

# Proposed fire and rescue services inspection programme and framework 2020/21

For consultation

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# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Consultation questions</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire &amp; Rescue Services</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>An overview of HMICFRS’s proposed inspection programme for fire and rescue services 2020/21</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Fire and rescue services inspection.....	8
Inspecting governance arrangements.....	10
National thematic inspections .....	10
<b>HMICFRS’s inspection framework</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Inspection framework for fire and rescue services.....	11
Fire and rescue service authorities’ priorities.....	12
<b>Methodology, monitoring, assurance and analysis</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Advisory and reference groups .....	13
HMICFRS’s monitoring process.....	13
Follow-up from previous inspections.....	13
<b>How to respond to this consultation</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Annex A – Fire and rescue service inspection methodology 2020/21</b> .....	<b>15</b>

## Foreword

In July 2017, HMICFRS began a programme of inspection into the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England. This was the first time in over a decade that the sector had been subject to independent inspection. We have just finished the first full inspection of every service and our remaining reports will be published in December 2019.

We have learned much about the fire sector over the past two years. We welcome the response to our work from services and authorities, who have generally viewed inspection as a positive development. We now need to consider how we should inspect services in our second cycle of inspections, which will begin in 2020, including how we should refine our approach to reflect what we have learned. This consultation document asks six questions about how we should do this.

We will use responses to refine our approach and produce a programme and framework, which we will then submit to the Home Secretary for approval. Over the coming months, we will consult those in the fire sector on our proposed judgment criteria and work with them to refine how we collect evidence.

Our principal approach at this stage is to evolve and improve our existing methodology, rather than reinvent it. Our inspection process worked. We inspected every service, giving clear judgments on three pillars and 11 questions covering effectiveness, efficiency and people. We have also refined the evidence and data we collect throughout the process. We believe that a second full cycle of inspection, covering the same essential characteristics of fire and rescue services, will mean we can give the public robust judgments on the performance of their local services. In each case, this will also allow us to gauge improvements since our first inspection visit, as well as giving us a strong foundation to consider a future move to a risk-based approach.

We are therefore proposing some relatively minor changes to the headline questions that we endeavour to answer through inspection. The changes we are proposing aim to formulate those questions better, based on our experience of completing one full round of inspections. Crucially, we will still examine how effectively and efficiently services provide their principal functions to the public, namely prevention, protection and response, as well as how well they look after their people. Later in this document, we explain our rationale for the changes we propose.

As part of our inspection reports, we intend to keep providing graded judgments, which will help the public to see how well their fire and rescue services are performing. We will also report on what improvements each service has made since our last inspection.

I should like to thank the fire and rescue sector for their co-operation to date. Our inspection programme continues to be developed through consultation with the fire and rescue sector, including members of our External Reference Group.

This public consultation will be open until 1700 on 29 November 2019. I hope you will offer your considered views, to help us design an inspection programme that leads to continued improvement in all fire and rescue services.

**(Sgd.) Thomas P Winsor**

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

## Consultation questions

This document provides details of HMICFRS's proposed fire and rescue services inspection programme and framework for 2020/21, and asks for your views on whether the right areas of fire and rescue services' activities are covered. In particular, we wish to receive your responses to the following questions:

1. What do you think of the proposed approach to FRS inspection that HMICFRS proposes to conduct in the next cycle? How could this be improved?
2. 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?
3. How best could HMICFRS report on the progress the service has made since the previous inspection?
4. What, if any, new or emerging problems for fire and rescue services should HMICFRS take into account in its inspections?
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?
6. What else should HMICFRS consider doing to make its fire and rescue service assessments as fair as they can be?

These questions are repeated in the body of this document. At the end of the document there is an explanation of how you can let us have your views.

# **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 which we believe the public requires to have answered, and publish our findings, conclusions and recommendations in an accessible form, using our expertise to interpret the evidence. We provide authoritative information to allow the public to compare the performance of their police force or fire and rescue service against others, and to determine whether performance has improved or deteriorated over time. Our recommendations are designed to bring about improvements in the service provided to the public.

## Introduction

This document provides details of HMICFRS's proposed inspection programme and framework for fire and rescue services for 2020/21. It concerns the second full cycle of inspection of all the fire and rescue services in England.

The fire and rescue services inspection programme enables HMICFRS to draw together evidence from inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services in England. Our focus is on the operational service provided to the public. Our inspection is a rounded assessment of every fire and rescue service and covers the effectiveness and efficiency of each service and how it looks after its people. It includes an assessment of:

- the operational service provided to the public (including prevention, protection, and response);
- the efficiency of the service (how well it provides value for money, allocates resources to match risk, and collaborates with other emergency services); and
- how well the service looks after its people (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).

HMICFRS's assessments are designed to enable the public to see how each fire and rescue service is performing, including changes over time and in relation to the performance of other services. The resulting assessments include graded judgments of performance.

This inspection programme and framework requires the approval of the Home Secretary before inspectors act in accordance with it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 28A(2), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

# An overview of HMICFRS's proposed inspection programme for fire and rescue services 2020/21

## Fire and rescue services inspection

As in cycle 1, HMICFRS will inspect how effective and efficient fire and rescue services are at carrying out their principal functions: fire safety, firefighting and responding to road traffic collisions and other emergencies.<sup>2</sup> We will inspect all 45 fire and rescue services in England, beginning in 2020.

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

### 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, and responds to fires and other emergencies, including major and multi-agency incidents.

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.

The more detailed draft FRS inspection methodology is provided at Annex A. The methodology indicates the changes we propose to make for our 2020/21 inspection from our first cycle. We ask for your views on the changes to the proposed methodology.

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<sup>2</sup> Sections 6-9, Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004



Our assessment of **effectiveness** will continue to consider how well each fire and rescue service is performing its principal functions of preventing fires happening, ensuring the public is kept safe through the regulation of fire safety, and responding to emergency incidents. During the second cycle of inspections we will provide the public with more clarity on how well fire and rescue services are prepared to respond to major incidents with other fire services and agencies.

Our assessment of **efficiency** will now make a clearer distinction between the way each fire and rescue service uses its resources to manage its current risks, and how well it is securing an affordable way of managing its risks in the future. New questions have been added which focus on whether a service can demonstrate what savings it has made, the effect of these on its operational performance, and whether its use of reserves is sustainable.

Our assessment of how each fire and rescue service looks after its **people** will remain focused on the leadership at all levels in the organisation, including training, diversity, values and culture. The question sets have been altered slightly to reflect an additional focus on the behaviours within the workforce, and to also consider individuals' career pathways.

Each inspection will result in a rounded assessment and graded judgments for each fire and rescue service. We will consult the fire and rescue sector on the criteria for judgments.

We will publish a report on each fire and rescue service inspection with our judgments. We may also report on particular themes emerging from our inspections if we consider it appropriate.

HM Chief Inspector of Fire and 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 England.<sup>3</sup> His first assessment will be published in December 2019.

### **Consultation questions**

1. What do you think of the proposed approach to FRS inspection that HMICFRS proposes to conduct in 2020/21? How could this be improved?
2. 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?

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<sup>3</sup> Section 28B, Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

## Inspecting governance arrangements

Our first round of inspections of the fire and rescue sector focused on the service provided to the public, rather than on the accountability and scrutiny structures that govern fire and rescue services. We will continue this approach as part of the 2020/21 inspection programme.

During inspections, HMICFRS inspectors will meet representatives from fire and rescue authorities, police, fire and crime commissioners, locally elected mayors and, in London, the Mayor's Office, but we will not routinely include an assessment of corporate governance as part of the fire and rescue service inspection programme.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, created powers to inspect fire and rescue authorities.<sup>4</sup> If, during a fire and rescue service inspection, we consider that we may need to conduct a corporate governance inspection of a fire authority, we will assess the need to do so against an appropriate set of indicators.

The Home Secretary may also, at any time, require HMICFRS 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 type.<sup>5</sup>

We are still developing an approach to corporate governance inspections and will consult on this shortly.

## National thematic inspections

We undertake thematic inspections where we make in-depth assessments of specific themes or issues. These inspections identify areas of strong and weak practice in specific fire and rescue services, and may result in recommendations that are relevant to the fire and rescue service as a whole.

We haven't yet undertaken a thematic inspection on a specific fire and rescue service matter. Potential themes may be identified through our monitoring processes or as a result of a commission from the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary can commission thematic inspections on individual matters if needed. HMICFRS is not funded to carry out thematic inspections as part of the 2020/21 inspection programme and framework, but we may undertake one if we consider it necessary. We will engage with the sector through our External Reference Group should a decision be taken to undertake one.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 11, [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#).

<sup>5</sup> Section 28A(3), [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#).

# HMICFRS's inspection framework

## Inspection framework for fire and rescue services

The fire and rescue service inspection 2020/21 will be the second round of inspection of all 45 fire and rescue services in England. Following this round of full inspections, we may move to a risk-based inspection programme, which will be developed and consulted on at a later date.

In inspections, we 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.

### Graded judgments

Fire and rescue services will continue to be assessed and given graded judgments for the three principal pillars of the inspection methodology (efficiency, effectiveness and people), as well as for eleven diagnostic questions within the pillars. The categories of graded judgment are:

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

**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 a 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 a fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of **inadequate**.

We will set out in our reports the progress made by the fire and rescue service since its last inspection.

## **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 functions.<sup>6</sup> The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England<sup>7</sup> 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 each fire and rescue authority's integrated risk management plan and how this translates into the operational practice of its fire and rescue service. The plan will be used as a source of information about the assessment of risk and vulnerability in respect of each service, the factors which 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.

A newly created Fire Standards Board has been established as part of the Home Office's reform programme for fire and rescue services. When designing future inspections, we will take account of all existing and new professional standards for fire and rescue services, including national operational guidance.

### **Consultation questions**

3. How best could HMICFRS report on the progress the service has made since the previous inspection?
4. What, if any, new or emerging problems for fire and rescue services should HMICFRS take into account in its inspections?

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<sup>6</sup> Section 21(7), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

<sup>7</sup> 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.)

## Methodology, monitoring, assurance and analysis

### Advisory and reference groups

This inspection programme and framework is being developed with fire and rescue services and authorities. It has been designed to promote improvements across 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 continue to use 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 the Fire Technical Advisory Group include representatives of the National Fire Chiefs Council co-ordinating committees, the Home Office, representative bodies, fire and rescue services and others.

### HMICFRS's monitoring process

HM inspectors of fire and rescue services (HMIs) will regularly monitor all services in order 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 and rescue authority, so that they can take action.

### Follow-up from previous inspections

We conduct a number of follow-up activities throughout the year. They include formal revisits, and tracking the progress that services have made against our recommendations. We will report on the progress each service has made since the previous inspection.

#### Consultation questions

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

## How to respond to this consultation

Please submit your answers to the consultation questions, together with any other comments, by email to: [HMICFRSfireinspectionprogramme@hmicfrs.gov.uk](mailto:HMICFRSfireinspectionprogramme@hmicfrs.gov.uk), no later than 1700 on 29 November 2019.

If you prefer, you can post responses to the Chief Operating Officer, HMICFRS, 6th floor, Globe House, 89 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PN.

If you have a complaint or comment about HMICFRS's approach to consultation, you can email this to: [HMICFRSfireinspectionprogramme@hmicfrs.gov.uk](mailto:HMICFRSfireinspectionprogramme@hmicfrs.gov.uk)

## How consultation responses will be reviewed

HM Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services will consider respondents' views and, if he determines it appropriate to do so, change the proposed inspection programme and framework before putting it to the Home Secretary for approval. In accordance with section 28A(2), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, HM Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services must obtain the approval of the Secretary of State for an inspection programme or inspection framework before the inspectors act in accordance with it.

[The final document, which will be appropriately revised to reflect the results of the consultation, will be made available on our website.](#)

You should note that we may publish consultation responses, or summaries of them, except where they have been provided in confidence. Please indicate in your response if you do not wish it to be published.

## **Annex A – Fire and rescue service inspection methodology 2020/21**

### **1. How effective is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?**

#### **1.1 How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies?**

1.1.1 How well does the FRS engage with the local community to build up a comprehensive risk profile?

1.1.2 To what extent does the FRS use information from other sources to build the risk profile?

1.1.3 How well does the FRS identify and assess current, emerging or future changes in the risk of fire and other risks?

1.1.4 How well does the FRS define the level of community risk, including those communities most at risk or seldom heard, and risks affecting the most vulnerable people?

1.1.5 To what extent is risk information systematically and accurately gathered by staff?

1.1.6 How well is information on risk communicated throughout the FRS?

1.1.7 To what extent are the results of operational activity used to make sure there is a common understanding of risk?

#### **1.2 How effective is the FRS at preventing fires and other risks?**

1.2.1 To what extent is preventative activity, such as the home fire safety check programme, focused on the people most at risk?

1.2.2 How well does the FRS raise awareness, and campaign to prevent fires and promote community safety?

1.2.3 What progress has the FRS, with partner organisations, made in preventing fires and keeping people safe?

1.2.4 To what extent does the FRS identify vulnerability and safeguard vulnerable people?

1.2.5 How well does the FRS work with partner organisations to promote road safety and reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads?

1.2.6 How well does the FRS work with partner organisations to tackle fire setting behaviour and support the prosecution of arsonists?

### **1.3 How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety?**

1.3.1 To what extent is enforcement and inspection based on risk?

1.3.2 To what extent is a systematic, consistent and robust fire safety audit undertaken by staff?

1.3.3 How well does the FRS take enforcement action against those who fail to comply with fire safety regulations?

1.3.4 How well does the FRS work with other enforcement agencies to share information on risk and take joint enforcement action?

1.3.5 To what extent is the FRS working in partnership to reduce the burden of unwanted fire signals?

1.3.6 To what extent does the FRS engage with local businesses or large organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations?

### **1.4 How effective is the FRS at responding to fires and other emergencies?**

1.4.1 To what extent does FRS operational policy reflect national operational guidance?

1.4.2 To what extent does the FRS respond proportionately to incidents based on risk?

1.4.3 How well does the FRS use and communicate information about incident risk?

1.4.4 How well does the FRS command fire service assets at incidents?

1.4.5 How well does the FRS respond to cross-border incidents with other FRSs?

1.4.6 How well does the FRS communicate information about incidents and risks to the public?

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

### **1.5 How well prepared is the FRS to respond to major and multi-agency incidents?**

1.5.1 To what extent has the FRS anticipated and assessed community risks likely to require a multi-agency response?

1.5.2 How well has the FRS established response plans for dealing with major and multi-agency incidents?



1.5.3 How well has the FRS trained, exercised and tested arrangements for dealing with major and multi-agency incidents?

1.5.4 How well prepared is the FRS to form part of a multi-agency response in line with JESIP?

1.5.5 How well prepared is the FRS to respond to major incidents with other FRSs?

1.5.6 How well does the FRS exchange learning and notable practice with other FRSs, including learning from local, regional and national incidents?

## **2. How efficient is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?**

### **2.1 How well does the FRS use resources to manage risk?**

2.1.1 To what extent do FRS plans address the risks identified in the integrated risk management plan?

2.1.2 To what extent are the FRS plans built on sound planning assumptions, subject to informed challenge and meet financial requirements?

2.1.3 To what extent does the FRS have the capacity and capability it needs to achieve operational performance, including the allocation of resources to prevention, protection and response activity?

2.1.4 How well does the FRS make sure its workforce's time is productive?

2.1.5 How well is the service making use of new ways of working, including having a flexible workforce and flexible working pattern?

2.1.6 To what extent is the FRS actively exploring all opportunities for collaboration within and beyond the fire and rescue sector, and are the anticipated benefits from collaboration being realised?

2.1.7 To what extent are business continuity arrangements in place and how often are they tested?

2.1.8 To what extent does the FRS show sound financial management of non-pay costs, including estates, fleet and equipment through benchmarking, contract renegotiation and procurement?

2.1.9 To what extent can the FRS show that the efficiencies it has made have sustained or improved its operational performance?

## **2.2 How well is the FRS securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks now and in the future?**

2.2.1 To what extent does the FRS understand and take action to mitigate its main or significant financial risks?

2.2.2 To what extent does the FRS have a track record for achieving savings and avoiding any residual future budget gaps?

2.2.3 To what extent is the FRS's use of reserves sustainable and promoting new ways of working?

2.2.4 To what extent does the FRS estate and fleet strategy, and changes to estate and fleet, support future service provision?

2.2.5 How is the FRS planning to invest in future innovation and use technology and new ways of working?

2.2.6 To what extent does the service have the capacity and capability it needs to achieve future change?

2.2.7 To what extent does the FRS influence how it works with others in the future in order to improve efficiency?

2.2.8 To what extent has the FRS considered and exploited external funding opportunities, or options for generating income?

## **3. How well does the FRS look after its people?**

### **3.1 How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?**

3.1.1 How well does the FRS understand the wellbeing needs of its workforce and act to improve workforce wellbeing?

3.1.2 To what extent are service values and behaviours demonstrated at all levels of the organisation?

3.1.3 How well do leaders model and maintain the values that the FRS expects of them?

3.1.4 To what extent is a culture of promoting health and safety evident at all levels of the FRS?

### **3.2 How well trained and skilled are FRS staff?**

3.2.1 How well does the FRS understand the skills and capabilities of its workforce, including the use of technology?

3.2.2 How well does the FRS ensure it has the right workforce mix of skills and capabilities?

3.2.3 To what extent has the FRS established a culture of learning and improvement?

### **3.3 How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity?**

3.3.1 How well do leaders seek feedback and challenge from all parts of the workforce?

3.3.2 How well does the FRS identify and resolve workforce concerns?

3.3.3 How well does the FRS identify and address potential disproportionality in recruitment, retention and progression?

### **3.4 How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability?**

3.4.1 How well does the FRS manage and develop the individual performance of its staff?

3.4.2 To what extent are the career pathways of all staff effectively managed?

3.4.3 How fairly does the FRS identify high potential members of the workforce to become senior leaders?

3.4.4 How fairly does the FRS select for leadership roles at all levels?