



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 February 2023

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

Report of the Director Community Risk Management

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the current position and next steps of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Background

2. In July 2017, HMICFRS extended its remit to include inspections of England's FRS as well as the territorial police forces in England and Wales. Their 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.
3. 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.

CDDFRS Round 2 Inspection

4. CDDFRS's second inspection was part of tranche 3 of HMICFRS's Round 2 inspections, with the main part of the inspection taking place the five weeks following the Strategic Brief delivered on 8 June 2022. This consisted of intense scrutiny of how effectively and efficiently CDDFRS prevents, protects the public against and responds to fires and other emergencies as well as how well it looks after its people.
5. The full report can be accessed online at <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/county-durham-and-darlington-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2021-22.pdf>
6. Overall, the inspection shows a positive direction of travel with all three pillars rated as 'good' with ten 'good' grades out of 11 sub-diagnostics.

7. Positively, HMICFRS identified two areas of innovative practice within the Service: the breathing apparatus washing facility and an effective apprenticeship programme. The report wording for these two areas of innovative practice is copied below:
- A new breathing apparatus washing facility has been created in the Service's training centre. The facility removes the products of combustion from the breathing apparatus equipment and is used alongside additional cleaning of firefighting personal protective equipment. This further supports the aim of keeping operational staff safe; and
 - The Service has an effective and successful apprenticeship programme which was implemented in 2017. The apprentices have been recruited in diverse roles across the Service. This has helped positively change the organisation's culture. In the last cohort, 50 percent were women and 25 percent from an ethnic minority background. The Service anticipates saving £1m on overall training costs over the next 5 years by using the programme effectively and the apprenticeship levy to its full potential.
8. The latest report only identifies four 'areas of improvement' compared to 21 'areas of improvement' in the 2019 report.
9. The table below shows the grades and sub-diagnostic grades that were awarded within this report, including a comparison to the 2019 report:

Pillar/ Sub-diagnostic	2018/19 Grade	2021/22 Grade
EFFECTIVENESS	GOOD	GOOD
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	Requires Improvement	Good
Preventing fires and other risks	Good	Good
Protecting the public through fire regulation	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement
Responding to fires and other emergencies	Good	Good
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	Good	Good
EFFICIENCY	GOOD	GOOD
Making best use of resources	Good	Good
Making the FRS affordable now and in the future	Good	Good
PEOPLE	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	GOOD
Promoting the right values and culture	Good	Good
Getting the right people with the right skills	Good	Good
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Requires Improvement	Good
Managing performance and developing leaders	Requires Improvement	Good

10. The Service is developing an action plan which will address all areas of improvement formally identified and also any text in the report which identifies where the Service is not as good as it could be. The action plan and progress against it, will be reported to the Performance Committee.

Service Liaison Lead Responsible for Oversight of CDDFRS

11. Andy Blades was appointed as the new HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead for CDDFRS on 21 September 2022. He is also responsible for Humberside and Merseyside FRS.
12. His role will be to lead inspections of CDDFRS and to develop and maintain an effective working relationship between HMICFRS and CDDFRS. The Service has had an initial introductory meeting with Andy and will arrange future engagement visits to inform him about the Service.

HMICFRS Short Term Secondees

13. 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.
14. During December, the Service supported five staff to successfully apply for selection for the scheme, one Group Manager and four Station Managers. Each inspection they take part in will require a commitment of two non-consecutive weeks.

State of Fire and Rescue 2022

15. Under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Andy Cooke is required to publish an annual assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of FRS in England.
16. On 20 January 2023, the 'State of Fire and Rescue – The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022' was published. This is Andy Cooke's first assessment of England's FRS as HM Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services.
17. The report can be accessed online at:
<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/state-of-fire-and-rescue-annual-assessment-2022/>
18. The report consists of two main chapters. Chapter 1 contains his assessment of the state of FRS in England. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the gradings and the findings from HMICFRS's Round 2 inspections of FRS's in England. The chapter focuses on the principal findings from Tranche 3 with the commentary building on the findings from the first two tranches to form an overall view. Four Annexes A – D cover national recommendations, HMICFRS reports from December 2021 to January 2023, revisit letters and information about HMICFRS.
19. The key headline outlined by Andy Cooke in his associated press release was "Government needs to reform the fire sector as a matter of urgency, or else firefighters will not be able to provide the best possible service to the public."

20. There are no new recommendations made, although Andy Cooke expresses his frustration that only two of the six previous recommendations are complete. The four remaining recommendations are:
- The Home Office should precisely determine the role of fire and rescue services, to remove any ambiguity;
 - The sector should remove unjustifiable variation, including in how they define risk;
 - The sector should review how effectively pay and conditions are determined; and
 - The Home Office should invest chief fire officers with operational independence, whether through primary legislation or in some other manner.
21. The key areas outlined in Chapter 1 of the report are listed below:
- Services and their staff are dedicated to serving the public;
 - Reform is still urgently needed;
 - The Government needs to implement our national recommendations as a matter of urgency;
 - In many respects, the sector has made progress on national policies, standards and fire safety;
 - Our inspections have helped services to better serve their communities;
 - Services face a difficult year ahead;
 - Our inspections continue to be valuable;
 - Learning from the Manchester Arena Inquiry;
 - Most fire services are well-placed to respond to marauding terrorist attacks.
22. The Service will review the content of the report and use it to assist the development of the action plan.

Recommendations

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

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