



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

17 JULY 2018

DEVELOPING THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE INSPECTIONS: LEARNING REPORT (JUNE 2018)

REPORT OF AREA MANAGER ASSETS, ASSURANCE AND TRAINING

Purpose of the report

1. To brief Members on the report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) entitled 'Developing the fire and rescue service inspections: Learning report', published in June 2018.

Background

2. On 7 December 2017, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) Zoe Billingham contacted all fire and rescue services (FRS) requesting volunteers to participate in a pilot inspection. Three services were chosen to enable HMICFRS to understand different governance arrangements (county council, metropolitan and combined fire authority).
3. Pilot inspections were completed in Suffolk FRS (March 2018), Staffordshire FRS (April 2018) and West Yorkshire FRS (May 2018) to test the inspection methodology on services of different sizes, complexities and workforce mixes.
4. In June 2018, HMICFRS published their report to present their findings of the inspections, entitled 'Developing the fire and rescue service inspections: Learning report'.
5. The unabridged version of the report is attached as Appendix A.

Findings

6. In March 2018, three inspection data workshops were held to enable the understanding of the data collection process. Based on the feedback from FRS, the approach was developed to gather data that was not already available from other sources and key changes were made to the data collection process, including:
 - Removing some of the types of data requested in the collection;
 - Providing more detail on what specific data was to be collected;

- Allowing for the delay between the end of the financial year and when certain data becomes available (e.g. human resource and finance data);
- Providing extra time for the first data return to allow for the time needed to gather the data.

7. Key learning from the pilot inspections also included:

- Recognising the value of service liaison leads making early contact with each service to understand their operating context;
- Testing different ways of involving retained duty system staff to reflect the important part they play in most FRS;
- Including visits to prevention and protection teams during the inspection week, in addition to those already planned for in the discovery phase. This followed feedback from pilot services who suggested the HMICFRS should spend more time on these areas;
- Adapting the police inspection technique of reviewing case files and evolving it into process reviews. This enabled the HMICFRS to understand how FRS conduct prevention and protection activity;
- Increasing the number of partner telephone interviews conducted in the week prior to the inspection. The interviews gave a valuable understanding of collaborative working arrangements and partnerships;
- Introducing an interview with the chief fire officer (CFO) towards the end of the inspection. This is an opportunity for the inspectors to liaise with the CFO after conducting most of the inspection and discuss what has already emerged;
- Providing greater clarity on how to involve authority members, if necessary, on the inspection process;
- Evolving how to test operational effectiveness to ensure a broad range of duty systems and station locations across each service are visited;
- Evolving the reality testing of incident command to ensure that it is not simply a test of operational competence, but covers all levels of command; and
- Understanding the importance of listening to representative bodies as part of the inspection process.

8. Following the pilot inspections, extensive consultation was undertaken to confirm the inspection approach. This included the following groups:

- An external reference group comprised of representatives from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), CFO, fire authorities, police and crime commissioners, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Home Office;

- A technical advisory group to provide advice on the inspection methodology, data collection and analysis;
 - Subject matter expert networks for each of the three inspection pillars;
 - Public and fire and rescue sector.
9. Based on the learning from the pilot inspections and consultation, HMICFRS also refined their approach to the delivery of each inspection. The development of the methodology question set confirmed that HMICFRS will focus their inspections on the service provided to the public by the FRS, and will not inspect the governance arrangements provided by the fire and rescue authorities.
10. As a result of the learning from the pilot inspections, HMICFRS reflected that services are funded according to the level of risk and not the demand for services. Consequently, additional sub diagnostics were added to the relevant core question to focus on risk and reflect the operational relevance.
11. HMICFRS also adapted their inspection approach to accommodate the range of fire and rescue governance models.
12. All evidence gathering techniques, including the document reviews, self assessments, strategic briefing and the discovery process were all found to be effective and provided the inspection teams with the correct level of detail and understanding. Each of these phases of the inspection will continue to be delivered in the same format for all subsequent inspections.

Next steps

13. Following the pilot inspections the first tranche of inspections will begin in July 2018. HMICFRS are currently confirming the logistics of all related visits and meetings. On conclusion of each inspection, HMICFRS will conduct a rigorous moderation process and then publish all final outcome reports for tranche one during Autumn 2018.
14. Tranche two inspections will commence in Autumn 2018 with tranche three inspections, including County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, in Spring 2019.

Recommendations

15. Members are asked to:
- (a) **note** the report.