



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

17 September 2021

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

Report of the Area Manager Assets and Assurance

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) including the fire and rescue services (FRS) inspection programme.

Background

2. In July 2017, HMICFRS extended its remit to include inspections of England's 45 FRS as well as the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales.
3. The standard FRS inspection programme assesses how effectively and efficiently FRS prevents, protects the public against and responds to fires and other emergencies. It also assesses how well services look after their people who work for the Service.
4. The first HMICFRS inspection of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) was completed on 19 July 2019 with the final report published on 17 December 2019.
5. Additionally, under section 28A(3) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Secretary of State can commission HMICFRS to conduct thematic inspections of FRS.
6. In August 2020, HMICFRS were commissioned to inspect the response to the COVID-19 pandemic of the fire and rescue sector in England. CDDFRS was

inspected the week beginning 2 November 2020 with the inspection conducted entirely virtually, with interviews using Microsoft Teams.

Round Two Fire and Rescue Service Inspections

7. All 45 FRS will be inspected in three tranches during 2021 and 2022. CDDFRS will be inspected in tranche three which is likely to take place between March and September 2022 with the report published in Winter 2022.
8. Fifteen FRS have been inspected during tranche one. Although reports will not be published until November / December 2021, HMICFRS have provided feedback of their findings so far.
9. Generally, those services with Cause for Concerns had made real progress but those with Areas for Improvement was a less positive story and there is expected to be eight new Cause for Concerns. Many of these new Cause for Concerns were related to Areas for Improvement which hadn't made sufficient progress.
10. During tranche one, HMICFRS have identified improvements in the following diagnostics:
 - How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety?
 - How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?
11. However, HMICFRS has expressed disappointment with progress by some FRS in the following diagnostics:
 - How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies?
 - How effective is the FRS at preventing fires and other risks?
 - How well trained and skilled are FRS staff?
12. Following CDDFRS's last inspection, an action plan was produced to ensure improvements against the 21 Areas for Improvement were made. These have been tracked by the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and are undergoing further scrutiny following the feedback from tranche one. The updated action plan will then be brought to a future Authority meeting. Additionally, further analysis is being undertaken of the areas identified in section 11 to ensure the Service have made sufficient progress in these areas.

Her Majesty's Inspector Responsible for Oversight of CDDFRS

13. Andy Cooke is Her Majesty's Inspector of the Fire and Rescue Services for the Northern Region which includes CDDFRS. He was appointed as Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue in April 2021.

Service Liaison Lead Responsible for Oversight of CDDFRS

14. Gareth Bradbury was appointed as the new HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead for CDDFRS on 7 July 2021. He is also responsible for Humberside and Merseyside FRS.
15. His role will be to lead inspections of CDDFRS and to develop and maintain an effective working relationship between HMICFRS and CDDFRS. The Service have had an initial introductory meeting with Gareth and will use future engagement visits to inform him of our direction of travel since the last inspection.

HMICFRS Short Term Secondees

16. HMICFRS run a short term secondee scheme whereby staff from FRS help support the inspections of other FRS. Seconded staff bring valuable insight and experience of current fire service practices into the inspections. They will have the opportunity to learn about good practice in other services and develop their own assessment, analysis and decision-making skills and they will also become experts in the inspection methodology and process.
17. The Service supported staff to apply for selection for the scheme with one Group Manager being successful and selected. Each inspection they take part in will require a commitment of four weeks and the expectation is they will participate in two inspections.

State of Fire and Rescue 2021

18. Under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Thomas Winsor is required to publish an annual assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of FRS in England. The 2021 report will be his third report to the Secretary of State.
19. As part of his preparation of the annual assessment, Sir Thomas Winsor has asked Chief Fire Officers and Chairs of Fire Authorities (Appendix A) for their views on the following questions, the deadline for the response is 15 September 2021:
 - (a) What do you think are the most pressing areas for reform in the fire sector?
 - (b) Where do you think the fire sector ought to be in 2026?
 - (c) What changes have occurred, both locally and nationally in response to the first round of our inspections; what effect have they had, or do you expect them to have?
 - (d) COVID-19 continues to test the resilience of every service; what went well and what could be improved?
 - (e) What short-term changes do you think COVID-19 has had on individual services and the sector?
 - (f) What medium and long-term changes do you think COVID-19 is having and will have on individual services and the sector?

- (g) What has your organisation done to implement the learning and recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report (published on 30 October 2019)? and
- (h) What are your current people priorities, and what challenges are you facing to implement in your people strategy?

20. Due to the deadline for submission, the Chief Fire Officer and Chair have provided a response to the questions posed in Section 19. A copy of the response is attached at Appendix B.

Recommendations

21. CFA Members are requested to:
- a. **note** the contents of this report;
 - b. **receive** further reports as appropriate.

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