County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority

Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

21 October 2024

Fire Standards Progress Report

Report of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

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

Background

2. Fire Standards are a National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) product that were introduced in February 2021 by the Fire Standards Board. The Fire Standards are a critical part of setting out how fire and rescue services operate. They are designed to bring consistency to the sector to support the delivery of our legislative requirements.

3. The NFCC has released an implementation tool alongside the publication of each standard. Each implementation tool has a set of criteria with tasks to action and/or measure compliance against.

4. Although the Fire Standards are not legally binding, they represent sector best practices. As such, they serve as a benchmark for the standards that the Service is expected to uphold.

5. Fire Standards should not be seen as silo documents as their relationships produce positive synergies needed to achieve improvements. Separately and together, they help drive improved quality of service to support the safety, health, and wellbeing of communities.

Published Standards`

6. To date there are 19 fire standards that have been approved and published, each with individual desired outcomes.

7. The recent publication of the Internal Governance and Assurance, Digital and Cyber and Procurement and Commercial Fire Standards are designed to drive continuous improvement. These standards aim to enhance internal governance structures, ensure the secure and effective use of technology and promote best practices in procurement.

8. The Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard focuses on ensuring that fire and rescue services (FRSs) have internal governance structures and business planning processes which enable senior leaders to maintain comprehensive oversight of internal activities, assuring them that the service is operating effectively.

9. The Digital and Cyber Fire Standard sets out a series of recommendations and procedures that will help services deliver excellence to the public by using information and communications technology (ICT) safely, effectively and efficiently.

10. The Procurement and Commercial Fire Standard sets out the importance of procurement and commercial best practice within FRSs. Implementation of this Standard will help to ensure that contracts and relationships with suppliers realise value for money (VFM) and result in delivery of high-quality public goods and services.

Governance

11. Services are expected to work towards achieving the Standard's stated outcome through reflection and self-assessment and by avoiding simply treating Standards as a tick box compliance exercise.

12. The Continuous Improvement Team support departmental leads to ensure the effective interpretation of fire standards, conducting thorough gap analyses and developing effective action plans. This collaborative approach helps to embed a culture of continuous improvement.

CDDFRS Current Position

13. Relevant departments are using the implementation tools to conduct gap analyses relating to compliance, to evidence work achieved and work yet to be completed. In many cases much of what each Standard's outcome requires is already being achieved.

14. The two leadership fire standards (Leading the Service and Leading and Developing People) are two of the largest standards and are more cross-cutting, impacting and relevant to a wider range of teams across the Service's directorates. SLT have conducted an initial gap analysis of Leading the Service and further work is being undertaken to ensure a rigorous gap analysis is completed.

15. The table below highlights the areas where progress has been made and identifies those standards which are still undergoing analysis or updates.

Gap Analysis Fully Implemented	Gap Analysis Previously Implemented and Review Ongoing	Gap Analysis Underway	Gap Analysis not yet Completed *Recently Published*
Code of Ethics	Communication & Engagement	Data Management	Digital & Cyber
Emergency Response Driving	CRMP	Fire Control	Internal Governance & Assurance
Operational Learning	Emergency Preparedness & Resilience	Leading the Service	Procurement & Commercial
Operational Competence	Fire Investigation	Leading & Developing People	
Operational Preparedness	Prevention	Safeguarding	
	Protection		

16. Preliminary assessments show that CDDFRS is largely in compliance with the Fire Standards. Although there are a few areas needing further development, no significant high-risk issues have been identified.

Recommendations

17. Members are requested to:

   a. **<u>Note</u>** the contents of this report.

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