

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

To:  
Chief Fire Officers  
Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities  
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners  
Roy Wilsher, National Fire Chiefs' Council

14 January 2021

All,

**Response to Covid-19 – Support by Fire and Rescue Services**

We continue to be hugely thankful for the hard work of everyone in Fire and Rescue Services – both firefighters and staff – during the Covid-19 pandemic. We want to take this opportunity to again extend our thanks for the leadership you have all shown during this period.

The work that firefighters and staff have done has been critical to the response to the pandemic. We have heard many amazing examples of what has been achieved and spoken to frontline staff about the work they have done. A consistent theme has been how committed and proud they are to support people in need. It goes without saying that we share your collective commitment to put the safety of staff at the centre of this effort whilst doing all you can to help save lives and protect the NHS.

We support you in encouraging your firefighters and staff to continue to undertake this important work, particularly in providing support to local authorities, the NHS and Ambulance Trusts. The next phase of mass testing and the roll out of the vaccination programme is critical. As Chief Fire Officers told Lord Greenhalgh last week – this is an all hands to the pump moment and supporting mass testing and vaccine deployment should be a key community safety focus for Fire and Rescue Services. We ask you to find as many volunteers across your service as possible and to encourage them to support mass testing and vaccination efforts across the country.

For the first phase of the vaccine rollout, the Government is rightly prioritising the elderly and clinically extremely vulnerable, alongside front-line healthcare workers. However, we are continuing to work with our ministerial colleagues, to ensure that the role Fire and Rescue Services continue to provide in supporting the pandemic response is recognised in the continuing discussions on prioritisation for the next phases of the rollout.

HMICFRS have inspected all Services' performance during the pandemic and we look forward to seeing their findings when the reports are published this month. The Home Office will continue to support Fire and Rescue Authorities that have taken on additional Covid-19 related duties through the Fire Covid-19 Contingency Fund. Following first payments from the fund in December, the Contingency Fund has just been re-opened for a second round of applications and will remain open until 14 February. The fund eligibility criteria have been widened, so that in some instances Fire and Rescue Authorities may also be able to claim money for other additional Covid-19 related costs, such as overtime and on-call costs to support core functions, PPE items and cleaning. We would like to encourage all eligible services to apply and to get in touch with our officials in case of any questions.

This, as the Prime Minister has said, is the most critical phase of the pandemic. I know you will do all you can to ensure Fire and Rescue Services play their part in responding to this. On behalf of the British people, we thank you.

With our good wishes  


**Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP**



**Lord Greenhalgh  
Minister of State for Building Safety,  
Fire and Communities**