



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

28 April 2023

Dear colleague,

## **Fire and Rescue Service Update**

I am writing to update you on several aspects of our inspection programme for fire and rescue services.

### **Cause of Concern Process**

I want to inform you of a change to our cause of concern process. Previously, when we have identified a cause of concern related to public safety as part of an inspection, we have alerted the relevant fire and rescue service (FRS) immediately so that remedial action can be taken. However, we have reported that cause of concern and associated recommendations more publicly in the full report. This can be some months after we initially uncovered the concern.

We will continue to immediately alert FRSs to significant failures as we discover them. But in certain circumstances, to better inform the public, we will henceforth also publish a cause of concern and recommendations as soon as practicable thereafter. This takes the form of an update to the HMICFRS website. Services will receive a copy of the cause of concern(s) prior to publication in order to conduct pre-publication factual accuracy checks.

The full evidence base and background to the cause of concern is covered in the next service inspection report, along with an update on the progress made against it.

We do not publish all causes of concern this way – only those immediately related to public safety. Other causes of concern (for example, those that relate to the organisation and running of the service) will be published in the next report as we have previously done.

## **Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services**

Our recent spotlight report on [Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services](#) has drawn a lot of attention and we will be monitoring our thirty-five recommendations closely.

The spotlight highlighted a number of significant issues, and we are now considering what further work may be needed on this important issue. This includes through our Round 3 FRS inspections, which are underway, but also through other work with the sector. I will continue to provide further updates in the months ahead.

## **Positive Practice**

Following on from my last update I wanted to provide you with more information relating to our new programme of work, to promote and share the more positive things we find during our inspections.

A key pillar of our [2021- 2025 Strategy](#) is to capitalise on our independent insight and learning and to share this with the sectors we inspect. At HMICFRS we believe this is a vitally important part of our work, to help the sectors improve by giving you the opportunity to learn from each other, alongside our work identifying areas where things are not going so well.

At the core of the programme are the practices identified as ‘promising’ or ‘innovative’ during our inspections and published in our reports. This terminology is common across all our types of inspection, and has also been adopted by the NFCC. Promising practice is defined as: those activities HMICFRS find to be working well in a force or service, where there are positive measurable outcomes which have been observed or monitored. Innovative practice is defined as: 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 programme includes:

1. Positive practice events:
  - These were launched in January with a PEEL (Police inspection) Masterclass, hosted by Greater Manchester Police (GMP), which focussed on the improvements made by GMP that resulted in them being taken out of our enhanced monitoring regime. Some of the sessions, particularly those about leadership, were equally relevant to all of our inspected sectors. A recording of the event has been shared with Chief Fire Officers.

- We have been working jointly with the NFCC, who have agreed to host an event in the summer, focussing on positive practice in the FRS sector. We will let you know as soon as we have a firm date for this event. We will also be contributing to the NFCC spring conference in May.
- Further events, including webinars focussing on particular topics, in-person masterclasses and contributions to external learning events and conferences, for both the policing and fire and rescue sectors, are to be held over the next eighteen-months.
- Stakeholder newsletters: our HMICFRS stakeholder newsletter will include a roundup of published promising and innovative practice, giving you an easy reference guide and prompt to look further into areas relevant to you and your service.

### 3. Practice bank/practice portal:

- The College of Policing have recently launched a practice bank – an online platform designed as a public-facing shared space to enable the sharing of information. HMICFRS are one of many contributors to the bank, identifying examples of promising or innovative practice within policing that we find during our inspections. The practice bank provides a single source for the sector to search and to access this information.
- The NFCC are currently developing their own positive practice portal. This will be available to all services through the NFCC platform and will enable the sharing of information about promising and innovative practice across the fire and rescue sector. HMICFRS will continue to contribute and support the NFCC on its development. These practice examples are already available in our reports, however featuring them on the portal will ensure they are easy to access and search.

We hope that you will find this work beneficial to your service and would encourage you to attend and participate in events later this year, and to access the NFCC's positive practice portal once it is up and running. Any suggestions you have for future topics of focus, particularly where either you and your service have something that is working well to share with others or feel you would benefit from learning from others, please let us know. The work is being led by [lucy.bradshaw-murrow@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.bradshaw-murrow@homeoffice.gov.uk) and [ruth.jackson@hmicfrs.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.jackson@hmicfrs.gov.uk) who are very happy to be contacted if you have questions, suggestions or require more information.

We are confident that the work in this programme will be of great benefit, resulting in an improvement to the service provided to the public, which is, ultimately, what we are all striving to achieve.

### **Round 3 Inspection - Hot Debriefs**

Finally and following feedback received, I also wanted to clarify the purpose of the hot debrief. This meeting is to provide an overview of our early inspection findings so that appropriate action can be taken by the service. It marks the end of our inspection evidence gathering activity with the service. The meeting is designed to let the Chief Officer and lead authority member (or relevant equivalent) know what was found during the inspection to promote improvements. It also provides an opportunity for the service to provide feedback on the inspection process.

Should you have any queries regarding any of the above then please contact either me or Alex Hill, FRS portfolio director via [alex.hill@hmicfrs.gov.uk](mailto: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