



Northumberland
County Council

**Her Majesty's Inspectorate of
Constabulary and Fire and Rescue
Services (HMICFRS)**

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service

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Introduction

Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework which sets priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in England in connection with the discharge of their functions. **FRAs have a statutory duty to have regard to the Framework.** The 2004 Act requires the Secretary of State to keep the Framework under review and revise it if needed with significant revisions subject to statutory consultation with representatives of fire and rescue authorities and their employees.

The Framework:

- A. must set out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions;
- B. may contain guidance to fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of any of their functions; and
- C. may contain any other matter relating to fire and rescue authorities or their functions that the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

Every fire and rescue authority **must** have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions. Every authority **must** publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Framework.

Every fire and rescue authority **must** assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities.

Fire and rescue authorities **must** put in place arrangements to prevent and mitigate these risks, either through adjusting existing provision, effective collaboration and partnership working, or building new capability.

Fire and rescue authorities **must** make provision for promoting fire safety, including fire prevention, and have a locally determined risk-based inspection programme in place for enforcing compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in premises to which it applies.

The National Framework states - *“.....we recognise fire and rescue authorities can make an important contribution to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of public services and alleviating pressures on local response resources. **However, this should not be at the expense of their core fire functions.**”*

Fire and rescue authorities **should robustly** evaluate the impact of their activities to ensure that they only pursue those which can be demonstrated to impact effectively and cost-efficiently on risk reduction within their communities.

Fire and rescue authorities **must** make provision to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies within their area and in other areas in line with their mutual aid agreements.

Fire and rescue authorities **must** have effective business continuity arrangements in place in accordance with their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Each fire and rescue authority **must** hold the individual who has responsibility for managing the fire and rescue service – in most cases the Chief Fire Officer - to account for the delivery of the fire and rescue service and the functions of persons under their direction and control.

Each fire and rescue authority has a statutory duty to ensure provision of their core functions as required by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and, the fire and rescue authority should give due regard to the professional advice of the chief fire officer when making decisions affecting the operation of their fire and rescue service.

Background

Since April 2018, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has been awarded responsibility for inspecting fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England, as detailed in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018. The chief fire and rescue inspector and inspectors of fire and rescue authorities in England have powers of inspection given to them by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017. The inspection of FRSs will allow the public to see how well their local fire and rescue service is performing and improving.

Objectives for the inspection of FRSs will be to:

- Improve the services they provide and to ensure they reduce the risks identified by local communities;
- Identify good practice, transformation and areas for improvement; and
- Improve transparency and accountability to the communities they serve.

Inspections will focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services and each Service will be given a graded judgement (outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate). For context, one in four police forces received a 'requires improvement' during the most recent inspection programme.

HMICFRS has carried out three pilot inspections January - March 2018, in order to test its methodology. The full inspection programme commenced April 2018 and, during the

following 18 months, all 45 fire and rescue services in England will be inspected. Inspections will be carried out in tranches of 15. It has been confirmed that Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) will be inspected in the second tranche, during autumn/winter of 2018.

There are five HMI regions. Northumberland sits within Northern Region, of which Matt Parr has been temporarily appointed as HMI. Each service has been appointed a Service Liaison Lead (SLL) who liaises between HMICFRS and FRSs. Matt Reavill has been appointed SLL for Durham and Darlington, Northumberland, and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Services. The SLL has already begun his engagement with the service. NFRS has arranged three engagement days on 24 April, 26 June and 25 July 2018.

HMICFRS inspection will consider a fire and rescue service's:

- efficiency;
- effectiveness; and
- leadership

HMI's will inspect:

- **operational service delivery** (prevention, protection, resilience, response);
- **organisational effectiveness** (leadership, training, diversity, values and culture); and
- **efficiency** (value for money, matching resources to meet demand, collaboration).

Methodology

A methodology (or question set) has been produced for the Inspection Programme. HMICFRS will be considering three core (or principal) questions as follows:

- How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- How efficient is the FRS at keeping people safe from fire and other risks? and
- How well does the FRS look after its people?

Table 1: to show how HMICFRS will focus on each of the three core (or principal) questions

Principal question	Inspection focus
How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?	How well the fire and rescue service understands its current and future risks, works to prevent fires and other risks, protects the public through the regulation of fire safety, responds to fires and other emergencies, and responds to national risks.
How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?	How well the fire and rescue service uses its resources to manage risk, and secures an affordable way of providing its service, now and in the future.
How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people ?	How well the fire and rescue service promotes its values and culture, trains its staff and ensures that they have the necessary skills, ensures fairness and diversity for its workforce, and develops leaders.

Effectiveness

The assessment of effectiveness will consider how well the fire and rescue service is performing its principal functions in relation to fire safety, firefighting and road traffic collisions. The inspection will give prominence to the principal themes of how effective each service is at preventing, protecting against and responding to incidents; whether the service provides value for money; and whether the service understands its current demands and where future risks lie.

Efficiency

The assessment of efficiency will consider whether the way in which each fire and rescue service operates represents value for money, and how well it is matching resources to the risks faced by the public.

People

The assessment of how each fire and rescue service looks after its people will consider leadership at all levels in the organisation, including training, diversity, values and culture.

In addition, there are 11 diagnostics, and 63 sub-diagnostics. Further detail on the question set can be found [here](#)

The Inspection Process

An inspection of NFRS is underway. The inspection culminates in a fieldwork week to take place between October and December 2018, however significant interaction between HMICFRS and the service is already taking place. HMICFRS has already begun, and will continue, to monitor the service through its media presence. This includes Northumberland County Council website, all channels of social media, newspapers articles etc.

Table 2: to provide summary of inspection process

Requirement	When	Who
Data request	May 2018 and quarterly thereafter	Fire and Rescue Services
Document request	12 weeks prior to fieldwork	Fire and Rescue Services
Position Statement and Self-assessment	12 weeks prior to fieldwork	Fire and Rescue Services
Document review	8 weeks prior to fieldwork	HMICFRS
Staff survey	8 weeks prior to fieldwork	HMICFRS/Staff
Public perception survey	Ongoing	HMICFRS
Data pack received	5 weeks prior to fieldwork	HMICFRS
Discovery week (4 weeks prior to fieldwork)		
KLOE meeting	3 weeks prior to fieldwork	HMICFRS
HMI briefing note	3 weeks prior to fieldwork	HMICFRS
Strategic briefing	2 weeks prior to fieldwork	CFO/SLT
Fieldwork week		

Data request

All FRSs received a data request for submission in May 2018, irrespective of the inspection timeline. NFRS submitted its data request in accordance with the deadline. The submission took a total of 88 working hours to compile. NFRS, as with all FRSs, will receive its next data request in July, and quarterly thereafter.

Document request

FRSs will receive a document request eight weeks prior to fieldwork. Fifty documents will be requested, and will include the Integrated Risk Management Plan (or Fire and Rescue Plan), Medium Term Financial Plan, and the Workforce Strategy.

Position Statement and Self-assessment

The position statement and self-assessment will be requested eight weeks prior to fieldwork, and will underpin the strategic briefing. The position statement will be restricted to no more than 1000 words, with a maximum of 300 words allocated per diagnostic. In total FRSs will be required to submit a position statement and self-assessment of no more than 4,300 words.

Staff survey

Likely to be hosted on HMICFRS website, with staff given four weeks to submit responses.

Public Perception survey

HMICFRS will facilitate a public perception survey. Survey methodology will include 400 phone calls to randomly selected residents living in each FRS area, and 750 face to face interviews across England. Members of the public will be asked about:

- Their expectations of the fire and rescue service;
- Their views on priorities for their fire and rescue service; and
- Their views of HMICFRS

Strategic briefing

The strategic briefing will be underpinned by the position statement and self-assessment. It is expected that the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) will give a presentation for approximately one hour, with the strategic briefing lasting around 3 hours in total. It is expected that Service Leadership Team and the portfolio holder will be invited to attend. HMI Matt Parr will be in attendance, along with the SLL and one or two additional inspectors from the team. Approximately two weeks prior to the strategic briefing, the service will receive four or five questions that it will need to answer as part of the briefing. These questions will be informed by the gap analysis work undertaken by the inspection team. Inspectors will ask questions throughout the session.

Discovery week

Discovery week will take place 4 weeks prior to fieldwork. Dates of the week are usually planned, but inspectors may choose to arrive unannounced. There will be 4-6 inspectors on site to gather specific evidence, usually relating to systems and additional documents as part of a gap analysis. Inspectors will want to meet with elected members and staff representatives. They may also wish to speak with partners.

Fieldwork week

Approximately 10-11 inspectors will be onsite during fieldwork week, including the HMI and SLL. The team will have already considered up to 400 pieces of evidence prior to arrival. Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) are narrowing. Inspectors will undertake a series of interviews, focus groups and reality testing. Fieldwork week is invasive, with access all areas. A summary of inspection progress will be provided at the end of each day, but this will not provide an indication on potential judgements.

Throughout both the discovery and fieldwork weeks, the SLL will require daily, if not hourly, contact with the Service Liaison Officer (SLO).

Hot debrief

A verbal debrief is provided at the end of the fieldwork week, but the inspection team will not provide an indication of graded judgements. The debrief will deliver key messages, and will be scripted by the SLL.

Judgement Criteria

HMICFRS will assess each English fire and rescue service, giving graded judgments for the three principal areas (or pillars) in the inspection methodology of efficiency, effectiveness and people. The categories of graded judgment are: outstanding; good; requires improvement; and inadequate. The judgement criteria provide an indication of the expected levels of performance consistent with each grading. Judgement criteria allow HMICFRS inspectors to make consistent assessments across services and for services to see what they are being graded against. The criteria will also allow the public to see what performance they can expect from FRSs.

The judgement criteria take account of existing national operational guidance. HMICFRS will have regard to existing standards and new standards as they are agreed and adopted when assessing fire and rescue services. An overall judgement will not be provided for each fire and rescue service in the first full round of inspections. The three pillar level judgements will provide the public (and services) with a clear and succinct summary of findings and will help services to promote improvements where necessary.

Good is the 'expected' graded judgment. Good is based on policy, practice or performance that meets pre-defined grading criteria that are informed by any relevant national operational guidance or standards.

If the policy, practice or performance exceeds what is expected for good, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of **outstanding**.

If there are shortcomings in the policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of **requires improvement**.

If there are serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of **inadequate**.

The final report may contain an Area for Improvement (AFI) or a Cause for Concern (CFC).

- If HMICFRS' inspection identifies an aspect of a fire and rescue service's practice, policy or performance that falls short of the expected standard, it will be reported as one or more area(s) for improvement. Area(s) for improvement will not be accompanied by a recommendation.
- If HMICFRS' inspection identifies a serious or critical shortcoming in a fire and rescue service's practice, policy or performance, it will be reported as a cause for concern. A cause for concern will always be accompanied by one or more recommendations. HMICFRS will recommend that the fire and rescue service(s) (and sometimes other bodies) make changes to alleviate or eradicate it. Due to the serious nature of these shortcomings, HMICFRS will regularly review fire and rescue services' progress (and the progress of other bodies, where appropriate) in alleviating or eradicating a cause for concern. The method and timing of this review will be determined by the precise nature of the cause for concern.
- AFIs and CFCs can affect the Graded Judgement received.

Table 3: to show conditions necessary to achieve each of the Graded Judgements

Graded Judgement	Area(s) for Improvement	Cause(s) for Concern and accompanying recommendations
Outstanding	No	No
Good	Possible	No
Requires Improvement	Yes	Possible
Inadequate	Possible	Yes

Further detail on the judgement criteria can be found [here](#)

Final Report

The final report is subject to a rigorous process.

Table 4: to detail the process undertaken prior to final publication of the report

Timescale post fieldwork	Process
48 hours	All Evidence Gathering Templates (EGT) returned
2 weeks	First draft of report completed
2-6 weeks	Editorials submitted
7 weeks	Moderation
8 weeks	Legal review and HMI sign-off
9-10 weeks	FRSs for factual accuracy
10-16 weeks	Reports released and published

This will be the first full assessment of all 45 fire and rescue services for some years. At the end of each set of inspections, HMICFRS will publish a report of its assessment of every fire and rescue service inspected in each tranche, as well as a summary of themes emerging from the inspections. The resulting assessments will include graded judgements of each fire and rescue service. HMICFRS' assessments are designed to enable the public to see how each fire and rescue service's performance changes over time and in relation to the performance of other services.

The second year of inspections is currently being discussed, but those receiving '*requires improvement*' or '*inadequate*' are likely to be inspected annually. Additional themed inspections are also being considered, in line with police service inspection programmes.

In some circumstances, HMICFRS may carry out a separate corporate governance inspection. This would be undertaken if an inspection indicates that the efficiency and effectiveness of the Chief Fire Officer is inhibited by the decisions and activities of those within the fire and rescue authority, the police, fire and crime commissioner, locally elected mayors and, in London, the Mayor's Office. The methodology for a corporate governance inspection is currently be developed, and will be consulted on before implementation.

For further information you can visit the HMICFRS website by clicking [here](#)