rescue Services Act made fire prevention a statutory duty. This built on the findings of the Bain Report. "The new approach based on risk gives the Fire Service the opportunity to re-position itself within the community. The emphasis must be on engaging with the community by education and preventative measures to prevent fire occurring rather than concentrating on dealing with fire after it happens. Resources should be re-deployed accordingly. The result should be a reduction in the risk of fire and the incidence of fire."

In the same year, the government gave fire and rescue services £25m over four years to introduce Home Fire Safety Checks whereby firefighters visited people's homes and provided advice and smoke alarms. Subsequent evaluation of that grant estimated that the c. 2.4 million alarms installed would save 53 lives per year. Since then smoke alarm ownership has risen to 95 per cent



and the messaging has changed to checking rather than owning a smoke alarm.

In 2015, NHS England, Public Health England, the Local Government Association, the Chief Fire Officers Association and Age UK signed a [Consensus Statement on Improving Health and Wellbeing](#). This was a major milestone in recognising the value of the fire and rescue service as a preventative service working hand in hand with the health service in England, seeking to help reduce pressures.

The evolution of the Safe and Well visit from the well-established Home Fire Safety Check recognises the value of the partnership fire and rescue services have with health and other local providers. The National Fire Chiefs Council is developing a 'person centred' principle that attempts to bring these two approaches together.

HMICFRS was largely positive about the prevention work undertaken by services with their partners. In the tranche 1 summary report they note that home fire safety checks continue in large numbers alongside other preventative work with partners but they could not find substantial evidence of evaluation of the benefits of the activity. The tranche 2 report went further by commending innovative practice but noting that prevention activity was not always prioritised based on those at greatest risk.

IO5: Evolved role of protection

Fire protection activity carried out by fire and rescue services is redefined and expanded by using new professional standards, competence requirements and training for firefighters and specialist protection staff assisted by a significant reallocation of resources through increases in productivity.

Where we are now

IO5: Evolved role of protection

Protection activity

One of the most significant issues arising from the Grenfell Tower fire is undoubtedly the status of the building regulations and fire protection system in England. The system is wide ranging and goes way beyond the remit of the fire and rescue service, involving statutory frameworks, standards, testing regimes, regulators, local authorities and inspectors. The fire and rescue service are a key part of that system, with fire and rescue authorities having statutory responsibility to promote fire



safety (including the enforcement of the Fire Safety Order) in their areas.

Dame Judith Hackitt has strongly criticised the existing building safety system and has called for a widespread cultural change within it. The National Employers (England), the LGA, the NFCC and fire and rescue services are closely involved in the work arising from Dame Judith Hackitt's review and recognise that they have an important part to play in driving significant cultural and systemic change across all parts of the built environment system, including within fire and rescue services. This will involve a step change in the type, volume and quality of fire protection interventions by fire and rescue services. This is in the context of an ongoing increase of significant fires that involve the total loss of a number of different types of property particularly those of modern construction. Within these are a number of protection and building safety matters that are consistent to all of these incidents.

Fire protection is a statutory duty for each fire and rescue authority and is a core element of the firefighter's role. This is not always fully developed at present, with specialists taking a lead in many fire and rescue services. This is due to the professional complexity associated with fire protection matters and the need for technically competent people with a full and detailed understanding when dealing with regulation and enforcement issues and an understanding of the cultural issues within the current system.

The volume of inspection work that is likely to be needed to support the ongoing review of building safety is going to be significant. Fire services are going to need to gather intelligence about the risks in their area and identify the priorities for inspection and, potentially, enforcement action in a new regulatory environment. Then a programme of inspections will need to be put into place aligned with the priorities to gather further data and aid decision making.

To enable specialist officers to focus on higher risk premises, to increase the breadth and scope of protection work, and to support firefighters to have a better understanding of the built environment, the role of firefighters needs to be further developed in terms of fire protection. This will mean the establishment of professional standards and competence requirements. This will need to be supported by a substantial training programme. The new expectations of firefighters will have to be delivered alongside substantial improvements in productivity to ensure appropriate delivery.

Maximum use of new technology and data management needs to be exploited to address the issue of building safety. To simplify the inspection process, ease the burden on newly qualified inspectors, and to align to other parts of the building regulations system, data about building risks needs to be standardised and inspection processes digitised.

Drivers for change



IO5: Evolved role of protection

The duties relating to fire safety in non-domestic buildings for fire and rescue services are laid out in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Fire and rescue staff became enforcers of fire safety in non-domestic buildings and the Responsible Person carries out the risk assessment and ensures that necessary mitigation measures are in place.

The Grenfell Tower fire placed fire protection firmly under the spotlight. Dame Judith Hackitt was asked by the government to look at the whole system of fire safety in buildings and her final report published in May 2018 provides evidence of the need to change the role of the fire and rescue service when it comes to fire protection of buildings. The existing system whereby the responsible person should have a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment also comes under scrutiny in Dame Judith's report. The government accepted all the recommendations in Dame Judith's report and work continues to implement these through a combination of legislative and policy changes.

In October 2019 Sir Martin Moore Bick published his phase one report into the Grenfell Tower fire. The issues of competence for fire and rescue service personnel are covered above. The report goes much further and sets out what the owners and managers of buildings should be required to do and the impact that has on fire and rescue services. The report has implications far beyond the London Fire Brigade and a national response to the recommendations is encouraged.

At the same time as the Grenfell Tower Inquiry was collecting evidence, HMICFRS was also looking at how fire and rescue services are carrying out fire protection work. They found that many fire and rescue services had run down their fire safety inspection teams as a response to austerity. Most protection teams interviewed by HMICFRS described themselves as under-resourced. The number of qualified staff working in services is low and the amount of resource allocated to both proactive inspection and reactive response in terms of enforcement does not fit the risk.

There is no national definition or standard to define what constitutes a high risk premises. "We saw evidence of services planning their risk-based inspection activity based on staff availability to carry out the work rather than the actual level of risk posed to the public".

HMICFRS also spend some time in their reports highlighting alternative approaches to inspection that may assist in dealing with a lack of resources. Short audits, using firefighters to carry out low risk inspection and so on.

In December 2019 HMICFRS published the results of the third tranche of inspections. Under the Effectiveness pillar of inspection, HMICFRS looks at fire protection activity. Out of 45 fire and rescue services, none were outstanding, 20 were good, 22 required improvement and 3 were inadequate.

IO6: Measuring benefits, evaluating activity



The benefits of all fire and rescue service activity are measured and evaluated so that decision making about resource allocation can be improved.

Where we are now

IO6: Measuring benefits, evaluating activity

Evaluating activity

The fire and rescue service has been innovative in the way it is seeking to change its shape and purpose to match the changing environment that it is adapting to. The way that services are provided and their effectiveness in delivering value to the public needs to be more rigorously examined. This applies across the whole suite of its activities at all levels of the service. In future, the service needs to be able to more actively demonstrate the evidence that lies behind the value of its work.

HMICFRS Inspectors reported that there was little evidence of evaluation of protection and prevention activities within services. The innovation that is apparent in fire and rescue services often results in interesting partnerships with other organisations and ways to reach different at risk parts of communities. However, the value of the intervention is not supported by data nor evidence that suggests the use of resources is appropriate.

In operational response, the inspectors found that while debriefing is the norm for fire and rescue services, it is often done at a local level and not disseminated more widely.

One aspect that comes across strongly from the first two tranches of inspection reports is the lack of consistent data gathered by fire and rescue services in many areas of service delivery. When it comes to evaluation and measuring benefits, the paucity of data or more commonly the inconsistent gathering of data means it is impossible to make meaningful comparisons and establish benchmarks to determine improvement over time.

This narrative clearly shows that pressure is going to increase on the capacity within fire and rescue services to deliver further improvement. Fire and rescue authorities are going to need to make choices and set priorities for the resources at their disposal. The benefits of each element of service delivery need to be determined and achievement against those benefits properly measured. In this way, a model of the value of those elements can be determined. This again leads to a need for proper evaluation models and appropriate and accurate data to populate them.



Drivers for change

IO6: Measuring benefits, evaluating activity

The National Framework sets the expectations regarding the evaluation of some fire and rescue service activity.

“In all their prevention and protection activities, fire and rescue authorities should assess what they are aiming to achieve through the activity, what type of intervention is most likely to achieve the aims and how best to measure and evaluate outcomes. Fire and rescue authorities should share details of their interventions to support each other to understand and improve the evidence base of what works best and what is most cost-effective.”

While the National Framework considers evaluation through the lens of prevention and protection activity, the Thomas Review looks at the evaluation of technologies used by fire and rescue services. He describes a system whereby services carry out evaluation of potential equipment even though they have already been evaluated and then implemented elsewhere. He argued for a centralised testing facility to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

HMICFRS’s tranche one report reinforces the expectations set out in the National Framework, adding in their findings regarding the benefits and evaluation of collaborative working. “Most of the fire and rescue services we inspected are ambitious in the collaboration efficiencies they aim for. But nearly half of services have no formal review process for collaboration. So they fail to evaluate the benefits of often costly projects. Where they have done so, the results often fall short of the anticipated savings. Services need to evaluate the collaborations to identify what worked. Evaluation will also help them better understand the feasibility of future projects and predict results.”

In terms of prevention, the inspectorate notes that very few services evaluate prevention activity properly and have a limited understanding of the benefits it can provide to the public. This criticism is also levelled at the protection activities where HMICFRS suggests that fire and rescue services would benefit from evaluating the effectiveness of the activities to assist prioritisation of work to focus on those at greatest risk.

Operational activities include post incident debriefing. In the HMICFRS reports there are references to debriefing being confined to the immediate crew attending the incident rather than being shared more widely. Another area that is mentioned is operational discretion, which is used to variable degrees across the country and the inspectors make the link between good recording and evaluation of operational discretion and how well officers learn from its use at incidents.



IO7: Attracting employees

Prospective employees are attracted to fire and rescue services as an employer of choice where inclusive recruitment practices and the available diverse roles and responsibilities help the service manage risk in the local community.

Where we are now

IO7: Attracting employees

Fire and rescue services as employer of choice

The costs of fire and rescue services are predominated by the need to employ skilled and highly trained employees. Of a total service cost in England of £2.1bn the pay bill is £1.62bn. This represents 77% of the total costs of the service. But it is recognised, that some people who could work within the service still do not see it as an employer for them. This includes many women, ethnic minorities and people from the LGBT communities. This is limiting the base from which the service can recruit and reduces the range of experience that can enter it. Addressing this issue must not be seen as additional to achieving the improvement objectives in this business case, but as fundamental to their delivery.

In some respects, the attitude towards the fire and rescue service is reflected in the media and in society at large. The general popular view of the service is projected as largely about response. And that to respond you only need to be extremely physically powerful and fit. There is also a huge public misconception of the level of complexity within fire and rescue services; the level of professionalism required and, or the diversity of opportunity that working within a fire and rescue service presents.

The fire and rescue service is often portrayed as a rather basic, manually focused profession where some quite burly (usually white) men bravely undertake some demanding physical tasks. Young people are constantly exposed, virtually from babyhood, to stereotypes that perpetuate these myths. The current public representation of firefighters and the fire and rescue service is not just insulting to those who are not represented as they should be. It is an insult to everyone associated with the service, whether they be an Employer or a professional within it.

Fire and rescue services, National Employers (England), the LGA and the NFCC have all been working hard, as has the independently chaired Inclusive Fire Service Group, to challenge the status quo. But changing these deeply held perceptions will be a challenge for all leaders within fire and



rescue services. Although on occasions firefighters do have to undertake difficult and physically demanding work, widening the scope of work undertaken and being further involved within communities in those wider areas will ensure old perceptions do not live on and assist in recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce.

Drivers for change

IO7: Attracting employees

In 2008 the government published its ten year equality and diversity strategy. It cited two success factors for recruitment:

- Recruitment of minority ethnic employees is at the same percentage or higher than the representation in the working age population
- Recruitment of women in the operational sector is at least 15 per cent and rising

The strategy was developed under a Labour government and was not supported by the 2010 Coalition government. Currently there is no national strategy focused on equality and diversity in the fire and rescue service.

Today, women make up just over six per cent of the firefighter population (although the number of firefighters has dropped from just over 43,000 in 2008 to 32,700 in March 2019). The proportion of firefighters from an ethnic minority group is 4.5 per cent compared with 14.6 per cent of the English population in the 2011 Census.

The LGA published its Fire Vision 2024 in February 2018 and stated the ambition that by 2024/5 30 per cent of new firefighter recruits nationally should be female. The LGA also state that in each fire and rescue service both frontline staff and staff as a whole should reflect the ethnic diversity of the community they serve.

Fire and rescue services have been recruiting wholtime firefighters in recent years. This follows a period of up to ten years where there was little or no recruitment by services across the country. Recruitment approaches have embraced the need to appeal to all sections of local communities with some services reporting high number of women applicants. Indeed, in Gloucestershire, the number of women firefighters now stands at 15 per cent, the highest by far of any service in the country.

On call recruitment has been historically difficult particularly in rural areas. The NFCC and government invested in an on-call recruitment campaign that has allowed local services to use national assets to create modern imagery in social media environments to reach people who may never have considered the fire and rescue service before.



HMICFRS notes, “We were pleased to find that most services in tranche 2 are considering workforce diversity when planning and carrying out recruitment campaigns. Expanding the pool of people services can recruit from increases the talent they can access”. They go on to commend services that are exploring apprenticeships as a way to invest in and develop the workforce.

IO8: Retaining employees

An inclusive culture is at the heart of every fire and rescue service. They are a welcoming and supportive place to work for the widest variety of people from all backgrounds.

Where we are now

IO8: Retaining employees

An inclusive and welcoming place to work

Fire and rescue services are also still experiencing issues with their service culture, which can be seen as excluding by some. A number of independent studies (see [Evidence sources](#)), including the work of HMICFRS, indicate that some employees feel they are experiencing bullying and harassment in the workplace. This can happen anywhere but can flourish on isolated shifts in small fixed teams. Employees working on the Retained Duty System (RDS) can face very similar issues due to the isolated nature of their work and bring with them all the dynamics, good and bad, from their local communities. Leadership needs to be strengthened across all fire and rescue services, supported by clear service values that make this behaviour abhorrent and unacceptable.

There are a number of areas where fire and rescue services could do more in terms of creating a welcoming place to work. These range from access to appropriate workwear and facilities as well as recognition that people’s needs change over time. An example of which is the impact of the menopause on women firefighters. As more and more women reach their late 40s and early 50s prior to retiring, fire and rescue services need to ensure the workplace is flexible to their needs.

Remaining a welcoming place to work throughout the entire career of employees will require fire and rescue services to be adaptable and sensitive to the needs of a range of groups of employees and not treating them all as one homogeneous cohort.



Drivers for change

IO8: Retaining employees

This improvement objective is focused on how people are treated once they join a fire and rescue service. References to inclusion, fairness and diversity appear in many of the documents cited in the [Evidence sources](#). As far back as 1999, the previous fire inspectorate published Equality and Fairness in the fire service. It stated, “We are strongly of the opinion that substantial change is necessary in the management and culture of the service to achieve an environment where equality and fairness can be integrated into its whole operation and organisation.”

The 2008 strategy set out its expectations around understanding and respecting difference, valuing diversity and treating everyone with dignity and respect and not tolerating bullying, harassment, unfair unacceptable behaviour.

The LGA published a number of reports about inclusion and an MOU on equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the fire and rescue service co-signed by many organisations in the fire sector and beyond.

The Inclusive Fire Service Group is independently chaired by Professor Linda Dickens. It is unique in that it brings together employer, management and employee interests, comprising employer and employee representation from the National Joint Council and representation from the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Fire Officers Association and the Fire and Rescue Service Association. It has carried out a substantial amount of work, including directly with FRS’ and union representatives, on improving inclusion based upon a number of evidence-based improvement strategies and a determination to see inclusivity embedded in every aspect of the fire and rescue service. That work is continuing.

The Bain and Thomas reviews also made reference to the need for improvement. Responding to the publication of the Thomas Review, Fire Minister Brandon Lewis said, “A culture shift is needed. Action is needed on career progression, inclusive working practices and recruitment. Progression through the service has to improve”.

The NFCC People Strategy sets out the principles of what it means by equality, diversity and inclusion. “We want people to bring themselves to work without the need to hide their sexuality, mental health state, quirks and individual traits etc. We want to build a representative workforce (gender and race particularly) and support development of underrepresented groups.”

More recently, the new form of inspection through HMICFRS looked at culture too. It found considerable problems despite all the efforts and strategies of the past twenty years or more. One of the three pillars of inspection is focused on people and under that there is a grading for values and culture. The tranche 1 report found that too few of the services had achieved a positive culture.



“We graded three services as good at promoting values and culture and one service as outstanding. Nine services require improvement and one service is graded as inadequate. These results show that while it is possible to create a positive culture in fire and rescue services, too few services have achieved this.”

IO9: Effective leadership

Political leaders, governments and fire and rescue service managers use a single leadership framework that sets out clearly a suite of service values, expectations and behaviours which all can promote and support. It is the basis on which fire and rescue services and all their employees operate.

Where we are now

IO9: Effective leadership

Inspirational leadership

Being clear about what needs to improve, as well as providing a framework and infrastructure for fire and rescue services to draw upon will not make change happen. Delivering improvement relies upon the unified, coordinated and sustained effort of leaders in the fire and rescue service both centrally and within every level in every fire and rescue service across political and officer roles. Leadership may well be the most significant and challenging aspect in delivering improvement within fire and rescue services. Achieving unity around what needs to improve as outlined in this proposal will act as a compelling vision and starting point to build on.

To support this, the expectations of leaders in the service at all levels need to be defined and used as a basis of their selection, training, development and advancement. Fire and rescue services need to seek out and create talented and inspiring people from the broadest, most diverse elements of society and empower them to take the service forward.

A new Leadership Framework has been developed by the NFCC and needs to undergo further engagement and consultation including with employer interests. This could be developed to become jointly owned by stakeholders across the fire and rescue service. The endorsement of Government for such a framework would be welcomed and fit well with the current National Framework for England that says each fire and rescue authority should have in place a people



strategy, one element of which is professionalism, skills and leadership¹. The leadership framework cannot be allowed to be an academic exercise that people in the service know about and can recite. It would become a genuine driver for new service values, culture and behaviour.

¹ [Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England](#), para 6.1

Drivers for change

IO9: Effective leadership

Every report into the fire and rescue service talks about leadership. Sir George Bain writes in the Executive Summary to his 2002 report. “Notwithstanding the clear recipes for change which came from earlier studies, it was equally clear that progress had been disappointingly small. There are many reasons for this, but most important is that there has been a lack of leadership throughout the service at the political, institutional and operational levels. This problem has persisted for years.”

Facing the Future makes the distinction between political leadership and sector leadership. Linking learning and leadership, Sir Ken writes, “Greater sector leadership is needed to drive through a culture of learning from good practice and challenging services to rise to the level of the best”.

There are 36 references to leadership in the Thomas Review. It contains this recommendation. “To create and maintain (in the face of decreasing numbers) a cadre of managers capable of becoming future fire and rescue service leaders, a standardised industry wide approach to leadership development should be adopted.”

Under the People pillar, HMICFRS focuses on leadership and capability. The inspection reports look at how fire and rescue services identify and support those with talent to become leaders of the future. HMICFRS finds that there is work to be done in this area. Worried about a ‘leadership drain’, the tranche 2 report highlights the large numbers of principal officers retiring from the fire and rescue service over the next two years and the impact it will have.

The NFCC People Strategy contains six areas for improvement with leadership key to all areas of delivery. In the forward to the Leadership Framework, Roy Wilsher writes, “More than ever before, we need leaders who are both operationally and professionally competent as well as being capable of creating and delivering a compelling vision for the future to inspire and motivate others.” The Framework sets out the leadership behaviours required at each level of management. This provides the basis for which individuals can plan their own career development.



Acknowledging the publication of the NFCC's Leadership Framework, the inspectorate notes, "We are pleased that service leaders through the NFCC and the new Fire Standards Board are addressing this problem." It goes on to commend the Executive Leadership Programme.

IO10: Meaningful collaboration

Working with others in all aspects of fire and rescue activity is core business, based on solid evidence and data that determines the most efficient and effective use of resources to ensure firefighter and public safety.

Where we are now

IO10: Meaningful collaboration

Working with others

Fire and rescue services do not work in isolation. The relationship between fire, police and ambulance on the incident ground is well established and was significantly boosted by the creation of the programme in 2012 to develop the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP). The publication of the Joint Doctrine: the interoperability framework provides a standard approach to multi-agency working, along with training and awareness products for responding agencies to train their staff.

There is considerable commentary on the implementation of the Joint Doctrine in the Kerslake Report into the Manchester Arena bombings and in Sir Martin Moore-Bick's report into the Grenfell Tower Fire. These tragic incidents in 2017 demonstrated concerns about how the Joint Doctrine works in practice. It is important that learning is managed and reflected in the process of reviewing guidance. Changes in training and policy will need to be reflected in the continuing evolution of the Joint Doctrine as a tool used at a local level.

Working with others is not exclusive to the incident ground and there is a long history of fire and rescue services working with partners from the wider public sector, the third sector and the commercial world where they share the same goals. Evaluation of such interventions needs to evidence the benefits of such work. A rigorous evaluation approach needs to be applied consistently across all fire and rescue services.



The 2017 Policing and Crime Act includes provisions for fire, police and ambulance services to keep opportunities to collaborate under review. It goes on to set out where collaboration agreements may be created in the interests of efficiency or effectiveness.

Prior to this, fire and rescue services worked on more informal partnership arrangements based on local needs. This is particularly strong in the area of fire prevention where historically fire and rescue services have worked with local organisations to focus on, fire setting behaviour. This has involved working with vulnerable children and young people, including schools and local youth offending teams. This type of activity can bring great reputational rewards.

Community Safety Partnerships are an example of where older legislation compelled closer joint working in certain areas. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 also provides for joint working in the context of local resilience forums and in responding to major incidents. Fire and rescue services are now able to use National Operational Guidance on Major Incidents to help them plan for and respond appropriately within a multi-agency setting.

Drivers for change

IO10: Meaningful collaboration

Fire and rescue services have traditionally worked closely with other emergency services. In addition to this they work at a local level through crime and disorder partnerships, local resilience forums, health and other organisations. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 cites fire and rescue as a Category 1 responder with particular responsibilities. The National Framework says that an efficient fire and rescue service should actively explore collaboration where it lines up with the priorities in its IRMP.

The government invested in a programme to create the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles. This provides a basis on which the emergency services would work together. The Joint Doctrine was published in August 2016 and it provides guidance to support and enhance interoperability between emergency response organisations when responding to multi-agency incidents.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 1 report highlights a concern about the failure of the emergency services to co-ordinate with each other. Sir Martin Moore Bick is critical of the Joint Doctrine as well as the responders' use of the principles within it on the incident ground. He says that the Category 1 responders (LFB, MPS, LAS and the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) did not fully adhere to the principles contained in the Joint Doctrine with the principle, common to all, being poor communication. The consequence of this was organisations working in isolation and in ignorance of what others were doing.

Earlier in 2017, the Manchester Arena terrorist bombing resulted in the deaths of 22 people. Lord



Kerslake was asked to lead a review into the emergency services response. He writes in his final recommendation for fire and rescue, "The response to the Arena attack provided an extraordinary validation of the on-going work within the UK civil protection sector to embed the JESIP Interoperability Framework in practice". He praises responders where the principles of JESIP held good but goes on to say, "Where unforeseen limitations in guidance, protocol and circumstance collided to block such collaboration, the response of the organisation affected was paralysed for a crucial period".

Both Grenfell and the Manchester Arena bombing are major incidents where interoperability and joint co-ordination of response are critical. There is National Operational Guidance on Major Incidents to assist fire and rescue services in preparing for and responding in an effective way.

Police, fire and ambulance are also under a statutory duty to collaborate. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduced the concept of collaboration agreements and compelled the duty holders to keep under consideration opportunities to collaborate where it is in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness.

HMICFRS finds that nearly all fire and rescue services have a positive attitude towards collaboration. Their reports cite wide ranging examples of collaboration across all aspects of fire and rescue service business. As referenced in [Improvement objective 6](#), the issue is evaluation and providing the evidence that the collaboration is necessary and impactful.

IO11: Organisational learning

The National Employers (England), the LGA and the NFCC jointly own and maintain an organisational learning system that will promote continuous improvement at a strategic level.

Where we are now

IO11: Organisational learning

Continuous organisational learning

There has been direct criticism within the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report of the ability of the fire and rescue service to learn and to change in response to that learning. The National Operational



Learning (NOL) system has now been in operation for 2 years and has been partially successful in identifying and sharing lessons from incidents across services. In an environment where the number of incidents has reduced, but where public expectations are so high, there is a need to collectively share and learn from all aspects of the delivery of fire and rescue services.

The improvement objectives identified within this business case represent the most accurate picture that can be presented at this time of the need for improvement, based on the information and data currently available. Many of the improvements identified, once implemented, will serve to create a clearer picture of the need for ongoing service change.

Financial support from government is sought for implementation. The programmes being delivered by the NFCC need further resources to be able to maximise the breadth of improvement laid out in this document. There is also a need to support local implementation. This will entail partnership working between the NFCC and the National Employers (England), through the LGA to help fire and rescue services to deliver the defined efficiencies and benefits to the public.

National Employers (England), the LGA and the NFCC will work together to maintain the improvement objectives and keep them under continuous review. This will be informed by an "Organisational Learning" system that will be supported by the model that underpins this business case. The model will continue to be "fed" with data and information as it becomes available. In this way, new information can be seen in the context of that which already exists.

Drivers for change

IO11: Organisational learning

Facing the Future contains a section on driving efficiency. Sir Ken Knight focuses on learning as one of his key findings. "Greater sector leadership is needed to drive through a culture of learning from good practice and challenging services to rise to the level of the best."

After major incidents like Grenfell or going further back to the Kings Cross fire in 1987, there are always lessons to be learned. Sir Desmond Fennell recommended in his report published in 1988 that there ought to be joint exercises between the emergency services, "Because I am satisfied that if such joint exercises had taken place, communications would have been better and some of the problems which presented themselves would not have proved as difficult as they did on the night".

The need for learning from incidents also comes also from coroners' reports. In particular, the tragic death of Firefighter Stephen Hunt and the [important report written by the Coroner, Nigel Meadows in 2016](#). "It is suggested that consideration is given to being able to mobilise a national and consistent approach to sharing the learning and testing so that it can be shown to be received, understood, actioned and embedded".



Partly in response to Nigel Meadows report, the NFCC set up a project to create a National Operational Learning system in order to have a national and consistent way of capturing learning not only from major incidents but from day to day activity. By categorising learning based on the controls and hazards contained in National Operational Guidance, the analysis can provide decision makers with evidence of whether change needs to be made to policy, guidance, training or other areas.

Learning is also derived from non-operational aspects of fire and rescue service business and as such the NFCC is looking at how to widen out the principles contained in the National Operational Learning approach to see if it can be extended to Organisational Learning.

HMICFRS State of Fire report 2019 made reference to the variance of capacity at local level to deliver change in working arrangements. The National Employers (England), through the LGA, and the NFCC have identified a need to provide further support. Such a mechanism will require additional funding.

Evidence sources

Author/Publisher	Title	Year
Grenfell Tower Inquiry	Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report	10/2019
HMICFRS	Fire and Rescue Service inspections 2018/19 – summary of findings from tranche 2	06/2019
Nottingham Trent University	National review of community risk methodology across the UK fire and rescue service	03/2019
NFCC	NFCC Leadership Framework	01/2019
HMICFRS	Fire and Rescue Service inspections 2018/19 – summary of findings from tranche 1	12/2018
HM Government	Building a Safer Future: An implementation plan	12/2018
Industry Response Group	Second quarterly report on progress towards meeting the recommendations on competences in Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety	10/2018



Author/Publisher	Title	Year
NFCC	Strategy 2017-2020	07/2018 (rev)
Dame Judith Hackitt	Building a Safer Future: Independent review of building regulations and fire safety (final report)	05/2018
HM Government	Fire and Rescue National Framework for England	05/2018
LGA	An inclusive fire service: recruitment and inclusion	03/2018
LGA	Fire Vision 2024	02/2018
National Joint Council for local authority fire and rescue services	Circular NJC/1/18 Inclusive Fire Service Group Improvement Strategies	01/2018
Dame Judith Hackitt	Building a Safer Future: Independent review of building regulations and fire safety (interim report)	12/2017
New Economy	Emergency Medical Response by fire and rescue services: financial and economic modelling of impact	11/2017
HM Government	Fire Minister's speech to Reform	02/2017
LGA et al	Memorandum of Understanding: Equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the fire service	01/2017
LGA	An inclusive service: the twenty-first century fire and rescue service	01/2017
LGA	Fire and Rescue Service recruitment survey	12/2016
HM Coroner	Regulation 28 Report to prevent future deaths: Stephen Alan Hunt (deceased)	06/2016



Author/Publisher	Title	Year
HM Government	Home Secretary speech on fire reform	05/2016
NFCC	Fire and Rescue People Strategy 2017/2022	01/2016
Public Health England et al	Consensus statement on improving health and wellbeing	04/2015
Adrian Thomas	Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England	02/2015
Sir Ken Knight	Facing the Future: Findings from the review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England	05/2013
HM Government	Final evaluation of the Home Fire Risk Check grant and Fire Prevention Grant programmes (Fire Research 2/2009)	02/2009
HM Government	Fire and rescue service equality and diversity strategy 2008-2018	05/2008
Professor Sir George Bain (Chairman)	The future of the fire service: reducing risk, saving lives: Independent review of the fire service	12/2002
HMFSI	Equality and fairness in the fire service: a thematic review by HM Fire Service Inspectorate	09/1999