



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

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HMI Roy Wilsher
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and
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Chief Fire Officers
Chairs of Fire Authorities
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners
Police and Crime Commissioners
Lead Fire Authority Members
Locally elected Mayors
Other FRS interested parties

23 March 2023

Dear colleague,

Fire and Rescue Service Update

Round 3

I write to inform you on progress of our third round of fire and rescue (FRS) inspections.

Inspection activity is now underway, with document requests having been made to the first 9 FRSs in the programme. A further update to the inspection schedule for round 3 is set out in **Annex A**. This running order may be subject to change, which could be due to several reasons, including changes in performance or risk. Services affected by this will be informed of any planned changes at the earliest opportunity.

Please contact your Chief of Staff, Mick Mason, michael.mason1@hmicfrs.gov.uk or Jo Hayden, jo.hayden1@hmicfrs.gov.uk, in the first instance if you wish to discuss it.

Values and Culture

Since we started inspecting fire and rescue services in 2018, we have found bullying, harassment, and discrimination in many. We have repeatedly expressed concerns that the general culture is poor and needs to change. Our findings around values and culture from our second round of inspection show that, while some services have made improvements since our first round of inspections, too many need to do more. Then, in late 2022, London Fire Brigade published a report called [Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade](#). The review's troubling findings and recent media attention on other services have heightened public interest in this topic.

We therefore welcome the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire's commissioning of a spotlight report. It is an opportunity for much-needed attention on this area, and for action to be taken to improve values, culture, fairness and diversity across the fire and rescue sector. This report will be published this spring.

On 7 February 2023, we requested every fire and rescue service provide information relating to all allegations of gross misconduct currently under investigation or consideration, along with cases of alleged misconduct, and other grievances and complaints where the alleged behaviour of individuals calls into question the culture and values of the organisation.

As explained in our request to chief fire officers, as an inspectorate, we operate in the public interest, and public confidence is damaged by such behaviour. It is therefore essential, in order to assess the ongoing efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue services, that we understand, and are kept informed of, serious and significant allegations in relation to services, not only at the time of inspections, but whenever they occur. We therefore requested this information under powers contained in paragraph 6 of schedule A3 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

Then, on 17 February 2023, we requested every fire and rescue service provide information relating to their staff background checks. Again, as explained in our request to chief fire officers, we are considering how fire and rescue services can ensure their staff and leaders maintain high ethical and professional standards and act with the utmost integrity. A clear area where progress could be made is in relation to vetting. The Inspectorate needs to have a clear understanding of what background checks, if any, services are currently completing.

I thank all of you who have responded in full to our requests.

Positive Practice

Part of our strategy is to promote good practice through our inspection reports, and through examples of good practice that those working across the inspected sectors can find and use easily. It also says that we will work closely with others, taking a 'smarter systems' approach. In order to support this approach we are pleased that we now have agreement with the NFCC to work together on disseminating and promoting positive practice. This will start with us proactively looking for positive practice during all of our types of inspection and publishing it in our reports. The positive practice we publish will either be 'promising' or 'innovative'.

- Promising practice – things we find to be working well in a force or service, where there are positive measurable outcomes which have been observed or monitored.

- Innovative practice - new ways of working in a force or service that may not have been formally evaluated but that have the potential to produce more positive outcomes but have not been subject to any testing or monitoring.

The NFCC are also developing a space on their platform to host examples of positive practice in a very similar way, so again the sector will have one place to look for these positive examples.

In the meantime, if you need any further information please contact either me or Alex Hill, FRS portfolio director via alex.hill@hmicfrs.gov.uk

Thank you for your continued support of our inspection programme.

Yours sincerely,



HMI Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services