



Promoting improvements
in policing and fire & rescue
services to make everyone safer

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Services

Chief Fire Officers
Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners
Lead Fire Authority members
Locally elected Mayors
Other FRS interested parties

27 November 2020

Dear colleague,

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE INSPECTION UPDATE

I hope you and your colleagues are keeping well in these challenging times. I am writing to provide an update on our FRS inspection programme.

Covid-19 inspections

2. We have now finalised our evidence gathering which was conducted entirely virtually. I'm incredibly grateful to you and your teams for the way they engaged in the process. I am also very grateful to our staff for adapting to this new way of working so quickly. We are evaluating the virtual methods we used to consider how we can improve them in future inspections.
3. We are finalising our national and service level reports which we hope to publish in mid-January 2021. We will – as far as is possible - send service level reports for pre-publication factual accuracy checking to each service during w/c 7 December. These are drafted as letters from the HMI to the chief fire officer and FRA chair (or equivalents) rather than formal reports.
4. We will send these reports for pre-publication check in batches, so some services will receive theirs sooner than others. The letter is far shorter, and with less data, than the report we issued in round 1. The pre-publication check process should therefore be less onerous than before. We will send the pre-publication check to both the chief fire officer and the FRA chair (or equivalents). We would be grateful for a consolidated, single response, per service.
5. As previously discussed, we have not made any graded judgments, rather we have provided narrative comment. We have also identified '*areas for focus*' for each service which they should consider as part of their ongoing response to the pandemic and future transformation.

Round two

6. We intend to re-start round two early next year, finishing approximately at the end of 2022. We will continue to inspect against the same three pillars and eleven over-arching questions as used in round one. We will clearly need to be mindful of what effect Covid-19 is – or isn't - having in each service nearer the time of each inspection and adjust our approach accordingly. We are in the process of designing this flexible approach. This might include doing some activity in person in one service and needing to do it remotely in another. We are designing both approaches and will discuss these with our external reference and technical advisory groups.

7. As I mentioned at our last chiefs and chairs virtual conference, we have looked again at the tranche allocation for round two. Our revised allocation is set out in the table at Annex A. The annex also includes anticipated inspection dates for your planning purposes. We have tried to minimise changes to the tranches. Where we have made changes, these are mainly because of the risks we identified in round one. In due course, we will ask services to provide dates to avoid for us to build the full inspection schedule.

8. Services who were in tranche one when round two began earlier this year submitted documents and their self-assessment. So not to disadvantage any service, we will give everyone the opportunity to submit new material. We will provide more information about this in due course.

9. We will hold a virtual chiefs and chairs event, as well as a virtual event for service liaison officers, in the new year to update you on our planning and approach to round two. Again, we will provide details for this event later this year.

Causes of concern

10. In round one, we gave 24 causes of concern to 14 services. We have moved a number of these services into tranche one whereby we will consider what progress has been made as part of that inspection. For services in tranches two and three who have cause(s) of concern, we will speak to you individually about what work we propose to undertake to identify what progress is being made. This may be before your formal inspection.

11. For each cause of concern, the service should have an action plan. We now ask that every service with a cause of concern send us their updated action plan by **Friday 18 December 2020** to: FRSActionplans@hmicfrs.gov.uk.

State of Fire and Rescue 2020

12. Work continues to draft State of Fire and Rescue 2020. Our intention is to publish this report in late February 2021. We are in discussion with the named bodies in the six national recommendations we have made so far to agree new completion dates, reflecting the impact the pandemic has on this work. We will inform the sector once these dates have been agreed.

London Fire Brigade Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 recommendations inspection

13. As you will be aware, we were commissioned by the Home Secretary to consider what progress the London Fire Brigade is making to implement the relevant recommendations in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase one report. Our evidence collection is nearing completion. We plan to publish this report early in the new year.

14. As ever, if you require further information in the meantime, please contact our portfolio director Laura Gibb at lauraalice.gibb@hmicfrs.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Zoë Billingham

HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services
HM Inspector of Constabulary

ANNEX A- ROUND 2 RE-ORDERING

Tranche 1	Tranche 2	Tranche 3
Avon FRS	Devon & Somerset FRS	Cleveland FB
Bedfordshire FRS	Gloucestershire FRS	Cumbria FRS
Buckinghamshire FRS	Hertfordshire FRS	Derbyshire FRS
Cambridgeshire FRS	Humberside FRS	Dorset & Wiltshire FRS
Cheshire FRS	Lancashire FRS	Durham & Darlington FRS
Cornwall FRS	London FB	East Sussex FRS
Essex FRS	Norfolk FRS	Hampshire and Isle of Wight FRS
Greater Manchester FRS	Northamptonshire FRS	Isles of Scilly FRS
Hereford & Worcester FRS	Nottinghamshire FRS	Kent FRS
Lincolnshire FRS	Oxfordshire FRS	Leicestershire FRS
Merseyside FRS	Shropshire FRS	North Yorkshire FRS
Northumberland FRS	Tyne & Wear FRS	Royal Berkshire FRS
Surrey FRS	West Midlands FS	South Yorkshire FRS
Warwickshire FRS	West Sussex FRS	Staffordshire FRS
	West Yorkshire FRS	Suffolk FRS

Anticipated timeframe (pending further discussion on possible Covid-19 impact):

Tranche 1:

Document request: January 2021
Fieldwork: Spring to Summer 2021
Publication: Winter 2021

Tranche 2:

Document request: May/June 2021
Fieldwork: Autumn 2021 to Spring 2022
Publication: Summer 2022

Tranche 3:

Document request: January 2022
Fieldwork: Spring to Summer 2022
Publication: Winter 2022