

London Fire Brigade

Inspection of the London Fire
Brigade's progress to implement the
recommendations from the Grenfell
Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report

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Foreword

For the families and friends of those who called Grenfell Tower home, life is forever changed. The harrowing effects of the fire continue to reverberate more widely – in the Grenfell community, in the London borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and in the rest of the capital. Indeed, around the world.

The fire at Grenfell focused attention on the London Fire Brigade. It was one of the biggest challenges the brigade had ever had to face. And it rightly continues to shape how the brigade goes about its work today.

In August 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to review how the London Fire Brigade was progressing with its plan to implement the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report. The inquiry published its report on 30 October 2019. Our report, just over one year later, shows the public how well we think the London Fire Brigade has responded.

We know that the brigade's approach matters deeply to the survivors and the families and friends of those who lost their lives. They, like us, want to be assured that the brigade has learned lessons and that the recommendations are being acted on as quickly as possible.

We are encouraged by the progress the brigade has started to make over the past year. Clearly, there has been a sustained focus and effort on understanding the lessons from the fire and acting where the inquiry recommended it should. The brigade's leadership is certainly aware of what needs to be done and we now sense a wider recognition – at all levels – of the scale of change necessary.

It is impossible to judge progress over the past year without recognising the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. [We were impressed by the brigade's preparedness for, and response to, the pandemic.](#) However, the brigade has told us that COVID-19 has affected its ability to make some of the planned improvements. And there is still a huge amount of work for the brigade to do. At the time of our inspection, the brigade had completed only 4 of the 29 recommendations that we focused on. Most importantly, it needs to improve how it manages its different work plans to bring the greatest benefit to public safety. Although many improvements are scheduled to be introduced in the first half of 2021, it isn't clear how all this work will be achieved.

The brigade's assurance processes also need to be better. The leadership needs to be confident that the actions being taken are improving the brigade's response and public safety. Yes, there has been a sustained effort to make improvements, most conspicuously since the publication of the inquiry's Phase 1 report. But more still needs to be done.

Summary

In August 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned us to review how the London Fire Brigade was progressing with and governing its action plan to implement the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report.

Our terms of reference included commenting on the extent to which:

- the governance arrangements put in place by the commissioner of the brigade were effective at ensuring progress against the action plan for delivering the recommendations; and
- the brigade had made progress with each of the in-scope recommendations in the action plan.

Our inspection has focused on the 29 recommendations in the Phase 1 report, which are listed in Annex A. Of these, 16 are for the London Fire Brigade and 13 are directed either at fire and rescue services or emergency services more generally, which includes the brigade.

Background to this inspection

On 14 June 2017, a fire at Grenfell Tower, a high-rise residential building in North Kensington, West London, cost 72 lives. On 15 June 2017, the then Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Theresa May MP, announced a public inquiry into the causes of the fire.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry was set up to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire. Sir Martin Moore-Bick was appointed as chair of the inquiry. The inquiry has been conducted in two phases. Phase 1 considers what happened on the night of 14 June 2017. The Phase 1 report, which includes findings and recommendations, was published on 30 October 2019. Phase 2 examines what caused the disaster, including what allowed the fire to spread, as set out in the Phase 1 report. It also examines how the London Fire Brigade is organised and managed.

In December 2019, we published [our report into the efficiency and effectiveness of the brigade](#), as part of our first inspections of all fire and rescue services in England. Our findings were consistent with those of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. We found that, while the brigade had learned lessons from the fire, it had been slow to put in place the changes needed. We identified the training and skills of the brigade's staff as a cause of concern. The brigade had a significant backlog of training for staff in risk-critical skills such as incident command.

The previous commissioner, Dany Cotton, retired at the end of December 2019. Andy Roe took on the role of commissioner on 1 January 2020.

Methodology

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that we carried out our inspection, including focus groups and interviews, virtually. We reviewed documents and service records and did an online survey of the brigade's staff. We haven't drawn any conclusions from the survey alone.

Our findings

It is over three and a half years since the fire at Grenfell Tower. Since the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report was published in October 2019, there has been greater focus and priority on the recommendations and the action needed to make improvements. While we are encouraged by the progress the London Fire Brigade has made over the past year, there is still a significant amount of work for it to do. Many of the measures needed to address the failings of the brigade identified in the report have yet to be implemented.

At the time of our inspection, the brigade had completed only 4 of the 29 recommendations. It expects to have implemented 17 more recommendations by March 2021. These include 12 recommendations that are delayed by three months or more. The brigade has explained that the delays are due to the reprioritisation of staff in response to COVID-19, and the need for consultation on the revised and new policies. A further six recommendations require action either from London emergency services working together or from national organisations. These recommendations are due for completion by autumn 2021. Two recommendations aren't planned to be completed until after 2021.

Governance

Better co-ordination is being put in place, but assurance arrangements must improve quickly to avoid mistakes at a major incident

Addressing the recommendations is a priority for the commissioner and the brigade's leadership. But the public needs to know that, if an incident as potentially catastrophic as Grenfell were to happen again, the brigade's response would be much better. The brigade needs to improve how it co-ordinates its different plans to act on the recommendations. It will then be able to monitor its progress and manage risk more consistently and effectively. Accelerating this improvement work will allow the brigade to invest more energy in making a difference to the way it serves the public.

The brigade recognises that it needs to improve on the above areas and is now starting to act. Its new transformation board and director of transformation are focusing on co-ordinating plans and risks. They use performance dashboards to give a clear understanding of progress against deadlines. They are appointing more staff, including new programme managers to support the improvement process and consultants to help develop an approach to different areas of work, and they are improving leaders' skills in managing change in the organisation.

Assurance processes need to be better. Only then can leaders be confident that the way the brigade operates is improving and that the potential for human error is

reduced as far as it possibly can be. The brigade has recently taken steps to improve assurance, such as establishing an independent audit committee, but it still needs to do more.

More high-rise residential buildings are being inspected, and more often

Inspecting more high-rise residential buildings is a priority for the brigade's fire safety officers. The number of these inspections and their frequency are increasing. The brigade is on target to inspect or review the safety of all high-rise residential buildings in London by the end of 2021. This is in line with the Building Risk Review Programme, a government-funded scheme for England. We welcome this improvement, which we believe will improve public safety.

The brigade has also identified a need to improve its competency in fire safety. Retaining staff with the right skills and experience has been difficult, so the brigade is focusing on developing specialist skills in staff. It has also started to train firefighters to complete fire safety visits to lower-risk buildings.

Evacuation and operational risk

Updated policies are starting to be introduced and staff are being trained

The brigade has acted quickly in some areas to strengthen its response to reports of fires in high-rise residential buildings. It sends more commanders, more fire engines, and better targeted specialist resources, such as vehicles with extended height ladders, to incidents at these buildings than it did before the Grenfell Tower fire. It also provided fire escape hoods, called 'smoke hoods', to all fire stations at the end of 2018. These hoods can be worn by members of the public while they evacuate smoke-filled areas.

Updated policies on high-rise firefighting and fire survival guidance (FSG), and a new policy on evacuation and rescue, are planned to be in place by April 2021. The new and updated policies are detailed and include what was learned from the fire. A comprehensive training programme on the policies for incident commanders and firefighters has begun. All firefighters and incident commanders are receiving eLearning on the new policies with a knowledge test at the end. At the time of our inspection, most staff had completed this training.

More practical training in the new working practices is needed

All staff we spoke to said they needed more practical training on the new and updated working practices. Exercises are being planned at stations with scenarios involving high-rise residential buildings. For 18 months from April 2021, the brigade will carry out practical exercises at appropriate sites. But the planning and scheduling for these exercises hasn't started yet and suitable venues still need to be found.

Incident commanders consistently told us that they would use their discretion to put some training into practice immediately if appropriate, even though the policies don't come into effect until the end of March 2021. We were given several recent examples of this being done. Although we welcome this, the brigade needs to assure itself that the lessons learned from the fire will be consistently applied by incident commanders.

Staff better understand the risk of building materials

This relates to recommendation 2. Information and training have improved staff understanding of the risks and signs of fire in external high-rise walls. Nearly all incident commanders and firefighters we spoke to feel better prepared to deal with such incidents than before the Grenfell Tower fire. There is greater emphasis on carrying out risk assessments at high-rise residential buildings. And the brigade's new quality assurance process for these assessments is robust. Better information is being made available about the operational risks that firefighters are likely to face when responding to incidents.

We welcome the greater focus given to assessing risks at high-rise residential buildings, and to providing better information for firefighters and commanders attending incidents. The brigade has shown that it has a strong grasp on this activity and effective assurance arrangements in place to support it.

Control room

Good progress is being made but supervisors need more training

The brigade is making good progress with the improvements needed in its control room. It is working to make [fire control](#) more central to its operational response. Staff are included more in policy design and training. Regular refresher training is in place for staff.

The updated FSG policy, which control room staff helped develop, is planned to take effect at the end of March 2021. FSG training has taken place and more is planned on the updated FSG guidance and new information technology (IT) systems. Plans are in place for control room staff to be involved in the high-rise building exercises proposed to start in April 2021. Control room managers have a critical role in fire survival, and training for their role in co-ordinating an FSG response is still being developed.

Better technology is being introduced to help rescue people trapped by fire

The brigade has made improvements to its command and control system to help handle multiple calls from the public when they are trapped by a fire. It has also developed an FSG application (app) that is in its final stages of testing. These innovative and positive changes are designed to improve the information available to incident commanders from the control room so that they can prioritise rescue action.

A national radio talk group has been set up so that a control room can immediately let other fire and rescue services know when they are dealing with a major incident. Other control rooms can then provide support with handling FSG calls if needed. This should mean that members of the public reporting fires and other emergencies speak to control operators who know more about the incident in terms of its nature and extent.

The brigade is in the process of replacing its command unit vehicles and buying a new IT operating system to be used in them. The new operating system is designed to be more reliable than the previous version, and training in its use is being provided. The brigade is also making changes to the way the vehicles are staffed and where

they operate from. It has increased staffing levels and more station-based staff are being trained to operate the vehicles. There will be closer working and training between control room and command unit staff in future. This includes taking part in exercises.

Incident command

Incident command training and competence assessment remain a risk

Incident command training and assessing competence remain a risk for the brigade. The improvements will take time to introduce. Some plans have already been delayed because there aren't enough staff with the right skills.

Many of the inquiry's recommendations relating to incident command need incident commanders to be trained in revised or new working practices. The brigade has made the competence of its incident commanders a priority and has allocated more staff to work with its training provider to design new courses. The brigade has started developing new training courses for levels 1 and 2 incident commanders who are junior commanders. (Incident command levels range from 1 to 4; senior commanders are trained at levels 3 or 4 and usually take charge on complex incidents that involve more resources.) However, the limited number of staff able to design these courses is causing delays.

Meanwhile, the brigade has funded more courses from external training providers. This has ensured that levels 3 and 4 incident commanders have had the right training. The brigade has started to introduce assessments for incident commanders like those in place in other fire and rescue services. Only a limited number of brigade staff have the skills to carry out assessments, which is causing delays.

Communication at incidents is getting better, but new equipment will take time to arrive

The inquiry recommended improvements to the way the incident commander and control room co-ordinate firefighters involved in rescues from buildings. The new and revised policies include processes to track rescue action being carried out by crews entering the building with breathing apparatus. The incident commanders and firefighters we spoke to have a good level of knowledge and understanding of these new procedures. There is a comprehensive project to improve communications between the incident commander, command units and control room. This project includes buying better radios to be used at an incident, and devices to boost radio signals. It also aims to improve the communication to and from firefighters wearing helmets and breathing apparatus. But this project is being carried out in stages and, at the time of our inspection, isn't scheduled to be fully in place until May 2022.

Working with emergency services

Joint working with other emergency services is improving, but more training is needed

Recommendations in this area need other London emergency services or other national organisations to work together with the brigade. The brigade is acting to address the recommendations and, when appropriate, amend or create guidance for its staff.

The brigade has started to improve how it works with other emergency services when responding to a major incident. In the early stages of an incident, information is now exchanged with other services more consistently, which results in a better, more joined-up response.

The brigade has acted to make sure that the lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report are applied across all London's emergency service control rooms (for example, those of the Metropolitan Police Service [MPS] and London Ambulance Service [LAS]). But still more work needs to be done to incorporate the recommendations into guidance, both nationally and in London. Training needs to be improved for the brigade's incident commanders and fire control staff. Technology intended to improve the sharing of incident information between London's emergency services is due to be installed by autumn 2021.

Table 1: The brigade's progress with implementing recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report (numbers are from the original report so not always consecutive because not all apply to London Fire Brigade)

Number	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 recommendation	Status
2	All fire and rescue services ensure that their personnel at all levels understand the risk of fire taking hold in the external walls of high-rise buildings and know how to recognise it when it occurs.	Delayed
3	The LFB review, and revise as appropriate, Appendix 1 to PN633 ¹ to ensure that it fully reflects the principles in GRA 3.2. ²	Completed
4	The LFB ensure that all officers of the rank of Crew Manager and above are trained in carrying out the requirements of PN633 relating to the inspection of high-rise buildings.	Completed
7	All fire and rescue services be equipped to receive and store electronic plans and to make them available to incident commanders and control room managers.	On track
10	The LFB review its policies on communications between the control room and the incident commander.	On track

¹ Policy number 633 (PN633) is the brigade's policy on high-rise firefighting.

² Generic risk assessments 3.2 (GRA 3.2) is national operational guidance on high-rise firefighting.

Number	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 recommendation	Status
11	All officers who may be expected to act as incident commanders (ie, all those above the rank of Crew Manager) receive training directed to the specific requirements of communication with the control room.	Delayed
12	All CROs ³ of Assistant Operations Manager rank and above receive training directed to the specific requirements of communication with the incident commander.	Delayed
13	A dedicated communication link be provided between the senior officer in the control room and the incident commander.	Delayed
14	The LFB's policies be amended to draw a clearer distinction between callers seeking advice and callers who believe they are trapped and need rescuing.	Delayed
15	The LFB provide regular and more effective refresher training to CROs at all levels, including supervisors.	Delayed
16	All fire and rescue services develop policies for handling a large number of FSG calls simultaneously.	Delayed
17	Electronic systems be developed to record FSG information in the control room and display it simultaneously at the bridgehead and in any command units.	On track
18	Policies be developed for managing a transition from "stay put" to "get out".	Delayed
19	Control room staff receive training directed specifically to handling such a change of advice and conveying it effectively to callers.	Delayed
20	Steps be taken to investigate methods by which assisting control rooms can obtain access to the information available to the host control room.	Delayed
22	The LFB develop policies and training to ensure better control of deployments and the use of resources.	Delayed
23	The LFB develop policies and training to ensure that better information is obtained from crews returning from deployments and that the information is recorded in a form that enables it to be made available immediately to the incident commander (and thereafter to the command units and the control room).	On track
24	The LFB develop a communication system to enable direct communication between the control room and the incident commander and improve the means of communication between the incident commander and the bridgehead.	On track

³ Control room officers (CROs) work in fire and rescue services' control rooms.

Number	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 recommendation	Status
25	The LFB investigate the use of modern communication techniques to provide a direct line of communication between the control room and the bridgehead, allowing information to be transmitted directly between the control room and the bridgehead and providing an integrated system of recording FSG information and the results of deployments.	On track
26	The LFB urgently take steps to obtain equipment that enables firefighters wearing helmets and breathing apparatus to communicate with the bridgehead effectively, including when operating in high-rise buildings.	On track
27	Urgent steps be taken to ensure that the command support system is fully operative on all command units and that crews are trained in its use.	Completed
29	Fire and rescue services develop policies for partial and total evacuation of high-rise residential buildings and training to support them.	Delayed
34	All fire and rescue services be equipped with smoke hoods to assist in the evacuation of occupants through smoke-filled exit routes.	Completed
40	The Joint Doctrine be amended to make it clear: that each emergency service must communicate the declaration of a Major Incident to all other Category 1 Responders as soon as possible.	Delayed
41	The Joint Doctrine be amended to make it clear: that on the declaration of a Major Incident clear lines of communication must be established as soon as possible between the control rooms of the individual emergency services.	Delayed
42	The Joint Doctrine be amended to make it clear: that a single point of contact should be designated within each control room to facilitate such communication.	Delayed
43	The Joint Doctrine be amended to make it clear: that a "METHANE" message ⁴ should be sent as soon as possible by the emergency service declaring a Major Incident.	Delayed
44	Steps be taken to investigate the compatibility of the LFB systems with those of the MPS and the LAS with a view to enabling all three emergency services' systems to read each other's messages.	Delayed

⁴ 'METHANE' message is the recognised common model for passing incident information between the emergency services and their control rooms.

Number	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 recommendation	Status
46	The LFB, the MPS, the LAS and the London local authorities all investigate ways of improving the collection of information about survivors and making it available more rapidly to those wishing to make contact with them.	Delayed

About the inspection

About us

HMICFRS independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces in England and Wales, and fire and rescue services in England – in the public interest. In preparing our reports, we ask the questions that citizens would ask, and publish the answers in an accessible form. We use our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

Our commission

On 4 August 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned us to undertake:

“a light touch review of the governance and progress of London Fire Brigade’s action plan to implement the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report. An early review, carried out by HMICFRS, would indicate whether London’s significant transformation programme is starting to have a positive effect and they have made sufficient progress on delivering against the recommendations.”

The events that led to this inspection

Grenfell Tower fire

On 14 June 2017, a fire broke out in the kitchen of Flat 16 at Grenfell Tower, a high-rise residential building in North Kensington, West London. Firefighters from the brigade attended the fire and within minutes of their arrival had put out the fire in the kitchen. But the fire had escaped to the outside of the building, setting alight the aluminium composite material cladding. The fire spread quickly and within a few hours almost the whole building was on fire.

The fire cost 72 lives. A total of 227 people escaped from the tower.

Grenfell Tower Inquiry

On 15 June 2017, the then Prime Minister announced a public inquiry into the fire. The inquiry was set up to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire. On 28 June 2017, Sir Martin Moore-Bick was appointed as chair of the inquiry.

The inquiry has been separated into two phases. Phase 1 examines what happened on the night of 14 June 2017. This includes the beginning of the fire, how the fire spread and the events that resulted in such tragic loss of life. It also includes the response of the brigade and other emergency services. The Phase 1 report, with findings and recommendations, was published on 30 October 2019.

On 27 January 2020, the inquiry's Phase 2 hearings began. Phase 2 examines the events leading up to the fire and how Grenfell Tower came to be in a condition that allowed the fire to spread in the way it did. This includes the design and construction of the building, building regulations and fire safety measures.

Our previous inspection

In December 2019, we published [our report on the performance of the London Fire Brigade](#) as part of our first inspections of all fire and rescue services in England. Our findings were consistent with those of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. We found that, while the brigade had learned lessons from Grenfell, it had been slow to put in place the changes needed.

In our report, we identified a cause of concern about how well trained and skilled the brigade's staff were. The brigade had a significant backlog of training for staff in risk-critical skills such as incident command and emergency fire engine driving. Some staff hadn't had training in these skills for many years. Nor did staff have individual reassessments of their competence in incident command.

We recommended that, by 28 February 2020, the brigade should develop a plan to:

- remove gaps in all risk-critical skills training; and
- reassess incident command competence at all levels in line with national guidance, and determine what arrangements it will put in place when staff fail to achieve the standard set by the brigade.

The purpose of this inspection

The brigade has accepted the findings and recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report.

The report includes 46 recommendations, 16 of which are directed at the brigade. A further 13 are directed either at fire and rescue services or emergency services more generally, which includes the brigade. Our inspection has focused on these 29 recommendations, which are listed in Annex A. Most of the other recommendations are for owners and managers of high-rise residential buildings.

Based on our commission, the purpose of the inspection is to offer our judgment on whether the brigade has made enough progress in meeting the recommendations.

Terms of reference

The terms of reference that we agreed with the Home Secretary required us to comment on:

- to what extent the governance arrangements put in place by the London Fire Commissioner are effective at ensuring progress against the action plan for delivering the recommendations;⁵ and

⁵ This includes how the brigade is preparing for the changes required by recommendations that aren't directed solely at the brigade or other emergency services.

- what progress the brigade has made with each of the in-scope recommendations in the action plan.

The remit of our inspection

Our inspection has focused on the actions taken by the brigade in response to the recommendations in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report. We haven't inspected what actions other fire and rescue services, or emergency services, have taken.

We have reviewed the governance arrangements put in place by the brigade. This doesn't include the governance arrangements put in place by the Mayor of London and the Greater London Assembly.

Our methodology

We reviewed more than 200 documents. These included policy and guidance documents, training plans, action plans, project update reports, communications to staff, and minutes of meetings. Most documents were from the brigade, but some were from the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) (NFCC) and other organisations.

Because of the restrictions imposed at the time of our inspection by the COVID-19 pandemic, we conducted this inspection entirely virtually. Over a seven-week period in November and December 2020, we held 97 interviews and 10 focus groups with a total of 40 firefighters. We reviewed a sample of the brigade's training records. We also interviewed representatives from the NFCC, trades unions, other emergency services (the MPS and LAS) and the London Resilience Forum.

We ran an online survey for the brigade's operational and control room staff to complete. The survey was open to staff between 22 October and 20 November 2020. Of 549 responses, 498 were from incident commanders and 51 were from fire control staff. This is 30 percent of all the brigade's incident commanders and 52 percent of staff who work in the control room.

In this report, we refer to survey evidence only when it has been checked against (triangulated) other evidence from our inspection. This is standard in all our inspections. We don't draw conclusions from a survey alone.

Governance

Areas for improvement

- The brigade should better manage its risks and action plans to enable its improvement work to be accelerated.
- The brigade should establish effective assurance processes so its leaders can be confident that operational practice is improving.

The London Fire Commissioner has stated publicly that addressing the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry is a priority for the brigade. This message has been clearly communicated to brigade staff, who support the drive to make improvements. Staff were told about proposals to change working practices in a series of briefings by senior officers.

Senior leaders describe a more open approach developing over the past year. Now, staff are encouraged to speak up and discuss their concerns. Senior staff also recognise that they need to work more closely with colleagues from other departments to better co-ordinate their work. This work has started, but the brigade knows that more needs to be done.

Action plan

Keeping track of progress

The brigade has one main action plan to manage and monitor progress against the recommendations from the Phase 1 Inquiry report and our 2019 inspection. The transformation board checks progress against this plan at its meetings each month. The director of transformation chairs the meetings and other directors attend. Action owners – those responsible for getting the specific work done – only attend if needed.

The transformation board was set up in May 2020 and oversees work in the transformation delivery plan. This plan was agreed in January 2020 and outlines the priorities for improving the organisation in the long term. Since the transformation board first met, the brigade has used information about work plans and risk grading more effectively when it examines progress. It uses dashboards to clearly show progress against deadlines. Senior leaders recognise that these recent changes have brought benefits, but they also acknowledge that there is still more to do.

The main action plan is a spreadsheet showing deadlines and action owners. These action owners are expected to update their sections each month but staff told

us that the spreadsheet format is unwieldy and difficult to use. And there are no senior responsible owners for the recommendations or groups of recommendations.

The brigade reports to the Home Secretary and the Mayor of London each month on its progress against the recommendations. The comprehensive report is scrutinised by the transformation board and approved by the commissioner's board. The commissioner's board makes important decisions on policy and actions that need funding.

Funding for improvements

Funding has been provided to make improvements and progress actions. For example, there is funding for new incident command vehicles and extra staff to operate them. There is also extra funding for technology to improve communication systems and for more incident command training on top of the contracted training. A transformation fund of £7.7 million is available to support improvement activity. But senior leaders see future funding as at risk because the brigade must make efficiency savings during the remaining of this financial year and 2021/22.

Monitoring work and addressing risk across departments

Planned improvement activity stretches across many departments with significant interdependencies – that is, work that relies on other areas of work before it can be finished. We found evidence of missed opportunities to join up the work of different teams and departments as it is being put in place. For example, new training material for fire control staff on the FSG policy wasn't produced at the same time as that for station-based staff. And there is no critical pathway for the work plans in the programme. This makes assessing pinch points and identifying risks harder.

It also means that the improvements aren't being made efficiently. The public should be able to see a clear improvement in the way the brigade responds to fires. But benefits of the improvement will be lost if the brigade's action lacks co-ordination. Progress reporting and monitoring of improvements underway is inconsistent across the brigade. A large amount of activity is planned for the first half of 2021, and it isn't clear how it will all be managed effectively.

And the same applies to identifying and mitigating risks. This inconsistency in risk management reflects the findings from our 2019 inspection. We found evidence of risks regarding some work plans and deadlines being properly addressed. For example, staff have been sent to the Fire Service College for incident command training because it became clear that the brigade's courses wouldn't be ready until early 2021. But some risks aren't being recorded or managed by senior leaders. High-rise building exercises are an important part of the training plan, but many senior staff foresee that the brigade won't be able to secure access to the number of venues it needs. This risk hasn't been escalated, so senior leaders have yet to address the problem and find a solution.

Managing different areas of work

The brigade has identified the need to improve how projects are structured, monitored, reported and assured. Chief officers also know that senior leaders lack the skills and capacity they need to support these improvements. Experts in programme management have been brought in to support the improvement process. The brigade is appointing consultants to help it better manage different work plans (called ‘a portfolio management approach’) and improve the skills of leaders to manage organisational change.

The brigade has also identified that it needs to improve how it gives senior leaders confidence that its projects, programmes and policies will achieve what they have been set out to do, and on time. It proposes to introduce a new assurance framework to do this. We welcome greater emphasis on assurance and increasing the capacity to carry out this work.

The amount of change needed to address the recommendations is significant. Many of the recommendations have a requirement for staff training and exercising in new or revised working practices. An independent operational assurance adviser has recently been appointed. This person will tell the commissioner each month how effective the brigade is in its operations, which will include how the changes are being put in place. The brigade is considering how other teams who are responsible for quality-assuring the effectiveness of training and operational practice will work in the future.

The brigade has also put together an independent audit committee. Members have been appointed and held their first meeting in December 2020. It is proposed that this committee will review earlier internal and external audits, and reports from bodies like us.

We are pleased to see the brigade’s ambition and plans to better manage its improvement work. But the public needs to know that, if an incident as potentially catastrophic as Grenfell were to happen again, the brigade’s response would be much better.

It has been a year since the inquiry published its recommendations and we reported on our first inspection. But still the basic building blocks of programme and change management are only now being established. The brigade needs to accelerate its improvement work so that it can invest its energy in making a real difference to the way it serves the public.

Preparing for future change

Changes to buildings

Several of the inquiry’s recommendations require changes in the law so that owners and managers of high-rise residential buildings must take measures to improve fire safety. These include testing lifts that are designed to be used by firefighters in an emergency and checking fire doors.

Other recommendations seek to make sure that building information that would help fire and rescue services respond to an incident is made available. This information

includes construction materials, building floor plans and evacuation plans. Proposed changes to fire safety regulations are being consulted on by the government. The brigade has been actively engaged in creating the national proposals.

Building Risk Review Programme

The Building Risk Review Programme is a government-funded scheme to inspect or review the safety of all high-rise residential buildings in England by the end of 2021. The brigade is on track to meet its target in London. It has used the funding to form a team focusing on high-rise residential buildings and to identify which are a risk to public safety. Inspections of high-rise residential buildings have been prioritised to identify action required by the building owner and any operational risk for firefighters responding to an incident.

A skilled workforce

The brigade has identified the need to improve its knowledge and understanding of buildings in London, and related fire protection measures and regulations. To support this process, it has set up the Centre of Learning and Excellence for Fire Safety. Retaining skilled and experienced staff has been difficult for the brigade – a similar problem is faced by many other fire and rescue services. Staff are being recruited into fire safety advisory roles with a development plan to become accredited inspecting officers. The ambition is to create a more stable and resilient workforce for these specialist roles. These plans will support the brigade with the right level of technical knowledge on fire safety in buildings. The brigade has also started to train frontline firefighters and supervisors to conduct fire safety visits on lower-risk buildings.

Evacuation and operational risk

Area for improvement

The brigade should put in place a plan to ensure that high-rise practical training exercises are provided to staff, and to assure itself that the lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower fire and proposed new ways of working will be consistently used by incident commanders.

This section covers recommendations 2, 3, 4, 7, 29 and 34 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report.

High-rise firefighting and evacuation

After the Grenfell Tower fire and before the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report, the brigade took some quick action to improve how it responds to reports of fires in high-rise residential buildings. It will now send more incident commanders, fire engines and specialist resources, such as vehicles with extended height ladders, to incidents at this type of building than before. And if multiple fire survival calls are received, these numbers will be increased. Stations are starting to receive the new vehicles with extended height ladders that the brigade has bought.

Updated policies

In response to several of the recommendations, the brigade has changed its policies on high-rise firefighting and FSG, and drafted a new policy on evacuation and rescue. Testing the changed working practices in exercises at high-rise residential buildings helped the design of these policies. We found that the policies are detailed and include what has been learned from the Grenfell Tower incident. The commissioner has approved the policies and there is a proposed start date of the end of March 2021.

The new or updated policies are as follows:

- The high-rise firefighting policy: the working practices for staff involved in search, rescue and firefighting in high-rise buildings. It covers the failure of compartmentalisation to prevent the fire spreading from one part of the building, and the risks associated with external cladding. It describes using breathing apparatus and the safety considerations and processes that need to be in place.
- The fire survival guidance policy: the information that should be shared between the control room and incident commander, and the actions to be taken when there are many calls.

- The evacuation and rescue policy: the hazards associated with evacuation, the different types of evacuation and the factors that an incident commander should consider. It includes guidance on how to move from a stay-put to a get-out situation, and partial and total evacuations.

The brigade has engaged with and consulted all representative bodies in developing these policies. Representative bodies told us that they have been listened to and much of their feedback has been included in the policies.

The Fire Brigades Union has raised concerns about one tactic in the high-rise firefighting policy. This relates to when firefighters wearing breathing apparatus should turn on the air while carrying out a rescue from a high-rise building. The brigade has started a formal dispute resolution procedure, which involves appointing an independent arbiter to chair a review process and make a recommendation to the commissioner. This process is planned to be completed by the end of March 2021.

Training

The brigade has started a comprehensive training programme for incident commanders and firefighters on all its new and updated policies. It recognises the importance of training to make sure that staff are aware of the new working practices and can use them. The training plan is split into three phases.

Phase 1 training

The first phase of training involves all firefighters and incident commanders receiving eLearning on the new policies. All staff must complete this training. This training began in September 2020. The computer-based training (CBT) packages cover high-rise firefighting, FSG, evacuation and rescue. It includes a knowledge test at the end that all staff need to pass.

Firefighters and incident commanders told us that the CBT packages are long and detailed but are good and give relevant, useful information. All staff we spoke to said they need more practical training on the changed and new working practices. Incident commanders consistently told us that they would use their discretion to put some training into practice immediately, if appropriate, even though the policies don't come into effect until the end of March 2021. We were given several recent examples of this having been done. Although we welcome this, the brigade needs to assure itself that the lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower fire will be used consistently by commanders if needed.

Data from the brigade shows that between 85 percent and 89 percent of staff had completed all four CBT packages by early December 2020. Our review of the brigade's training records gave similar completion rates. This is a high rate of completion in such a short time period. It represents over 4,000 staff.

It isn't clear what processes the brigade has in place to make sure that all staff complete the training. During our inspection, we found that the brigade's training record system wasn't always up to date. This is the main system supervisors use to monitor their staff's training. The situation needs to be rectified.

All level 1 incident commanders attend a one-day face-to-face training session to reinforce the new working practices. This was scheduled to finish at the end of December 2020. Data from the brigade shows that 54 percent of level 1 commanders had attended this training by early December 2020.

Levels 2 to 4 incident commanders will also do a one-day face-to-face training session, which at the time of our inspection was scheduled for between December 2020 and February 2021. Incident commanders are later expected to lead guided learning exercises with crews at their stations. The exercises are scenario based, involving a fire in a high-rise building, and should be completed by the end of March 2021.

The timeline for this activity is short. The brigade will need to make sure that it has arrangements in place to train many staff, and a mechanism to assure itself that this has been done and to the right standard. Because the face-to-face training for levels 2 to 4 incident commanders was still being developed when we inspected, and pilot training was yet to take place, we can't comment on the quality of this training.

Phase 2 training

Phase 2 of the brigade's training plan starts in April 2021 and is scheduled to last 18 months. Senior managers told us it involves practical staff training on the new policies in a series of exercises at high-rise buildings using 10 to 12 fire engines. But the planning and scheduling for these exercises hasn't yet started and suitable venues still need to be found. Several senior leaders we spoke to raised concerns about not being able to find suitable venues for this amount of exercising. This is a risk that the brigade needs to address, and quickly.

Phase 3 training

Phase 3 of the brigade's training plan involves developing an urban firefighting course. The brigade proposes that this course will combine elements from separate training courses and will include firefighting in high-rise residential buildings and the specific challenges faced in large towns and cities. This course will cover the lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower fire. Work on the design of this course hasn't yet started and isn't yet funded.

Good progress has been made with the eLearning training as part of the Phase 1 plan. But the brigade will need to make sure that appropriate leadership, planning and resources are made available to complete the rest of the training plan on time.

Operational risk information

Informing and training staff

We found that staff are now more aware of the risk of fire taking hold in external walls of high-rise buildings and are better at recognising it when it happens. This is because of the information and training the brigade has provided. An internal news bulletin in August 2019 provided links to training that staff had to complete by the end of December 2019. Data provided by the brigade shows that 94 percent of staff had completed the training by this deadline.

The Phase 1 CBT also gave staff detailed guidance on the risks associated with combustible cladding and rapid or unexpected fire spread. Our survey showed that 93 percent of respondents had been made aware of these risks by the brigade. Nearly all incident commanders and firefighters we spoke to said their understanding of the risks posed by cladding and the unexpected spread of a fire had improved. We would expect nothing less. Our survey showed that 65 percent of staff who had had training felt better prepared to deal with such an incident.

Changed guidance on risk information

A brigade review of its policies, including operational risk information in high-rise buildings, led them to change their guidance on how this information is gathered, recorded and made available to staff responding to incidents. The guidance is now included in the *Management of operational risk information* policy, which describes how to carry out premises risk assessments (PRAs). The changed policy started in July 2020.

All operational staff at fire stations, and officers up to Group Commander level, must complete a CBT package on the changed guidance. Data provided by the brigade shows that over 90 percent of station-based staff up to Group Commander level have completed the training. In our survey of supervisors up to Group Commander level, 56 percent state that they have done this training. The brigade needs to assure itself that all supervisors have received the appropriate training.

Assessing risk at high-rise residential buildings

Nearly all incident commanders and firefighters we spoke to said that there is now a greater emphasis on carrying out PRAs at high-rise residential buildings. They said that more importance is given to premises with identified risks. For example, buildings with cladding that were identified as presenting a higher risk were visited more frequently by local crews. A quality assurance process involves the station commander reviewing and approving all completed PRAs. A borough commander is also expected to check some records. Station-based officers described a more robust process with PRAs being sent back to them if more information is needed.

The brigade reports that 6,300 high-rise buildings in London have residential use. All of them need PRAs. Of these buildings, 98 percent have been assessed. Data provided by the brigade shows that it completed 10,699 visits and revisits in the 12 months to 1 December 2020. There is a need to update 1,928 more PRAs before the end of 2021, which the brigade is on schedule to complete.

For certain high-rise residential buildings, firefighters complete an electronic premises information plate (ePIP). This ePIP risk record includes important information such as building layout drawings; locations of hydrants, lifts and sprinklers; and equipment likely to be needed. Nearly all incident commanders and firefighters we spoke to said that the quality of ePIPs had improved significantly in the past year. They said that this had helped their response to incidents in high-rise residential buildings.

The brigade reports that 5,215 high-rise residential buildings require an ePIP. All currently have them. Data provided by the brigade shows that it completed or updated 2,045 ePIPs in the 12 months to 1 December 2020.

We welcome the greater focus given to assessing risks at high-rise residential buildings and providing better information for firefighters and commanders attending incidents. The brigade has shown that it has a strong grasp on this activity and effective assurance arrangements in place to support it.

Using risk information

The brigade uses the operational risk database to record information about the risks that crews are likely to face when attending an incident at a building. Crews responding to incidents can see this risk information on [mobile data terminals](#) in their fire engines. It is also available to fire control staff. Incident commanders we spoke to said that they routinely look at this information.

Risk information is also stored on two other systems that are used to support fire safety inspections and [home fire safety visits](#). The brigade plans to put all building risk information on one system by March 2023. This project is called a 'One Risk Solution'. But work on the project specification has been delayed and it is uncertain when an appointed supplier will be able to provide the system. The brigade has identified the potential delay of the project as a risk.

Smoke hoods

At the end of 2018, the brigade gave all fire stations smoke hoods to use. These are carried by crews wearing breathing apparatus when entering buildings and are given to members of the public to use when being evacuated. They have been used successfully during several rescues. Frontline staff were consistently positive about their introduction, the training provided and the potential for them to be used to help rescue people.

Control room

Area for improvement

The brigade should provide control room supervisors with training in co-ordinating an effective fire survival guidance response.

This section covers recommendations 10–20 and 27 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report.

Improving the control room

The brigade has created a control improvement plan to address the changes needed in the control room. The plan includes actions to implement the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report recommendations. We found they are making good progress.

Fire control room staff have been involved in updating the FSG policy and were part of the team training frontline firefighters and incident commanders. Control room staff consistently told us that they feel more included and their status as a valued part of the operational response is being recognised. This has improved since our inspection in 2019.

Control room staff are clear that, for most incidents at high-rise buildings, the stay-put advice is still appropriate. The brigade has done considerable work to identify buildings with cladding, and to update its command and control IT system. Staff know that for these buildings there is a marker on the system that means they should advise people to evacuate if there is a fire. The brigade now has guidance for responding to callers who are trapped and need rescuing, and those callers who need advice. Our survey showed that 88 percent of control room staff respondents have had training and 58 percent feel more prepared. More training for control room staff took place in December 2020 and is planned for early 2021.

Communicating with the control room

The brigade has provided information and training to increase the understanding of incident commanders about how to communicate effectively with the control room. Staff should know when radio channels should be used, why, and how frequently to expect messages from an incident. Information was sent to staff in an internal news bulletin in July 2020. It included links to training that staff should have completed by September 2020. Data provided by the brigade shows that only 54 percent of staff had completed the required training by the beginning of December 2020. The brigade should make sure that staff complete this training.

Our survey showed that 51 percent of staff surveyed said that there isn't a dedicated communications link between the control room and incident commanders. But our interviews with incident commanders and control room staff showed an awareness that radio channels are available for use. We found that the radio network is starting to be used more effectively at larger incidents. This supports better communications between the control room and incident commanders.

Control room staff told us that they often struggle to get information back from commanders in the early stages of an incident. This can affect the support the control room is able to give commanders. Incident commanders told us they want to make the message as detailed as possible, which often means there is a delay in sending it. Specialist staff are available to advise on communications during larger and more complex incidents. But we found these staff are rarely used.

The brigade should assure itself that staff understand what communication channels are available, that messages are sent quickly from incidents and that staff are getting the most out of their current radio system.

New control room roles

The FSG policy creates new FSG co-ordinator roles in the control room and at incidents. Information gathered by control room staff is passed to the FSG co-ordinator at an incident by a dedicated radio channel. This information includes details of people who need rescuing, including whether they are vulnerable for reasons such as limited mobility. The brigade has changed its command and control systems so that information from FSG calls is more clearly displayed and easier to understand. The changes are well designed and will make the brigade's response more effective.

Control room staff completed their FSG training in August 2020. This was aimed at making sure that they ask for the right information from callers to help the brigade's response. It also showed staff that they need to keep the line open so they can continue to talk to the caller. Our survey showed that 75 percent of control room staff surveyed had had this training and 76 percent felt more prepared. And nearly all fire control room staff we spoke to told us that they felt better prepared and knew that more training and exercising was planned.

Command units

The brigade is in the process of replacing its eight command unit vehicles and buying a new IT operating system to be used on its new vehicles. Funding for both these projects was agreed with a proposed delivery date of October 2021. The brigade is also changing how it staffs the units and where the staff operate from. The command units will work alongside station staff and more staff are being trained to work within them. Staffing of the units has been increased from two to three. Staff training has started. One unit will always be located at the control room to improve the knowledge of working practices and the understanding of each other's roles. The brigade has started to improve its training for control room staff about how to work with the new command units. During our inspection in 2019, we found many control room staff hadn't had any training for some time. The brigade has a contract with a training provider that covers nearly all areas of the organisation, but control room staff aren't part of this contract.

Fire control training

The brigade has created an extra senior control commander post for fire control training, and allocated more staff to design and provide training. The senior control commander has recently started working more closely with the brigade's main training team to improve the co-ordination of training. Other control room staff have been seconded to departments responsible for policy changes and planning for exercises. This is all part of a drive to better join up fire control with other parts of the organisation. This is needed because opportunities are being missed. For example, the training for the updated FSG policy was designed with eLearning packages for firefighters and incident commanders but not control room staff. Separate funding is now being sought to design FSG eLearning packages for these staff.

In July 2020, a system was introduced to make sure that control room staff have regular training to maintain their levels of competency. This brings the control room in line with other operational staff. Our survey showed that 88 percent of control room staff had received refresher training, most within the past six months. Most staff we spoke to saw this as positive and welcomed the training.

Control room managers need more training. This was planned to take place in January 2021. The training is still being developed but the brigade aims to provide managers with the skills to assess FSG incidents and better co-ordinate action in the control room. The brigade also intends to develop managers so that they can work more closely with incident commanders and give confident and firm advice if needed. This is a different role for control room managers and the brigade will need to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

Training for control managers needs to improve nationally. An NFCC-led project is developing national operational standards for control room staff and a training course. It is planned that this project will be ready by December 2021 when the training course will be tested.

Technology

Support when handling multiple calls

The brigade has developed an app that transfers the information from each FSG call to a cloud-based internet system. This lets staff at the incident see real-time FSG information and give up-to-date details of action taken at the incident. This updated information automatically goes back onto the command and control system in the control room, allowing staff to update callers and people waiting to be rescued.

The FSG app is in the final stages of testing. It is likely to bring significant benefits to how the brigade deals with incidents involving multiple FSG calls. The brigade is planning more training on the updated FSG guidance and the FSG app for all fire control staff by the end of March 2021.

An extra command unit will be sent to support the FSG co-ordinator at incidents involving multiple FSG calls. A process has been introduced so that, before crews enter a building, they get paper forms with information about whom they need to rescue. Crews return the forms to the command unit so that the IT systems can be updated with details of people rescued and those still needing to be rescued.

Over the past 12 months, work has taken place nationally with fire and rescue services to improve the support available to a control room dealing with multiple FSG calls. A national radio talk group has been set up so that a control room can tell other control rooms that they are dealing with such an incident and what the current FSG advice is. This will help supporting control rooms deal with callers and pass important information to the host control room quickly. It has been agreed that the North West Fire control room and the Staffordshire and West Midlands control room will support the brigade. This arrangement will be introduced in April 2021 when the brigade's staff have completed their training on its updated FSG policy.

Using images and faster connections

The brigade has invested in a system called '999 eye', which enables control room staff to see an image of an incident. The caller gets a hyperlink that they can use to send a photo or video straight to the control room. Control room staff can assess the scale and severity of the incident, and make sure that the service responds with the right resources. But we found that only a few control room staff had been trained to use 999 eye and that there had been some technical difficulties. These difficulties have now been addressed. We look forward to seeing in future inspections how the brigade will use the system. The brigade continues to use drones at larger incidents. In July 2020, it bought a new drone that live-streams images from incidents. Work is continuing to explore how this technology can be best used and made available to incident commanders and command units.

The brigade has installed 4G servers on all command units to improve connectivity and make the command support system more reliable. Our survey showed that 78 percent of respondents who are command unit staff confirmed that the system was operating fully when they last used it. Command unit staff have also been trained in how to use the system. Our survey showed that 86 percent of respondents who are command unit staff had received training since February 2020.

Incident command

Cause of concern – our 2019 inspection

When we inspected the brigade in 2019, we identified serious concerns about incident command training and the assessment of competence. There have been some improvements since our last inspection, but our cause of concern remains. This area continues to be a risk for the brigade.

The brigade has developed a new incident command strategy but is slow to implement it. Many commanders who need training still haven't received it. The same is the case with the assessment of competence. The brigade should act immediately to address this.

We will re-inspect the brigade's progress on making the improvements we identified in 2019 during our next inspection.

This section covers recommendations 22–26 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report.

Incident command training and competence

Many of the recommendations need incident commanders to be given training in the revised or new working practices, such as new evacuation tactics. In our 2019 inspection, we raised serious concerns about the brigade's backlog of incident command training, the lack of training for more senior leaders and the lack of individual assessments to make sure that its incident commanders maintain their competence to take command. The contract with the brigade's external training provider needed a fundamental review to make sure that it was fit for purpose and could provide the necessary training.

The brigade has made the competence of its incident commanders a priority and has allocated more staff to work with the training provider to design new courses. Staff told us that the relationship with the training provider has improved, and there is now a more collaborative approach. The strategy that the brigade has set for training and assessing incident commanders before taking on new roles is ambitious. But, for now, this remains an ambition. The strategy will take several years to put in place, and some parts aren't yet fully funded.

The incident command decision model

The brigade is the only fire and rescue service in England not to use the national incident command decision model. We raised this in our 2019 inspection as an area for improvement. The brigade has reviewed the model it currently uses and compared it with the national model used by all other services. An option favoured by several of the senior leaders we spoke to is to have an updated model that combines elements of both the national and brigade models. A decision has yet to be made about which option to select. Whatever model the brigade finally chooses to use must either be in line with, or better than, the national guidance. The brigade will need to quickly assure itself of its choice because it will be part of the planned incident command training.

Level 1 training

A new training course for level 1 incident commanders (leading fire fighter, sub-officer and station officer) is being developed. This course includes what was learned from the Grenfell Tower incident and the revised or new working practices. The brigade is testing the course and plans to implement it during 2021. It has also introduced a risk assessment process for all firefighters who wish to temporarily take on level 1 incident command duties. And, in 2020, the brigade prioritised funding for these staff to get incident command training from a different external provider because its contracted supplier didn't have capacity. The remainder of staff have courses booked for early 2021.

Level 2 training

A skills maintenance course for level 2 commanders has been redesigned and tested. The brigade also plans to redesign the course for new level 2 incident commanders (station commander and group commander). But this won't be completed until the level 1 course has been developed. This is because there are only a few course designers available and they have been allocated to complete the level 1 course design first. We were told that this is delaying these courses being ready.

Levels 3 and 4 training

Our 2019 inspection found that there was only limited incident command training provided to levels 3 and 4 commanders (deputy assistant commissioner and above). The brigade has since funded external training for staff at these levels. At the time of our inspection, data provided by the brigade showed that 96 percent of levels 3 and 4 incident commanders have been trained and assessed. This is a marked improvement.

Assessing competence

The brigade has started assessing the continuing competence of incident commanders, a process it calls 'revalidation'. National guidance advises that this should happen every two years, and include refresher training and an assessment. Our 2019 inspection found that no effective assessment process was in place.

Since then, the brigade has introduced a more robust way to assess whether an incident commander has maintained their competence. Data provided by the brigade shows that, at the start of December 2020, 66 percent of level 1 and 35 percent of

level 2 commanders had been trained and assessed. The numbers of level 2 commanders assessed as fully competent has decreased since 2018. The data shows that, despite meeting the minimum standard, 41 percent of the level 2 incident commanders who were reassessed were put on a personal development plan to improve their competence. Only a few brigade staff have the skills to carry out assessments, and we were told that this causes delays in assessments. Incident command training and assessing competence remain a risk for the brigade. The brigade should make sure that levels 1 and 2 incident commanders receive appropriate training and that their competence is assessed as soon as possible.

Information gathering and monitoring at incidents

The new and revised policies include changed procedures for how people trapped in high-rise residential buildings are rescued. These include new processes to track rescue action by crews entering the building with breathing apparatus. The inquiry found that better co-ordination and communication were needed.

The brigade plans to introduce revised procedures with new forms to record rescue details. This should improve the flow of information to make sure that tasks are monitored more effectively. These changes were included in the CBT provided. Our survey showed that 52 percent of incident commanders know about the new working practices. Incident commanders and firefighters whom we spoke to showed a good level of knowledge and understanding of these new procedures. They also told us that they would be willing to use these new practices, if appropriate, before the new and revised policies are in place.

The brigade has developed a new briefing and debriefing approach so that better information is consistently gathered and recorded from firefighters returning from rescue tasks. This approach has yet to be introduced and some testing is still taking place. Any new approach will need to be included in future training courses. Meanwhile, the brigade has put in place an interim process to debrief crews at the incident ground. We are pleased to see that it is also training commanders on writing incident ground risk assessments and logging decisions. This is an area we identified for improvement in our 2019 inspection. The brigade is also exploring how technology like body-worn cameras can help with this.

Communication during incidents

There is a comprehensive project underway to improve communications between the incident commander, command units and control room. This includes those commanders who are co-ordinating rescue activity in a building. The project includes buying better incident ground radios and devices to boost radio signals. It also aims to improve the communication from and to firefighters wearing helmets and breathing apparatus. But this project is being carried out in stages and, at the time of our inspection, isn't scheduled to be fully in place until May 2022. In the meantime, all incident commanders carry radios with them at an incident to give them direct communication with the control room. This wasn't done before the Grenfell Tower fire.

Radio communications are now used differently at an incident, since the brigade introduced changes. It has set up dedicated radio channels for different roles – for example, staff co-ordinating FSG, those using breathing apparatus and those in

command roles. This approach aims to improve the flow of communications at incidents and make them clearer. Since receiving the recent training on the dedicated radio channels and revised radio procedures, most commanders we spoke to at levels 2 and above told us that communications with control had improved. But neither level 1 commanders nor staff in the control room agreed.

The command and control system for handling multiple FSG calls is being improved. These changes will help with the flow of information between incident commanders and the control room about people being rescued. Information from crews returning from rescue tasks will be updated onto the system.

The brigade is about to introduce an FSG app that gives information about people who need rescuing to the incident commander, command unit and control room at the same time. The app is in its final stages of testing. It is planned to be introduced before 31 March 2021 when the new and revised policies come into force.

Working with other emergency services

This section covers recommendations 40–44 and 46 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report.

These recommendations require action either from London emergency services working together or from national organisations. The brigade is acting to address the recommendations and, when appropriate, amend or create guidance for its staff.

National guidance for working together

The Joint Doctrine

The Joint Doctrine provides national guidance on a common way for emergency services and other organisations to work together when responding to a major incident. It is maintained by the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) team. JESIP is a national programme run by the emergency services with the support of several government departments, including the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Four recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report require that the Joint Doctrine be changed. These are aimed at improving how the emergency services understand what is happening in the early stages of a major incident, and making sure that control rooms work together.

In December 2019, and in response to the recommendations, the national JESIP team sent a [Joint Organisational Learning](#) Action Note to all emergency services. It outlined the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and asked for immediate action to address the recommendations relating to the Joint Doctrine. All emergency services have now responded stating that they have completed their actions.

The Joint Doctrine is being reviewed by a project review team that includes representatives from all emergency services. The updated guidance will address recommendations made by the inquiry. A consultation period on the draft guidance is planned for early 2021. The project review team plans to include findings from the independent public inquiry into the deaths in the 2017 Manchester Arena terror attack, which is now hearing evidence. The project review team is considering whether to wait for this inquiry to report its findings before publishing the updated guidance.

London Major Incident Manual

The Major Incident Manual that covers London and is produced by the London Emergency Services Liaison Panel is about to be reviewed. The review will be led by the MPS and has a planned completion date of September 2021. This review will include the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry in the updated procedures. The brigade is currently revising its major incident policy to include the recommendations. It is also writing a policy to cover Joint Doctrine guidance.

The London Major Incident Manual sets out the roles and responsibilities of the emergency services towards survivors, casualties and evacuees. The review of these procedures will consider what more can be done to share information between the emergency services and London Resilience Forum partners, and to provide information to the public. The brigade will be part of this review, which is being led by the MPS and is due to be completed by September 2021.

The London emergency services

When a major incident is declared

Since 2018, London's emergency services have agreed that, after a major incident is declared, a conference call will take place between the fire brigade, police and ambulance service control rooms (called a 'tri-service call'). This will be to pass on information and co-ordinate the first stages of the response. This agreement is currently being updated.

The emergency services' control rooms have an arrangement to regularly test their procedures, including a schedule to set up tri-service calls. In a major incident, both the LAS and the brigade send staff to the MPS control room to facilitate the exchange of information and co-ordinate action.

Staff from the brigade and other emergency services told us that, after a major incident, the Joint Doctrine guidance was used inconsistently before the inquiry report. We found that over the past 12 months this has improved. All major incidents are subject to a review by the Blue Light Panel, a sub-group of the London Resilience Forum. Senior representatives from all London's emergency services attend. Panel members, brigade incident commanders and fire control staff told us that the guidance is now used more consistently.

Working together in the control room

In February 2020, control staff from the brigade and LAS trialled working in the MPS control room for a week. This sought to test whether there are benefits to having control room staff located together. A review found that there are benefits in decision making and resource deployments, but some problems with access to information and technology. It was also intended to test the working arrangements in a major incident scenario, but this planned exercise was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of our inspection, this phase of the trial was scheduled for January 2021. A decision will then be made about whether to go ahead with co-locating control room staff.

The Multi Agency Information Transfer (MAIT) standard enables incident records to be shared between emergency services. The brigade's control room system is ready for use with MAIT. Both the LAS and MPS are setting up new control room systems, designed to meet the MAIT standard. It is planned that all London's emergency services will be able to share incident information by autumn 2021.

Training

Incident commanders need to improve their understanding of the Joint Doctrine and what action is needed after a major incident. The brigade plans to include this in its new incident command training, which is being developed. There is also a gap with fire control staff, especially supervisors. The brigade is planning training courses for fire control supervisors for early 2021. Working with other emergency services will form part of this training.

The NFCC is developing national operational standards for control staff. The national team leading this work proposes to design a training course for control room supervisors. This is scheduled to be completed by December 2021. The London Resilience Forum has also commissioned a peer review of multi-agency training arrangements to identify what can improve. This was due to take place in 2020 but due to COVID-19 has been delayed until 2021.

Annex A: Recommendations

At the time of our inspection, the brigade had completed 4 of the 29 recommendations that we focused on during our inspection. It expects to have completed 17 more recommendations by March 2021. These include 12 recommendations that have been delayed by three months or more. The brigade says the delays were caused by the need to assign new priorities to staff in response to COVID-19. It has also had to consult representative bodies on the revised and new policies. Six more recommendations need action either from London emergency services working together or from national organisations. These should be completed by autumn 2021. Two recommendations won't be completed until after 2021.

Table 2: The brigade’s progress with implementing recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report (numbers are from the original report so not always consecutive because not all apply to London Fire Brigade)

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry’s phase 1 recommendation	Brigade’s expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade’s progress	Status
2	All fire and rescue services ensure that their personnel at all levels understand the risk of fire taking hold in the external walls of high-rise buildings and know how to recognise it when it occurs.	March 2021 (delayed from April 2020)	Progress has been delayed by 11 months. Changed policies on high-rise firefighting and fire survival guidance (FSG), and a new policy on evacuation and rescue, will be in place by April 2021. A comprehensive training programme has begun. Most firefighters and incident commanders have completed eLearning and face-to-face training has started. The timeline for this training is short. Practical training will begin from April 2021.	Delayed
3	The LFB review, and revise as appropriate, Appendix 1 to PN633 ⁶ to ensure that it fully reflects the principles in GRA 3.2. ⁷	Completed	Completed	Completed

⁶ Policy number 633 (PN633) is the brigade’s policy on high-rise firefighting.

⁷ Generic risk assessments 3.2 (GRA 3.2) is national operational guidance on high-rise firefighting.

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
4	The LFB ensure that all officers of the rank of Crew Manager and above are trained in carrying out the requirements of PN633 relating to the inspection of high-rise buildings.	Completed	Completed	Completed
7	All fire and rescue services be equipped to receive and store electronic plans and to make them available to incident commanders and control room managers.	March 2023	The brigade plans to put all building risk information on one system by March 2023. This project is called a 'One Risk Solution'. But work on the project specification has been delayed and it is uncertain when an appointed supplier will be able to provide the system.	On track

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
10	The LFB review its policies on communications between the control room and the incident commander.	March 2021	At the time of our inspection, training for control room managers was planned to take place in January 2021. The brigade also intends to develop the skills of control room managers so that they can work more closely with incident commanders and give confident and firm advice if needed.	On track

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
11	All officers who may be expected to act as incident commanders (ie, all those above the rank of Crew Manager) receive training directed to the specific requirements of communication with the control room.	March 2021 (delayed from June 2020)	The brigade has provided information and training to increase staff understanding about how to communicate effectively with the control room. Staff should have completed the training by September 2020. But data provided by the brigade shows that only 54% of staff had completed the required training by the beginning of December 2020. The brigade should make sure that staff complete this training.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
12	All CROs ⁸ of Assistant Operations Manager rank and above receive training directed to the specific requirements of communication with the incident commander.	March 2021 (delayed from June 2020)	Progress has been delayed by nine months. At the time of our inspection, training for control room managers was planned to take place in January 2021. The brigade also intends to develop control room managers so they can work more closely with incident commanders and give confident and firm advice if needed.	Delayed

⁸ Control room officers (CROs) work in fire and rescue services' control rooms.

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
13	A dedicated communication link be provided between the senior officer in the control room and the incident commander.	March 2021 (delayed from December 2020)	We found that the radio network is starting to be used more effectively at larger incidents. But control room staff told us they often struggle to get information back from commanders in the early stages of an incident. The brigade should assure itself that staff understand what communication channels are available, that messages are sent quickly from incidents and that they are getting the most out of their current radio system.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
14	The LFB's policies be amended to draw a clearer distinction between callers seeking advice and callers who believe they are trapped and need rescuing.	March 2021 (delayed from November 2020)	Progress has been delayed by four months. The brigade now has guidance for responding to callers who are trapped and need rescuing, and to callers who need advice. Our survey showed that 88% of control room staff respondents have had training and 58% feel more prepared. More training for control room staff took place in December 2020 and more is planned for early 2021.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
15	The LFB provide regular and more effective refresher training to CROs at all levels, including supervisors.	March 2021 (delayed from July 2020)	Progress has been delayed by eight months. In July 2020, a system was introduced to make sure that control room staff have regular training to maintain their levels of competency. Our survey showed that 88% of control room staff have recently had refresher training, which is part of a continuing process.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
16	All fire and rescue services develop policies for handling a large number of FSG calls simultaneously.	March 2021 (delayed from June 2020)	A national radio talk group has been set up so that control room staff can tell staff in other control rooms that they are dealing with an incident involving many calls and what the current FSG advice is. It has been agreed that the North West Fire control room and the Staffordshire and West Midlands control room will support the brigade. This arrangement will be introduced in April 2021 when the brigade's staff have completed their training on its updated FSG policy.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
17	Electronic systems be developed to record FSG information in the control room and display it simultaneously at the bridgehead and in any command units.	March 2021	The brigade is about to introduce an FSG app that gives information about people who need rescuing to the incident commander, command unit and control room at the same time. The app is in its final stages of testing. Staff will need training in how to use it.	On track
18	Policies be developed for managing a transition from "stay put" to "get out".	March 2021 (delayed from April 2020)	Progress has been delayed by 11 months. Changed policies on high-rise firefighting and FSG, and a new policy on evacuation and rescue will be in place by April 2021.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
19	Control room staff receive training directed specifically to handling such a change of advice and conveying it effectively to callers.	March 2021 (delayed from June 2020)	Control room staff completed their FSG training in August 2020 on the brigade's existing policies. More training for control room staff took place in December 2020 and is planned for early 2021 in relation to the brigade's new policies.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
20	Steps be taken to investigate methods by which assisting control rooms can obtain access to the information available to the host control room.	March 2021 (delayed from June 2020)	A national radio talk group has been set up so that control room staff can tell staff in other control rooms that they are dealing with such an incident and what the current FSG advice is. It has been agreed that the North West Fire control room and the Staffordshire and West Midlands control room will support the brigade. This arrangement will be introduced in April 2021 when the brigade's staff have completed their training on its updated FSG policy.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
22	The LFB develop policies and training to ensure better control of deployments and the use of resources.	March 2021 (delayed from April 2020)	Progress has been delayed by 11 months. Changed policies on high-rise firefighting and FSG, and a new policy on evacuation and rescue will be in place by April 2021. A comprehensive training programme has begun. Most firefighters and incident commanders have completed eLearning and face-to-face training has started. The timeline for this training is short. Practical training will begin from April 2021.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
23	The LFB develop policies and training to ensure that better information is obtained from crews returning from deployments and that the information is recorded in a form that enables it to be made available immediately to the incident commander (and thereafter to the command units and the control room).	March 2021	The brigade is introducing revised procedures with new forms to record rescue details. These changes were included in the eLearning training provided to staff. Our survey showed that 52% of incident commanders who responded knew about the new working practices.	On track

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
24	The LFB develop a communication system to enable direct communication between the control room and the incident commander and improve the means of communication between the incident commander and the bridgehead.	March 2021	Radio communications are now used differently at an incident, since the brigade introduced changes. It has set up dedicated radio channels for different roles – for example, staff co-ordinating FSG, those using breathing apparatus and those in command roles. Since receiving the recent training on the dedicated radio channels and revised radio procedures, most commanders we spoke to at level 2 and above told us communications with control had improved. But neither level 1 commanders nor staff in the control room agreed.	On track

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
25	The LFB investigate the use of modern communication techniques to provide a direct line of communication between the control room and the bridgehead, allowing information to be transmitted directly between the control room and the bridgehead and providing an integrated system of recording FSG information and the results of deployments.	March 2021	The command and control system for handling multiple FSG calls is being improved. These changes will help with the flow of information between incident commanders and the control room about people being rescued. Information from crews returning from rescue tasks will be updated onto the system.	On track
26	The LFB urgently take steps to obtain equipment that enables firefighters wearing helmets and breathing apparatus to communicate with the bridgehead effectively, including when operating in high-rise buildings.	May 2022	A project is underway to improve the communication from and to firefighters wearing helmets and breathing apparatus through procurement of new equipment.	On track
27	Urgent steps be taken to ensure that the command support system is fully operative on all command units and that crews are trained in its use.	Completed	Completed	Completed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
29	Fire and rescue services develop policies for partial and total evacuation of high-rise residential buildings and training to support them.	March 2021 (delayed from May 2020)	Progress has been delayed by 10 months. Changed policies on high-rise firefighting and FSG, and a new policy on evacuation and rescue will be in place by April 2021. A comprehensive training programme has begun. Most firefighters and incident commanders have completed eLearning and face-to-face training has started. The timeline for this training is short. Practical training will begin from April 2021.	Delayed
34	All fire and rescue services be equipped with smoke hoods to assist in the evacuation of occupants through smoke-filled exit routes.	Completed	Completed	Completed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
40	The Joint Doctrine be amended to make it clear: that each emergency service must communicate the declaration of a Major Incident to all other Category 1 Responders as soon as possible.	September 2021 (delayed from September 2020)	The Joint Doctrine is being reviewed by a project review team that includes representatives from all emergency services.	Delayed
41	The Joint Doctrine be amended to make it clear: that on the declaration of a Major Incident clear lines of communication must be established as soon as possible between the control rooms of the individual emergency services.	September 2021 (delayed from September 2020)	The Joint Doctrine is being reviewed by a project review team that includes representatives from all emergency services.	Delayed
42	The Joint Doctrine be amended to make it clear: that a single point of contact should be designated within each control room to facilitate such communication.	September 2021 (delayed from September 2020)	The Joint Doctrine is being reviewed by a project review team that includes representatives from all emergency services.	Delayed
43	The Joint Doctrine be amended to make it clear: that a "METHANE" message ⁹ should be sent as soon as possible by the emergency service declaring a Major Incident.	September 2021 (delayed from September 2020)	The Joint Doctrine is being reviewed by a project review team that includes representatives from all emergency services.	Delayed

⁹ 'METHANE' message is the recognised common model for passing incident information between the emergency services and their control rooms.

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
44	Steps be taken to investigate the compatibility of the LFB systems with those of the MPS and the LAS with a view to enabling all three emergency services' systems to read each other's messages.	To be confirmed (delayed from September 2020)	The Multi Agency Information Transfer (MAIT) standard enables incident records to be shared between emergency services. The brigade's control room system is ready for use with MAIT. Both the LAS and MPS are setting up new control room systems, designed to meet the MAIT standard. It is planned that all London's emergency services will be able to share incident information by autumn 2021.	Delayed

No	Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendation	Brigade's expected completion date	Our comments on the brigade's progress	Status
46	The LFB, the MPS, the LAS and the London local authorities all investigate ways of improving the collection of information about survivors and making it available more rapidly to those wishing to make contact with them.	September 2021 (delayed from September 2020)	The Major Incident Manual that covers London and is produced by the London Emergency Services Liaison Panel is about to be reviewed. The review will be led by the MPS and will cover this recommendation. The brigade will be part of this review.	Delayed

Glossary

Term	Definition
Breathing apparatus	Device worn to provide breathable air.
Bridgehead	Safe position inside a building from which to carry out firefighting operations.
Fire Service College	Organisation that supplies specialist fire and rescue training.
London Resilience Forum	Multi-agency partnership made up of representatives from local public services. It is responsible for planning and preparing for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies.
Smoke hood	Hood that protects the wearer from the effects of smoke inhalation.

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