

**HMICFRS Framework
Consultation
Buckinghamshire FRS Response
29 January 2018**

1. What do you think of the proposed approach to FRS inspection that HMICFRS proposes to conduct in 2018/19? How could this be improved?

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) believes this is an appropriate approach for the first round of inspections in order to gain a comprehensive overview of the performance of services in the proposed timeframe. It should provide adequate evidence to provide public assurance.

There is concern the HMICFRS may find benchmarking FRS' performance against one another problematical. The main concerns in relation to this are:

- Different demographics.
- Different income/budget per population.
- Different characteristics of road networks i.e. motorways.
Size/scale/budget allows for more specialists, knowledge, automation of process and investment of money and time into future/current concepts (software/methodologies, etc.).

Another concern is the ability to deliver this programme in the current timeframe as it does appear to be highly ambitious bearing in mind the levels of scrutiny and checks and balances the HMICFRS apply to reports before publication.

2. Do you agree that an integrated inspection of fire and rescue services' effectiveness and efficiency, and how they look after their people, is better than separate thematic inspections?

BFRS believes that this approach should provide a sufficiently comprehensive overview that will inform future thematic inspections and that this approach will be more efficient in the longer term than starting with thematic inspections.

3. Are there any other areas of fire and rescue services' activity that should be included in the integrated inspections?

Yes. Areas identified as being outside the scope of these inspections (accountability structures) are currently well catered for through internal and external audit. The health and safety culture and performance should be considered as part of the 'people' element of the inspection.

The primary focus should be on providing scrutiny and assurance on operational matters which were formerly only provided by the peer review process.

4. Does the draft inspection methodology (annex A) include the right questions to gather evidence for a rounded assessment of fire and rescue services? How could this be improved?

Our understanding of the data that HMICFRS proposes to collect gives us some cause for concern. Much of the data tends to focus on service inputs and outputs (e.g. how many of 'x' is carried out, number of crew attending an incident, number of appliances attending an incident etc.) We believe that there should be

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a greater emphasis on outcomes (how many dwelling fires, how many casualties, how many deliberate fires etc.)

Most of our work is focused on outcomes and not how they were calculated.

In general the diagnostic questions are straightforward but it would have been useful to understand the underlying judgment criteria as part of this consultation, as the purpose of questions is not always clear nor what would constitute a 'good' performance.

A particular example is sub-diagnostic 1.1.4. 'To what extent does the FRS undertake liaison with relevant bodies to ensure a common understanding of risk, including fire standards and requirements?'

On the face of it, it is not entirely clear what the thrust and breadth of this question is and what good performance might look like.

5. How else could HMICFRS adapt the way in which it acquires information to take full account of the circumstances of fire and rescue services and of risks to public safety?

BFRS agrees that looking at a Service in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and workforce is valid. An alternative way of looking at the operational performance of a Service in terms of planning and preparedness, delivery of operational services and assurance and organisational learning. This could look as follows:

Effective and Efficient Planning and Preparation for operational incidents.

How well does the FRS plan to provide proportionate resourcing to incidents on the basis of community, built environment and environmental risk?

How well does the FRS use its resources to manage current demand and risk?

How well trained and skilled are operational FRS staff? Is training delivered in accordance with national operational training specifications which align with national occupational standards?

How well does the FRS ensure it has the right workforce mix of skills and capabilities to meet operational risk and demand?

How well does the FRS plan to make the best use of the equipment, fleet and changes in technology?

How well does the FRS establish and manage site specific response plans for high risk premises?

To what extent does joint training and joint exercising help the FRS to plan for and test arrangements for dealing with major incidents which require multi-agency involvement?

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How well does the FRS incorporate Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) principles in its operations?

How well does the FRS capture, communicate and check the embedding of local, national operational learning and Joint Organisational Learning?

How well is the FRS prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to an identified community risk and terrorist threats?

Effective and Efficient Operational Performance at Incidents.

How effective and efficient is the FRS at responding to incidents?

How effective and efficient are the FRS's incident command systems, procedures and implementation of these at operational incidents? Are these in accordance with National Operational Guidance?

Does the FRS provide a proportionate response to incidents on the basis of demand?

How well does the FRS understand the competence of its operational workforce?

How well does the FRS communicate risk plans and information on vulnerable persons to crews attending incidents?

How well does the FRS receive and manage severe weather warnings or other issues that may affect the business continuity?

How well does the FRS' safeguarding policies and procedures work when safeguarding issues are discovered at operational incidents?

How interoperable is the FRS with other FRSs to ensure an effective and efficient cross-border response?

How well does the FRS implement JESIP at operational incidents?

How well does the FRS respond to local and regional major incidents, support the LRF and communicate public safety issues to the community.

Effective and Efficient Continuous Service Improvement.

To what extent are consistent, rigorous and open systems in place to evaluate operational performance and make operational improvements?

How well does the FRS exchange learning with other FRSs, including learning from national incidents?

How well does the FRS's operational assurance processes function?

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How well does the FRS's People Strategy capture poor performance and lead to effective remedial actions for individuals, groups and organisational learning?

How well does the FRS measure the satisfaction of those who receive operational services and use this to learn and improve?

How well does the FRS use data from operational incidents to inform its risk management strategies in the future and also identify equality, diversity and inclusivity issues in the community and its staff?

6. What, if any, new or emerging problems for fire and rescue services should HMICFRS take into account in its inspections?

The impact of reductions in funding on the ability to provide the service the public expects must be considered.

7. What else should HMICFRS consider doing to make its fire and rescue service assessments as fair as they can be?

One of the concerns of BFRS is the ability of the inspection process to be able to recognise and understand the implications of different Service operating models. Some smaller Services operate particularly lean staffing models for both frontline and back office service delivery. They have developed lean and agile governance models to concentrate on the delivery of outcomes. We believe that a key focus of the inspections should be looking at the tangible outcomes of Services in respect of what they said they would deliver in an IRMP against what they actually deliver. We welcome the inclusion of financial planning and hope this is used as a balancing factor when considering overall a Service's ability to deliver real benefits for the community it serves within its budget.

The first full round of inspections should cover all areas as defined in the draft framework document. If areas of weakness are identified on a recurring basis then these should be captured for thematic inspections in addition to the three main areas.