



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

15 September 2023

Fire Standards

Report of Director of Community Risk Management

Purpose of Report

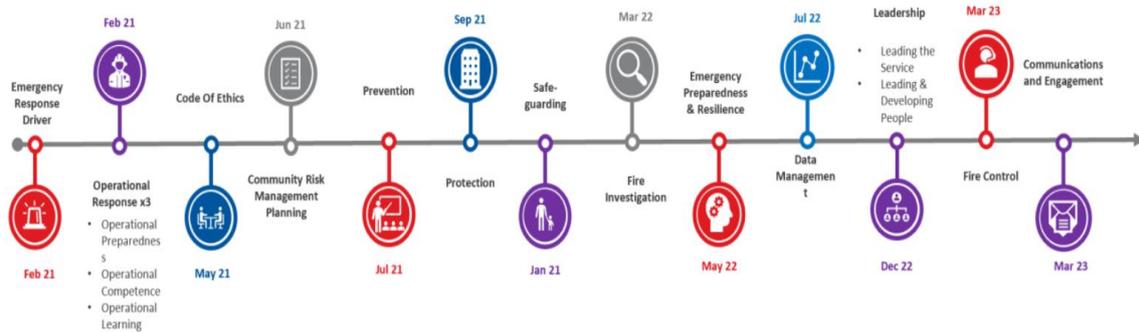
1. The purpose of this report is to update members on the National Fire Standards and to provide an update on the alignment of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) against the published standards.

Background

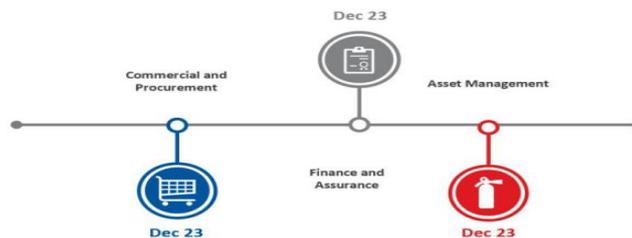
2. As part of the reforms for Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) in England and the 2018 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, a duty was placed on all fire authorities to implement professional standards and for His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to have regards to those standards as part of their inspections.
3. The Fire Standards Board (FSB) was created in 2019 to develop and introduce new standards to the fire sector, thus improving professionalism and driving sector improvement, with the first four standards published in February 2021.
4. The role of the FSB is to oversee the identification, organisation, development, and maintenance of Fire Standards for FRS in England. The intention being to help identify what good looks like and drive continual improvement across the Services for the benefit of the profession, the FRS and the communities served by them.
5. Adoption is not mandatory however the standards are considered to be best practice and HMICFRS Inspection programme will be expected to increasingly give due regard to compliance with the standards. CDDFRS has taken the strategic decision to adopt all Fire Standards.

Published Fire Standards

6. There are now sixteen approved and published Fire Standards shown on the timeline diagram below.



7. The FSB is currently consulting on the three new standards shown on the timeline diagram below, however, at this stage it is not definite that these will be published.



8. The final area outstanding for consideration for a Fire Standard is Digital and Information Technology (IT). It is intended that work will start on this Standard early 2024.

9. Each Fire Standard describes:

- What is required to meet the standard.
- What the benefits are of achieving the standard.
- Legal requirements.
- Linked Qualifications, Accreditations or Fire Standards.
- Guidance or supporting materials.

Benefits of Fire Standards

10. The benefits of implementing the Fire Standards are to:

- Drive service improvement for local people, provide re-assurance to our communities.
- Assist Governing bodies and operational leaders in assessing local performance.
- Support local change activity and addressing issues (culture change, leadership).
- Consistency in approach to improve competence and decrease organisational risk.
- Generate more positive working cultures.
- Enable services to collaborate effectively, with others nationally as well as across border.

Implementation Support

11. To help with implementation of both Fire Standards and other National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) products the Service is supported by an Implementation Liaison Manager, Jo Hardy, who provides input from a national perspective.
12. A range of workshops and virtual sessions are being held to support FRS with implementation of the published Fire Standards. These are made available to relevant officers within CDDFRS to ensure knowledge and understanding is embedded at all levels of the Service in context to the Fire Standards.
13. The implementation support provided enables ongoing liaison between the Service and the NFCC to review progress and identify innovative ways to embed the Standards and other relevant NFCC products.

CDDFRS Governance Arrangements

14. To ensure the Fire Standards are consistently applied, reviewed and monitored, a governance framework has been put in place.
15. To drive forward the application of the standards requires involvement of the Director of Community Risk Management (CRM) as the strategic lead, supported by the Project Assurance Manager who is the conduit between strategic direction and operational delivery.
16. The current work undertaken to capture evidence and performance across the Service is facilitated by the Project Assurance Manager through an in-depth process of data collection working with Standard leads. This provides a more detailed analysis which is fit for purpose for the requirements of Service improvement and HMICFRS.
17. To support the governance framework central monitoring and reporting of progress is facilitated through the Project Board, chaired by the Director of People and Organisational Development which meets on a six-weekly cycle.
18. Adoption of the Fire Standards for FRS in England has also been integrated into CDDFRS Assets and Assurance Strategy 2023-26.

CDDFRS Implementation

19. The process of implementation for Fire Standards has been refreshed with a greater emphasis on engagement, support and progress. This approach has yielded the benefits of increased awareness of interdependencies between the Standards. It is anticipated that by continuing with this approach silo working will be reduced and the value of using nationally benchmarked standards recognised.
20. Each approved Fire Standard is introduced into the Service in a systematic and consistent way. The process consists of four phases:
 - Phase 1 Interpretation
 - Phase 2 Gap Analysis
 - Phase 3 Action Planning
 - Phase 4 Maintenance
21. When a new Standard is published the Project Assurance Manager engages the responsible lead to interpret the standard, associated guidance and supporting information.

22. Using this information, an initial assessment is undertaken utilising implementation tools provided by the NFCC to complete a gap analysis to identify where the Service is meeting the Standard, or areas for improvement and development. When completed, it provides a benchmark from which progress over time can be measured.
23. Any issues flagged through the process will, if necessary, be escalated to the Project Board.

CDDFRS Current Position

24. The Code of Ethics and Emergency Response Driving Fire Standards have been fully implemented and a maintenance phase is being developed.
25. A gap analysis and action plan were successfully completed for Community Risk Management Planning, Emergency Preparedness and Resilience, Fire Investigation, Operational Competence, Operational Learning and Operational Preparedness. With the introduction of the new Implementation Liaison Manager an assurance exercise is ongoing by the Project Assurance Manager and identified leads to challenge and develop the evidence and journey for these Standards.
26. Work on the gap analysis for Communication Engagement and Consultation, Data Management, Fire Control, Prevention, Protection and Safeguarding and Leading and Developing People is underway.
27. Following recent national reports, the 'Leading the Service' Fire Standard is a welcome framework for this area. The Service has approached initial implementation of this Standard from a Benefits Realisation perspective and have used the NFCC Maturity Model for Leadership Development engaging with the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and a range of internal stakeholder groups at different levels including future leaders and Service Management Team (SMT) to gain a Service wide view on the current position. The NFCC is supportive of the approach adopted and has requested a case study to demonstrate use of the Maturity Model as part of the Fire Standard journey.
28. Through this work the Service believe a more accurate position across all of the Standards will be achieved, recognising areas for improvement and development and areas of good practice. In particular, this workstream is enabling the Service to inform and assure existing and new Service development plans.

Collaboration

29. A Fire Standards Implementation Leads Network has been established by the NFCC Implementation Liaison Manager providing an opportunity to connect with other FRS to share learning opportunities and implementation experiences.
30. CDDFRS has recently engaged in a Peer Review with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service focusing on Service Improvement Systems, Organisational Learning and Response Reality Testing.
31. To support services continuing their Fire Standards journey, CDDFRS are hosting a session to focus on the assurance part of Fire Standards implementation. The session will be held on 27 October 2023 attended by Fire Standard leads from FRS in the Northern Region.

Review of Fire Standards

32. The FSB has a periodic review process in place following publication of a Fire Standard. The first Fire Standards to undergo the agreed periodic review are as follows:

- Operational Preparedness
- Operational Competence
- Operational Learning
- Emergency Response Driver

33. The recent HMICFRS Spotlight Report on Culture and Values identified a number of recommendations for the FSB. In light of this, they are reviewing the following standards:

- Safeguarding
- Leading the Service
- Leading and Developing People

Recommendations

34. Members are requested to:

- a. **Note** the contents of this report.
- b. **Receive** further reports as appropriate.

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