


**HMICFRS**

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

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# HMICFRS assessment framework commencing January 2023: Fire and rescue services

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## Introduction

In our Round 3 inspections, we measure fire and rescue services against the ‘characteristics of good performance’. These characteristics describe the levels of performance needed for a fire and rescue service to achieve a grade of ‘good’. These characteristics allow our inspectors to make consistent assessments across all services. They also mean that services can see what they are being graded against.

The characteristics are examples to help inspectors to determine appropriate judgments. They are not intended to prescribe specific standards or to be exhaustive lists of how we expect services to perform.

The characteristics have regard to national standards and take account of operational guidance and evidence from research, but we are not limited to these. We are entitled to establish our own view of efficiency and effectiveness. We will take into account new guidance, standards and research as they become available.

## 1. Effectiveness assessment

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

- 1.1.1. The FRS engages in dialogue with communities and interested parties to understand local risk.
- 1.1.2. The FRS routinely gathers a wide range of data to produce an accurate and clear risk profile and risk management plan.
- 1.1.3. The FRS risk management plan identifies and clearly sets out current and future changes in risk. The plan clearly establishes how the FRS will manage risk to the public.
- 1.1.4. The FRS risk management plan has clear links to community risk registers. In its risk management plan, the FRS clearly outlines the strategic direction it is taking for prevention, protection and response activity.
- 1.1.5. The FRS routinely gathers relevant risk information about people, places and threats. It makes sure that the information it has gathered is accurate and up to date.
- 1.1.6. The FRS has easily accessible systems in place that help staff to access risk information. The FRS can assure itself staff are aware of any material changes to risk information.
- 1.1.7. The FRS uses emerging information from operational activity to test its risk profile and challenge its risk management plan. The FRS has an up-to-date [risk assessment](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/glossary/risk-assessment/) of reasonably foreseeable fire-related risks and other risks.

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

- 1.2.1. The FRS has developed and implemented an ambitious prevention strategy which is informed by local risk and complies with statutory requirements. The FRS prevention plan clearly sets out where the greatest risks lie within its area and has a clear rationale for the level of activity to prevent fires and other risks. The FRS uses findings from prevention, protection and response activity to adapt its prevention plan. FRS prevention activity meets community expectations and its core functions are sustained regardless of other discretionary priorities for the FRS.
- 1.2.2. The FRS tailors its communications to provide information about fire prevention and to promote community safety. The FRS has a comprehensive understanding of the diverse needs of its communities and makes sure that its engagement and communication is designed to be appropriate and accessible to meet those diverse needs.

1.2.3. FRS staff are able to recognise the opportunity to prevent fires and other risks and take appropriate action. The FRS works with other FRSs, a wide range of partner organisations and diverse sections of the community to reduce the number of fires and other risks. The FRS evaluates the impact of its prevention activity and uses this to improve its own and partners' approaches.

1.2.4. Staff understand how to identify vulnerability and take action to safeguard vulnerable people (<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/glossary/vulnerable-people/>) as a result.

1.2.5. The FRS promotes road safety to reduce the numbers of people killed and seriously injured on the roads.

1.2.6. The FRS identifies and targets individuals who display signs of fire-setting behaviour for intervention activity and routinely shares information with partner organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists.

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

1.3.1. The FRS has developed and implemented a fire safety enforcement strategy and risk-based inspection programme which is informed by local risk. The FRS regulatory activities comply with statutory requirements to reduce the risk of fire. The FRS enforcement plan prioritises the highest risks and includes a proportionate level of activity to reduce risk. The FRS carries out a programme of fire safety audits in line with its enforcement plan.

1.3.2. The FRS carries out systematic, consistent and robust fire safety audits. The FRS assures itself that fire safety audits are being carried out in a systematic, consistent and robust way.

1.3.3. The FRS uses its enforcement powers in a proportionate way. The FRS regulatory activities keep people safe and secure from the risk of fire.

1.3.4. The FRS systematically and routinely shares relevant information on fire safety risk with staff who use it to carry out fire safety audits. FRS staff work, and share information with, enforcement partners and take appropriate enforcement action in line with the FRS plan.

1.3.5. The FRS has a risk-based system in place to manage its response to unwanted fire signals.

1.3.6. FRS staff engage with local businesses or large organisations and share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations. The FRS has a system to help all local businesses to have easy and timely access to clear guidance on how to comply with fire safety regulations.

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

1.4.1. The FRS understands what action it needs to take to adopt fire standards and national operational guidance (<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/glossary/national-operational-guidance/>), including joint and national learning. The FRS is implementing a plan to achieve this.

1.4.2. The FRS has developed a response strategy that is based on a thorough assessment of risk to the community. The FRS has an appropriate range of resources (people and equipment) available to respond to personal, property and environmental risk in line with its risk management plan. The FRS understands and actively manages the resources and capabilities available for deployment. The FRS is able to handle calls in a timely manner to ensure public safety. The FRS is able to manage the fair deployment (and temporary redeployment) of resources to meet operational need.

1.4.3. The FRS is able to make relevant risk information accessible to staff responding to emergency incidents in an easily usable format.

1.4.4. FRS staff are able to command fire service assets assertively, effectively and safely at incidents. FRS staff make sure the public are protected at incidents.

1.4.5. The FRS can mobilise sufficient resources to respond to local and cross-border incidents.

1.4.6. The FRS provides relevant information to the public about ongoing incidents to help keep them safe during and following incidents.

1.4.7. FRS staff use learning to improve operational response and incident command.


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

1.5.1. The FRS understands national and cross-border risks, and has sufficiently assessed reasonably foreseeable local community risks that are likely to require a major or multi-agency response.

1.5.2. The FRS uses risk assessments to develop plans to respond to major or multi-agency incidents.

1.5.3. The FRS carries out a joint exercise programme to test arrangements for major and multi-agency incidents. The FRS uses the learning to improve its capabilities and inform local and national developments.

1.5.4. FRS staff can work with neighbouring FRSs and form part of a multi-agency response in line with Joint Emergency Services Interoperability principles. The FRS actively participates in its local resilience forum and is well-prepared for, or routinely contributes to, multi-agency debriefs.

1.5.5. The FRS local arrangements comply with, and support, the requirements within the National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework  (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-coordination-and-advisory-framework-for-england>).

1.5.6. The FRS is aware of joint organisational and national operational learning. The FRS takes sufficient action to improve the services it provides in line with industry good practice.

## 2. Efficiency assessment

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

2.1.1. The FRS budget and resource allocation is proportionate and supports the activity set out in its risk management plan and strategic priorities.

2.1.2. FRS plans are built on sound planning assumptions, including scenario plans. The plans are subject to informed external independent challenge and meet financial requirements. The FRS has an affordable workforce model that provides the right skills and capabilities, linked to its risk management plan and priorities. The FRS's financial plans help it to make sure it can provide a sustained service to the public and continuously improve, as well as result in a balanced budget. The FRS has financial controls and financial risk control mechanisms in place to reduce the risk of inappropriate use of public money.

2.1.3. The FRS has allocated sufficient resources to prevention, protection and response activity. There is a clear rationale for the levels of such activity linked to its risk management plan. The FRS workforce model allows it to carry out its core functions effectively and efficiently.

2.1.4. The FRS arrangements for managing performance make sure resource use is clearly linked to its risk management plan and strategic priorities. Productive worktime should include making sure that staff contribute as much as possible when they are available.

2.1.5. The FRS is making use of new ways of working, including flexible workforce patterns, to make sure the services it provides are proportionate to risk and public safety. The FRS can demonstrate how this is cost-effective.

2.1.6. The FRS proactively meets its statutory duty to consider emergency service collaboration. The FRS collaborative activity fits with the priorities set out in its risk management plan and improves the provision of core functions or achieves work force efficiencies. The FRS comprehensively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration and can demonstrate that it improves the provision of its core functions or achieves work force efficiencies.

2.1.7. The FRS has business continuity arrangements in place for high-risk areas, which are updated and tested regularly.

2.1.8. The FRS can demonstrate savings from non-pay costs. It routinely reviews non-pay costs and regularly challenges itself to make sure that it is achieving value for money.

2.1.9. The FRS can demonstrate that the efficiencies it has made have helped it to sustain an appropriate level of service to the public. Savings identified are subjected to benefits/impact analysis to make sure there is no disproportionate impact on operational performance and on service to the public.

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

2.2.1. The FRS understands the likely financial challenges (beyond the current spending review) on the basis of relatively robust, realistic and prudent assumptions, which take account of the wider external environment and include some scenario planning for future spending reductions.

2.2.2. The FRS identifies savings and investment opportunities that improve service to the public and/or generate further savings.

2.2.3. The FRS has a plan for using reserves (<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/glossary/reserves/>) and is able to provide good evidence of using reserves (<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/glossary/reserves/>) in a sensible and sustainable way.

2.2.4. The FRS estate and fleet strategies have clear links to the risk management plan. The FRS actively considers how changes in fleet and estate provision and status and future innovation may affect risk, and the FRS exploits opportunities presented by changes in fleet and estate to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

2.2.5. The FRS actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk, and it exploits opportunities presented by changes in technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

2.2.6. The FRS has the capacity and capability it needs to change. It has the skills to achieve sustainable change.

2.2.7. The FRS routinely seeks opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency in future. It has ambitious plans to improve efficiency.

2.2.8. The FRS secures funding to invest in improvements to the service it provides to the public and is proactive in identifying additional funding sources.

## 3. People assessment

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

3.1.1. The FRS has well-defined values and behaviours that are understood and demonstrated at all levels in the organisation.

3.1.2. FRS senior managers act as role models and show that they are committed to service values through their behaviours.

3.1.3. The FRS has well-understood and effective wellbeing policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are available to and understood by staff. The FRS promotes effectively the mental and physical health and well-being of staff. FRS staff understand and have confidence in the well-being support processes the service provides.

3.1.4. The FRS has well-understood and effective health and safety policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are available to, and help to afford protections to, staff. The FRS effectively promotes the health and safety of staff.

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

3.2.1. The FRS regularly reviews its understanding of the skills and risk-critical safety capabilities of the workforce to make sure that it meets current and future organisational needs.

3.2.2. The skills and capabilities of FRS personnel are aligned with the implementation of the risk management plan. Staff are appropriately trained for their roles. The FRS training plans are used to develop and maintain competence and capability. Risk-critical safety training is given sufficient priority. The FRS has an effective mechanism to monitor and assure staff competence and service provision to the public. The FRS has systems in place to identify gaps in workforce capability and resilience issues. The FRS is tailoring its future workforce plans to meet longer-term changes in risk in a financially sustainable way.

3.2.3. The FRS has established a culture of continuous improvement and has effective systems in place for staff and the organisation to continually learn and develop.

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

3.3.1. The FRS regularly requests feedback from staff at all levels. The FRS feedback mechanisms carry credibility with staff and help to gather valuable information.

3.3.2. FRS leaders can demonstrate that they act on and have made changes as a direct result of feedback from staff. The FRS engages with all representative bodies and staff associations. The FRS resolves staff grievances, discipline and at-work issues in a timely, effective and supportive manner.

3.3.3. The FRS operates an open, fair and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for it. The FRS exploits opportunities to make sure that its workforce better reflects the community it represents and it promotes diversity at all levels within the organisation. The FRS has an effective system to understand and remove the risk of discrimination (<https://www.justiceinspectores.gov.uk/hmicfrs/glossary/discrimination/>) in recruitment and promotion processes. It has firmly established equality throughout strategies, plans, training and practice.

3.3.4. The FRS promotes equality, diversity and inclusion and engages with under-represented groups in the workforce to resolve staff concerns and make sure that there are fair and open opportunities for all.

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

3.4.1. The FRS has arrangements in place to assess and develop the individual performance of all staff. FRS staff have clear, personal and specific goals and objectives and have regular assessments of performance.

3.4.2. The FRS has open and transparent selection processes and actively manages the career pathways of all staff, including those with specialist skills.

3.4.3. The FRS has an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

3.4.4. The FRS has an open and fair process to select staff for leadership roles and this is reflected in the diversity of staff represented at all levels of the organisation.

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Sitemap (<https://www.justiceinspectores.gov.uk/hmicfrs/sitemap>)  
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(<https://www.justiceinspectores.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publication-html/hmicfrs-style-guide/>)

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