



Her Majesty's Chief Fire and Rescue Inspector for
England

Fire and rescue services inspection programme and framework 2018/19

An inspection programme and framework prepared
under Section 28A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act
2004

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Contents

Foreword	3
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services	4
Introduction	5
Types of inspection we will conduct in 2018/19	5
An overview of our proposed inspection programme for fire and rescue services 2018/19	7
Fire and rescue inspection programme	7
National thematic inspections	9
Our inspection framework	10
Inspection framework for fire and rescue services.....	10
Fire and rescue service authorities' priorities.....	11
Professional standards	11
Methodology, monitoring, assurance and analysis	12
Advisory and reference groups	12
Our monitoring process	12
Follow-up from previous inspections.....	12

Foreword

In July 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC) remit was extended to include inspections of fire and rescue services in England. It is now called Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

This is the first inspection programme and framework for fire and rescue service inspections. We will assess and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the 45 fire and rescue services in England. This includes how well fire and rescue services prevent, protect against and respond to fires and other emergencies and how well they look after the people who work for the service.

We have chosen to focus on these main themes:

- how effective each fire and rescue service is at preventing, protecting against and responding to incidents, and whether the service understands where future risks lie;
- whether the service provides value for money; and
- the ability of the service to train staff, embrace diversity and develop a positive working culture to reflect the level of public and professional interest.

In the three principal questions, the inspection will consider how fire and rescue services discharge the statutory functions of the fire and rescue authority as well as the wider work they do to keep the public safe. We will provide graded judgments in our inspection reports, which will help the public see how well their fire and rescue service is performing.

In December 2017, we published the draft inspection and framework for consultation. This inspection programme and framework takes account of the observations provided throughout the public consultation, which ran from 19 December 2017 to 19 February 2018.

We received more than 60 responses to the consultation. These have helped us to establish the priorities for inspection of fire and rescue services in 2018/19. We will also use the responses to develop our inspection methodology further. We will publish this in final form before the first inspections begin. We are very grateful to all those who took the time to respond to the consultation.

(Sgd.) Thomas P Winsor

**Sir Thomas Winsor WS
HM Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services**

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses and reports on the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services – in the public interest.

We ask the questions we believe the public wants to have answered, and publish our findings, conclusions and recommendations in an accessible form, using our expertise to interpret the evidence. We give authoritative information to allow the public to compare the performance of their police force or fire and rescue service against others, and to find out whether performance has got better or worse over time. Our recommendations are designed to bring about improvements in the service police forces and fire and rescue services give the public.

Introduction

This document gives details of our proposed inspection programme and framework for fire and rescue services for 2018/19.

Types of inspection we will conduct in 2018/19

We may conduct several different types of inspection each year. To give context for the fire and rescue services' proposed inspection framework for 2018/19, we have summarised each type of inspection here.

Fire and rescue services inspection programme

The fire and rescue services inspection programme enables us to draw together evidence from inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services in England. This inspection of all fire and rescue services will cover the effectiveness and efficiency of each service and how it looks after its people. It will include assessments of:

- the operational service provided to the public (including prevention, protection, resilience and response);
- the efficiency of the service (how well it provides value for money, allocates resources to match risk, and collaborates with the police and ambulance services); and
- the organisational effectiveness of the service (how well it promotes its values and culture, trains its staff and ensures they have the necessary skills, ensures fairness and diversity for the workforce and develops leadership and service capability).

The resulting assessments will include graded judgments of performance. Our assessments are designed to enable the public to see how each fire and rescue service's performance changes over time and compared with the performance of other services.

The fire and rescue services inspections will not include an assessment of corporate governance or the accountability structures provided by the fire and rescue authority, police, fire and crime commissioner, locally elected mayors and, in London, the Mayor's Office.

Inspecting governance arrangements

The fire and rescue service inspections will focus on the service given to the public rather than on the accountability structures that govern fire and rescue services. During inspections, our inspectors will meet representatives from fire and rescue authorities, police, fire and crime commissioners, locally elected mayors and, in London, the Mayor's Office.

In some circumstances, we may carry out a separate corporate governance inspection. We would do this 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. We will develop a methodology for the corporate governance inspection and will consult on this in due course.

Statutory requirements

This inspection programme and framework requires the approval of the Home Secretary before the inspectors act in accordance with it¹.

The Home Secretary may, at any time, require us to carry out an inspection of a fire and rescue authority in England, all fire and rescue authorities in England, or all fire and rescue authorities in England of a particular type². Such a requirement may limit the inspection to a particular matter³.

We may also carry out an inspection of a fire and rescue authority in England even though that inspection has not been set out in an inspection programme and the Home Secretary has not required us to do it⁴. Before doing so, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services must consult the Home Secretary⁵.

¹ Section 28A(2), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

² Section 28A(3), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

³ Section 28A(4), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

⁴ Section 28A(5), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

⁵ Section 28A(6), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

An overview of our proposed inspection programme for fire and rescue services 2018/19

Fire and rescue inspection programme

In May 2016, the Home Secretary established a wide-ranging reform programme for the fire and rescue services in England. This included a proposal to establish a rigorous and independent inspection regime for fire and rescue authorities.

In July 2017, the Home Office confirmed that HMIC would take on the role of inspecting fire and rescue services in England, and of assessing and reporting on the effectiveness and efficiency of each service. To reflect these new responsibilities, HMIC's name changed to HMICFRS.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017, which amended the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, contains provisions to strengthen existing powers to inspect fire and rescue authorities⁶.

We will inspect the fire and rescue services that carry out the main functions of a fire and rescue authority: fire safety, fire-fighting, road traffic accidents and other emergencies⁷. We will inspect all 45 fire and rescue services in England, in three sets of 15 services, beginning in summer 2018. We will consult the fire and rescue sector on the criteria for judgment. Each inspection will result in a rounded assessment and graded judgments for each fire and rescue service. We will publish a report of our findings for each fire and rescue service.

The principal questions the fire and rescue services inspection programme is designed to answer are below, along with the corresponding inspection focus.

⁶ Section 11, Policing and Crime Act 2017. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/3/contents

⁷ Sections 6–9, Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

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.

Our assessment of effectiveness will consider how well the fire and rescue service is performing its main functions in relation to fire safety, fire-fighting and road traffic accidents. The inspection will focus on the main 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.

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

Our 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 the three principal questions, the inspection will consider how fire and rescue services discharge the statutory functions of the fire and rescue authority as well as the wider work they do to keep the public safe.

This will be the first full assessment of all 45 fire and rescue services for some years. At the end of each set of 15 inspections, we intend to publish a report of our assessment of each of the fire and rescue service we have inspected, as well as a summary of themes emerging from the inspections.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services for England is required to report each year on the carrying out of inspections, including an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the fire and rescue authorities in England⁸.

National thematic inspections

National thematic inspections are in-depth examinations of specific fire and rescue service matters. Our monitoring processes may identify the need for a thematic inspection, or a thematic inspection may be commissioned by the Home Secretary. These inspections will identify areas of strong and weak practice in specific fire and rescue services, but will result also in recommendations that are relevant to the fire and rescue service as a whole. The Home Office can commission thematic inspections on individual issues if needed. We are not funded to carry out thematic inspections.

⁸ Section 28B, Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

Our inspection framework

Inspection framework for fire and rescue services

We will gather information to inform our assessments using a range of methods that include:

- analysis of documents and data;
- reviews of operational incidents;
- surveys of the public, and of fire and rescue services staff;
- interviews;
- focus groups; and
- observations of fire and rescue practice.

Following the first round of full inspections, we intend to move to a risk-based inspection programme, which we will develop and consult on separately. This allows inspection activity and resources to take account of known risks to public safety and to reflect the assessed performance of each fire and rescue service.

Graded judgments

We will assess fire and rescue services and give them graded judgments for the three principal questions in the inspection methodology (efficiency, effectiveness and people). We may give a single overall judgment for each service. We will test this during the pilot inspections and will make a final decision on our approach after the pilot inspections have finished. The categories of graded judgment are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

We make judgments against how efficient and effective fire and rescue services are, and how well they look after their people.

A judgment of good is based on policy, practice or performance that meets pre-defined grading criteria. The criteria are informed by any relevant national operational guidance or standards.

If the policy, practice or performance exceeds what is expected for a judgment of good, we will consider a judgment of outstanding.

If there are shortcomings in the policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, we will consider a judgment of requires improvement.

If there are serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, we will consider a judgment of inadequate.

Fire and rescue service authorities' priorities

Fire and rescue authorities must have regard to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England in carrying out their functions⁹. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England¹⁰ states that each fire and rescue authority must produce an integrated risk management plan that identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community.

Our inspectors will consider the content of the fire and rescue authority's integrated risk management plan and how this translates into the operational practice of the fire and rescue service. The plan will be used as a source of information about the assessment of risk and vulnerability for each service, the factors that affect considerations of public safety, and how each fire and rescue service will use prevention, protection and response activities to mitigate the risk to communities.

Professional standards

Part of the Home Office's fire reform programme is to develop a coherent and comprehensive set of professional standards for all areas of fire and rescue services' work, drawing on existing standards where appropriate. We will take account of all existing and new professional standards, including national operational guidance.

⁹ Section 21(7), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

¹⁰ Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, Department for Communities and Local Government, July 2012. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england

The Framework is prepared by the Home Secretary. It must set out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions; it may contain guidance to fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of any of their functions; and it may contain any other matter relating to fire and rescue authorities or their functions as the Home Secretary considers appropriate. (Section 21, Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004). Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/section/21

Methodology, monitoring, assurance and analysis

Advisory and reference groups

We have developed this inspection programme with fire and rescue services. It is designed to promote improvements throughout fire and rescue services.

We have established a fire and rescue service external reference group. Its members include those who have specific skills and experience in the areas that will be inspected, such as representatives from fire and rescue services, the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Home Office, the Local Government Association and police, fire and crime commissioners. We are using their knowledge and advice to establish a sound methodology for inspections.

Our fire technical advisory group considers how to develop appropriate methods of data collection and analysis to support the inspection methodology. The members of this group include representatives of the National Fire Chiefs Council co-ordinating committees, the Home Office and fire and rescue services.

Our monitoring process

HM inspectors of fire and rescue services (HMIs) will monitor all services regularly to promote improvements. If an HMI identifies a cause of concern about practice in a particular fire and rescue service, it will be raised with the relevant chief fire officer/chief executive/commissioner and the fire authority/police, fire and crime commissioner, so that they can take action.

Follow-up from previous inspections

We conduct follow-up activities throughout the year. They range from formal revisits to offering fire and rescue services support to help them respond to our findings. We also track the progress services have made against our recommendations.