

Andy Cooke QPM DL

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire &
Rescue Services

Sent by email:

Chairs

Fire and Rescue Authorities

15 November 2023

Dear Chairs,

Annual assessment of fire and rescue authorities in England

This letter asks for your advice and assistance in connection with my preparation of the annual assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities in England. This is the report which I am required by section 28 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to submit to the Home Secretary and lay before Parliament. I greatly value your views.

The 2023 annual report will provide my second annual assessment as His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services. I intend to take this opportunity to reflect on the overall progress made since July 2017, when HMICFRS had its remit extended to include inspections of England's fire and rescue services. In particular, I will reflect on progress that we have seen since the start of our second full round of inspections commenced in February 2021.

My annual report will provide my assessment of the state of fire and rescue authorities in England. I appreciate your input, to ensure the report concentrates on the things which matter most.

To this end, I should be grateful for your views on the following questions in particular:

1. Do you consider that the delay in publishing the Government's White Paper on reforming the fire and rescue sector (published in May 2022) had a negative effect on the sector? And do you consider that the subsequent delays to bring about reform have also affected the sector? If so, what consequences have there been?
2. How would a College of Fire and Rescue be beneficial to the sector?
3. What has your organisation done to implement the recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report (published on 30 October 2019)?

4. What challenges are you facing when it comes to making your service more efficient and effective and providing public value?
5. To what extent has our spotlight report on values and culture in fire and rescue services and our misconduct thematic inspection changed your prioritisation of work in these areas?
6. For those organisations that have been subject to our values and culture spotlight report recommendations, what problems, if any, have you experienced when implementing the recommendations?
7. What challenges do you think the current on-call model presents and do you think it is sustainable?
8. What do you see as your biggest challenges in making progress against your organisation's future plans?
9. What do you think your fire and rescue service is doing well?
10. What changes have occurred or are planned – both locally and nationally – in response to the second round of our inspections; what effect have they had, or do you expect them to have?

The plan is to publish the annual assessment in spring 2024. It would be greatly appreciated if I could have your views no later than 1 December 2023.

If you have any queries about this request, and indeed wider views on what I should include in my assessment, please let me know.

I would also be grateful if services could please submit images that we can use as a cover image for my report.

Finally, we are considering our post-2024 approach to fire and rescue inspections, we will ensure you will have an opportunity to provide feedback and inform our plans.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Cooke QPM DL

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services