



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Overview and Audit Committee, 10 November 2021

Report title: Prevention Evaluation - Phase one report 2021

Lead Member: Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE

Report sponsor: Area Commander Steve Wells

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Action: Noting

Recommendations:

1. That the evaluation report be noted.
2. That the recommendations to secure long-term improvements to the Prevention function in Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) be endorsed.

Executive summary:

Following completion of the first inspection round of all 45 fire and rescue services, HMICFRS published the report into BFRS on 17 December 2019, as part of the final tranche of reports.

The report for this Service identified 11 areas for improvement, including two for Prevention. These are:

1. The Service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.
2. The Service should understand the reasons for its reducing number of prevention visits and consider how it can better target those who are most at risk to fire.

To address these areas for improvement, an evaluation of Prevention activity commenced in July 2020. The evaluation uses a diagnostic methodology developed from academic research and with colleagues from Manchester University. The approach uses the Viable Systems Methodology, which has been adapted for the Service's purposes and forms the basis of the evaluative approach.

The evaluation was separated by work-stream to enable a more focussed and pragmatic approach. The initial phase includes Fire and Wellness visits, Road Safety, Youth Engagement and Safeguarding.

The pandemic undoubtedly caused an impact on progressing the evaluation throughout 2020/21. Work was paused whilst capacity was diverted to assist with the broad range of response and recovery commitments required to support the Service, our partners and the local communities we serve, through a difficult and unprecedented period.

During the Summer of 2021, HMICFRS completed their second round of inspections of BFRS, and the inspection revealed that limited progress against the Prevention areas for improvement has been made. This formed the basis of three further recommendations being issued by letter in August 2021.

As the Service enters a new business as usual environment, with the main line of defence against the pandemic being vaccination rather than lockdown, work has recently recommenced with a renewed and reinvigorated focus on delivering long term improvements to our Prevention activities.

The Prevention evaluation has been finalised and its findings are ready to be progressed, coupled with strategic drivers from our partners, the recently published Fire Prevention Standards and National Operational Guidance relating to Prevention activity.

The learning from the evaluation has already started to inform enhancements against the areas for improvement. This includes funding agreed by the Authority to establish a number of new Prevention posts (during the period immediately after our first inspection), a targeted programme of knowledge acquisition for operational staff, Service Delivery area profiles to provide information on community risk and incident demands/trends and benchmarking to assist in the comparison between Service areas and national statistics.

Planning meetings linked to the first phase of the evaluation are now integral to driving the Prevention agenda forward and to help develop objectives that address priority Prevention objectives bespoke to Service area requirements.

A Prevention improvement plan has now been developed which encompasses the Prevention evaluation recommendations, HMICFRS recommendations and the Prevention Standards requirements.

The Prevention improvement plan includes 60 recommendations.

Financial implications:

The prioritisation of the Prevention evaluation improvements to address the specific recommendations raised within the cause of concern may introduce additional financial implications, either through reprioritisation of other projects, or through new workstreams.

The prevention evaluation and associated improvement plan will be monitored through the appropriate boards for consideration before any subsequent project documentation is submitted to the Business Transformation Board for consideration and inclusion in the Portfolio Management Office project register, to ensure associated costs, both direct and indirect, are fully understood.

Any requirement for growth will be submitted through the established internal governance arrangements for consideration.

Risk management:

This Prevention evaluation is one effective way of ensuring we continue a path of improvement that ensures the best possible service is provided to the communities we serve. By assuring ourselves that we are aligned to national best-practice through implementing the report recommendations, we will work more effectively to reduce risk in our communities.

There remain reputational corporate risks to the organisation should we be judged as inadequate by HMICFRS. The Service had already taken steps to mitigate this through having extensive internal and external audits of a number of areas of the Service, notably, elements of our operational activity has been subject to external independent assurance. The prevention evaluation is another example of applying constructive internal scrutiny to drive improvement and reduce risk.

Once established as a project, implementation risks will be managed through our established corporate risk management processes.

Legal implications:

The current Fire and Rescue Service National Framework issued under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to which the Authority must have regard when carrying out its functions, states as follows at paragraph 7.5:

‘Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and – if recommendations are made – **prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned**. If the fire and rescue authority does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a recommendation, reasons for this should be given.’[emphasis added]

It continues: ‘When forming an action plan, the fire and rescue authority could seek advice and support from other organisations, for example, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association’

Privacy and security implications:

No privacy or security implications have been identified that are directly associated with this report or its appendices. The respective strands of the improvement plan will ensure Data Protection Impact Screening and full impact assessments are completed and reviewed where appropriate.

The report and its appendices are not protectively marked.

Duty to collaborate:

Collaboration with partners to ensure a collective and shared approach to identify and mitigating community risk is critical to ensure Prevention activity is effective. The evaluation identifies a number of areas where collaboration and partnerships can be developed for the benefit of community safety.

Health and safety implications:

There are no Health, Safety or Wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Environmental implications:

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

No implications have been identified that are directly associated with this report or its appendices. The respective strands of the improvement plan will ensure impact screening and full impact assessments are completed and reviewed where appropriate.

Consultation and communication:

The Prevention evaluation involved extensive engagement with stakeholders to ensure an effective and thorough evaluation of all our activity.

A communications and consultation plan will be developed as part of the project to implement the actions.

Background papers:

23 January 2020 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Findings Report:

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/230120_item_7_hmicfrs_cover_report_23012020_appendix-min.pdf/

The Prevention Fire Standard - [Prevention | Fire Standards Board](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Prevention Evaluation - Phase one report 2021	Not protectively marked