



Developing the fire and rescue service inspections

Learning report

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Foreword from Her Majesty's Inspector Zoë Billingham

We recognise the difficult and dangerous work firefighters and their colleagues do to protect the public. We also recognise the wider role services play in communities. It is important to us, as an inspectorate, that we understand all elements of the fire and rescue service (FRS), and reflect this in our inspection approach.

After it was announced that we would take on the work of inspecting fire and rescue services, we made a promise to the sector:

The inspection will be developed with the fire and rescue service. It will be designed to promote improvement and to identify all aspects of the excellent work undertaken by fire and rescue services. We will approach the inspection on a no-surprises basis and experts from across the service will be fundamental to the delivery of our inspections.

As we look ahead to the start of the first round of inspections, I hope the sector feels we have developed our inspection approach with it. The response we have had so far suggests people are broadly supportive of the inspections, and are keen to see the findings for all services.

This report sets out how we tested our inspection. I hope the sector finds this useful in understanding how we developed our approach. I am very thankful for the time and welcome our three pilot services gave, and for the continued advice of all our interested parties. We will continue to work with experts across the field as we move through the inspections.

Introduction

The Home Secretary announced HMICFRS as the inspectorate for England's fire and rescue services in July 2017. We have been working with fire and rescue services, fire authorities and other interested parties to develop the inspection methodology and approach.

This report sets out what we have learned from the three pilot inspections carried out between March and May 2018. It also includes our learning from the public and sector consultations we ran on the inspection programme and framework, methodology and judgment criteria respectively. The report explains how we have adapted our approach to take account of our learning, and feedback from services.

We are very grateful to the chief fire officers, chairs of fire authorities and colleagues of Suffolk, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire fire and rescue services. Their help, support and participation has helped us improve the inspection approach and the experience of all those involved.

Pilot inspections

HMI Zoë Billingham wrote to all fire and rescue services seeking volunteers to participate in the pilot inspections on 7 December 2017. We explained that any service that participated in the pilot inspections would not be inspected until tranche three (spring 2019).

We are very grateful to all those services who volunteered. We chose the pilot areas to allow us to understand three of the governance arrangements for fire and rescue services (county council, combined fire authority and metropolitan¹). The selection also allowed us to test our methodology on services of different sizes, complexities and workforce mixes, and from different areas of the country.

We consulted the external reference group (ERG) on the selection criteria for the pilot inspections. We then worked with the three services as part of the planning stage. Our objectives were to test the methodology and judgment criteria, and train our new staff.

The pilot inspections broadly followed the same timing and sequence as the planned inspections. We deployed slightly larger teams for the pilot inspections. This allowed us to train our new inspection staff with experienced inspectors supporting their development, as well as test the methodology. The inspection teams will normally have ten people. The pilot inspections had at least 14 people on each team.

During the pilot inspections, we spoke to over ten percent of the frontline workforce of each service. This was in addition to the managers and leaders we spoke to.

The pilot inspections took place on the following dates:

¹ Metropolitan fire services are single purpose bodies covering multiple metropolitan district councils.

	Data collection	Document request and self-assessment	Strategic briefing	Discovery	Fieldwork
Suffolk	13 December–15 January	5–26 February	12 March	13–14 March	19–23 March
Staffordshire			9 April	26–27 March	16–20 April
West Yorkshire			8 May	23–25 April	14–18 May

The experience for pilot services

All the pilot services were very generous with their time and resources. They created an environment in which we could test out our ideas and learn.

The chief fire officers from Suffolk, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire have given us their insights into the process.

Mark Hardingham, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Chief Fire Officer

“Being a pilot service gave us a great insight into the new inspection regime. It presented an opportunity to help HMICFRS learn about fire and rescue services and to mould and shape their approach to achieve the best outcomes...both of which it was evident they were keen to do. As a county council based service, the pilot was helpful to explore the opportunities and challenges this presents. The impact of these on a countrywide inspection programme is such that our pilot led to a meeting between the county council chief fire officers and HMICFRS to explore the complexities further.

"We have many post-pilot reflections, not least; the challenges of benchmarking services that have been encouraged to develop local solutions and measures for many years; the extent and breadth of the inspections, coupled with services not having been inspected for nearly a decade means that preparation and resources is key, not just in terms of data, documents, evidence and organisation, but the 'inspection mindset' of staff and partners; and finally, as the first pilot, the relationship with our service liaison lead hadn't even started to be built, and it was clear that this relationship, and their knowledge of the service and those in it, will be critical to the inspection."

Becci Bryant, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Chief Fire Officer

"As a pilot service, we had the fantastic opportunity to gain a great deal of insight into the new inspection methodology and approach adopted by the team of inspectors. The pilot also crucially gave us the ability to assist HMICFRS with their learning and ensure the new methodology was fit for purpose for all services that will be inspected over the coming months. It was clear from the outset of the engagement we have had with HMICFRS that they were extremely committed to ensuring this learning and improving took place.

"As a service under a combined fire and rescue authority and soon to be under a PCC FRA, this gave HMICFRS the chance to view different governance arrangements to those they saw in Suffolk. A meeting has now been scheduled between the chief fire officers of those services who are moving towards a PCC FRA in order to explore the differences further with HMICFRS.

"We have had many reflections on the inspection process which include; the IRMP differences between FRSs and how this will have an impact on any benchmarking that will take place, how differing governance models will affect the way services are delivered, the differing and complex needs of all our communities and how that has led to bespoke local solutions and how this creates a challenge to HMICFRS when inspecting different services. Ultimately, we felt that whilst we had the opportunity to help shape the future approach, we took a great deal of learning for ourselves as a service by being involved."

John Roberts, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Chief Fire Officer

"Having previously been on the receiving and assessor side of the Operational Assurance Peer Review Challenge, the HMICFRS inspection process felt very similar. The main challenge was the volume of work before the inspection with regards to data submissions, document requests, self-assessment, and preparing for the discovery week, the field work week and the strategic briefing.

"The approach that WYFRS took for self-assessment, based on the 11 diagnostics and over 60 sub-diagnostics, was to push out the diagnostics and sub-diagnostics to the teams and departments that are specialist and in the best position to answer the diagnostic questions. We asked our departments to: identify future plans, what areas of good practice do we have, and what areas do we have for improvement. We took this approach to engage and inform our teams in what HMICFRS may be using to measure our performance, and gather data for self-assurance purposes.

"As a result of using this methodology, we generated a huge response, and over 20,000 words of quality information from throughout the service. The challenge we had was to whittle down this information to 3,330 words (300-word submission for each of the 11 diagnostics). We found the 300-word submission process to be very restrictive, as we had all of this quality information. We used all of the information harvested to form our strategic briefing and give ourselves an opportunity to cover the areas we needed to evidence in a relatively short space of time. We also used the strategic presentation as a platform to establish what makes WYFRS different and unique from other FRSs, whilst incorporating the six Key Lines of Enquiry we were given at quite short notice following the discovery week.

"I believe internal communications with your staff and engagement with local stakeholders is key to the success of the inspection process. We used numerous tools for this process including: face-to-face meetings, internal social media (Yammer), internal magazine and intranet. We also did internal pieces to camera, Q&A sessions and provided reports and briefings for FRA members. The one thing I heard my service liaison officer repeatedly say to staff and stakeholders who engaged with inspection teams was: Be professional, Be honest, but most importantly, Be yourself. This appeared to work effectively and put people at ease.

"The nice thing before, during and after the inspection process was that actually we are a very self-aware service and there were not too many surprises. The areas that were highlighted by the inspection team were already being worked on to improve service performance."

What we changed as a result of each pilot inspection

We asked each of the pilot services for feedback. This was to understand their perspective on the inspection, and review our approach where appropriate. In Staffordshire, we asked questions of FRS staff straight after interviews and reality testing, to gain their immediate thoughts. We were keen to gather feedback on our methodology and approach, as well as the logistical challenges inspections can bring.

We incorporated all the feedback we received into our learning from the inspections themselves and refined our approach as a result. The changes we made after each inspection are set out below. We got better at applying the methodology through each pilot inspection; this is reflected in the volume of learning we extracted as they went on.

Pilot one – Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

The pilot inspection in Suffolk was our first opportunity to test the methodology we had developed. It was also the first FRS inspection any of us had ever done.

Feedback from colleagues in Suffolk helped us to identify the need to introduce checkpoints – in our interviews and debriefing session – that looked for positive evidence and examples of good ways of working. As our purpose is to promote improvements, it was important to us to do this and include regular opportunities to do so.

We learned about the different roles, ranks and responsibilities. From this we revised our plans about who to speak to on inspection and increased the involvement of staff at all levels of the organisation. We also identified a gap in our evidence-gathering techniques in relation to incident command.

We inspect on behalf of the public and we write reports for the public. While in Suffolk, we identified the need to help our inspectors ask questions on behalf of the public. We need to ask the questions the public want to know the answers to.

We recognised the need to introduce an interview with the chief executive (or equivalent) in county council services. This helps to make sure we understand the operating context of the wider organisation of which the fire and rescue service is a part.

We also recognised the value of leaving enough time to carry out extra unplanned inspection activity. For example, in Suffolk we gathered useful evidence from observing incident command training.

Finally, we gave the chief fire officer, chair of the authority and the senior team a debrief. We learned that we need to design this process to be relevant and appropriate to the fire and rescue sector.

Pilot two – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

In Staffordshire, we learned more about the value of making sure inspection staff know people's roles and responsibilities and interview them accordingly. We learned more about the differences between services and the value of engagement work led by service liaison leads in advance of inspection.

We worked with the service in advance of the fieldwork to negotiate the timetable of activity. Through this process, we learned more about the potential challenges some services may face in assembling focus groups of firefighters. We were able to test workable alternatives such as station visits.

We tested our ideas about how to gather evidence on the effectiveness of incident command. We learned that we had more to do to if we wanted to find evidence of the service provided to the public, rather than just the knowledge or competence of firefighters.

We also tested a different way of providing the debrief at the end of the fieldwork week. This involved a headline summary to the chief fire officer and a discussion about our evidence. This debrief was designed to involve more participation from the chief fire officer and senior team. We were able to test our understanding and evidence from the inspection through a more conversational approach to the session.

Pilot three – West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

Having tested our methodology in the two previous pilot inspections, the West Yorkshire inspection was an opportunity to consolidate our learning and refine our approach. This inspection also helped us to understand what consideration we may need to give to metropolitan fire and rescue services.

We learned that we need to make sure we use language and terminology that is appropriate and relevant to the service we are inspecting. We established that we need to keep enough flexibility within the fieldwork week to accommodate extra interviews if we needed them. We also tried a much shorter version of the debrief and found it did not give enough detail to the chief fire officer and the team.

We continued to test and refine our approach to incident command evidence gathering. Finally, we acknowledged the limited value of using significant amounts of inspection time to carry out reality testing in relation to breathing apparatus, as this only relates to a limited part of the methodology.

Pilot data collection

It was important to us that we spoke directly to those who handle and collate data in services. In March 2017, we held three data workshops in London, Birmingham and Leeds to bring together FRS and HMICFRS analytical and data colleagues. All 45 services were represented. The workshops enabled us to talk through the data collection process and consult with experts, who offered valuable insight into our approach.

The data workshops provided a wealth of learning for the inspection team. Based on the feedback we received, we made several changes to our data collection approach. These included:

- removing some of the types of data in the collection – for example, staff turnover, return to work interviews, and the number of, and hours spent on, safe and well visits;
- providing more detail on what data we were collecting – how this should be broken down and the time periods the data should cover;
- allowing for the delay between the end of the financial year and the time when certain data (for example, HR and finance) becomes available; and
- providing an extra week for the first data return to allow for the time needed to gather the data.

Pilot data collection from the three pilot services took place in December 2017. This approach was developed to gather data that was not already available from other sources. It followed the data workshops and consultation with our FRS technical advisory group. As a result of initial feedback, we gave additional guidance about definitions where appropriate and allowed services to provide their own definitions in certain areas. We also split some questions (such as sickness data) by wholtime² and retained³, as we understood that it was more appropriate to collect this information separately.

In advance of the first round of full inspections, we have now issued the data collection request to all services.

² Wholtime firefighters are employed full time by the fire and rescue service.

³ Retained firefighters are also known as on-call or RDS (retained duty system) firefighters. They are paid to spend long periods of time on call. Usually they have other, full time jobs, but will attend a fire station within five minutes of an emergency call-out. For more information see:

www.fireservice.co.uk/recruitment/retained-firefighters/

Summary of learning

As well as the points above, other areas where we tested and refined our approach include:

- recognising the value of service liaison leads making early contact with each service to understand their operating context;
- testing different ways of involving retained staff, to reflect the important part they play in most fire and rescue services;
- including visits to prevention and protection teams during the fieldwork week, in addition to those already planned for the discovery phase. This followed feedback from pilot services who suggested we should spend more time on these areas;
- taking our police inspection technique of reviewing case files and evolving it into process reviews. This helps us to understand better how FRSs conduct prevention/protection activity;
- increasing the number of partner telephone interviews we conduct in the week prior to fieldwork. These interviews give us a valuable understanding of collaborative working arrangements and partnerships. We work with services to identify appropriate people to speak to;
- introducing an interview with the chief fire officer towards the end of fieldwork activity. This is an opportunity for inspectors to speak to the chief after conducting most of the fieldwork, and discuss what has already emerged;
- providing greater clarity on how to involve authority members in the inspection process;
- evolving how we test operational effectiveness to ensure we visit a broad range of duty systems and station locations across each service;
- evolving the reality testing of incident command to ensure it is not simply a test of competence, but covers all levels of command; and
- understanding the importance of listening to representative bodies as part of the inspection process.

Engagement and consultation

In addition to the pilot inspections, we undertook extensive consultation to develop our inspection approach. We did this through the following groups and interested parties.

External reference group

The ERG was established when we were preparing to take on fire and rescue inspections, and is still the main advisory group. Members include representatives from National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), chief fire officers, fire authorities, police and crime commissioners, the Local Government Association, Home Office and other interested parties. We held regular meetings regarding each step of the inspection process, to gain their insight and guidance. The group will continue to meet throughout the inspection programme.

Technical advisory group

The technical advisory group (TAG) was established in November 2017. The group advises us on the best way to gather and use evidence. Members of the TAG provided advice on the inspection methodology, data collection and analysis. They challenged our thinking and advised us about the practicality of our proposals. They also worked with us to identify solutions which could be incorporated into the inspection approach. The group will continue to meet throughout the inspection programme.

Subject matter expert networks

We arranged sub-groups of subject matter experts for each of the three pillars (effectiveness, efficiency and people). These experts gave us their time and advice to develop specific areas of evidence gathering and analysis for the inspection. This included:

- meeting the NFCC operational lead to identify reality testing opportunities;
- meeting the NFCC equality professionals group and NFCC lead for equality, diversity and inclusion to discuss the approach for inspecting organisational capability; and
- seeking the views of sector heads of finance on governance models to understand how to assess efficiency.

Members of the portfolio team contacted the networks to seek guidance, consulted individuals, and attended subject-specific meetings as required.

Consultation – public and FRS sector

We carried out two consultations with the public and the FRS sector:

A public consultation on our draft inspection programme and framework, and the FRS inspection question set.

This consultation was open from December 2017 to February 2018. We received 65 responses and were encouraged by the level of interest from the sector. Our analysis of the responses to each question showed that respondents were broadly happy with the approach and didn't propose any major changes. But areas where we could provide more information were highlighted. The following main themes emerged:

- inspecting the broader role of the FRS and collaborations;
- inspection of the fire authority/governance arrangements;
- consideration of funding for FRSs;
- comparisons between FRSs and possible benchmarking;
- effect of inspection on FRSs;
- emerging themes/thematic inspections; and
- considering the operating context of each FRS.

We made a small number of changes to both documents as a result of the feedback. The inspection programme and framework document was approved by the then Home Secretary on 27 March 2017 and published. We used the consultation feedback to amend the question set ahead of the pilot inspections.

A consultation with the fire and rescue sector on the draft judgment criteria.

This ran between the 11 April and 10 May 2018. We received 27 responses to this consultation. The main themes were:

- more information requested on whether the diagnostics will be weighted;
- clarification needed on whether there will be a scoring system applied to the judgment statements for each diagnostic;
- across a range of judgment criteria, some respondents were of the view that the criteria were ambiguous and open to interpretation;
- examples of each graded criteria should reflect FRS practices;

- concerns about the effect of inspection activity on the services; and
- how the judgment criteria will align with the new national framework document for FRSs.

We considered the responses and made some minor changes. The feedback we received was broadly supportive of the criteria. Most respondents were of the view that the draft judgment criteria were appropriate for assessing the fire and rescue service and could appropriately be applied to the range of governance models. They also felt there was enough differentiation between the judgment grades 'good' and 'requires improvement'.

We have now published the final methodology and judgment criteria that will be used in the first full round of FRS inspections (tranches one to three).

Her Majesty's Inspectors and members of the portfolio team also held meetings with representative bodies and sector experts, and spoke at sector conferences. We held a range of events, including:

- an introduction for chief fire officers, chairs of authorities, and others on 10 October 2017;
- an inspection preparation conference for service liaison officers (SLOs) on 31 January 2018; and
- data workshops in March 2018.

We have also held another conference for chief fire officers, chairs of authorities, and others on 30 May 2018 and a follow-up event for SLOs on 6 June 2018.

What services can expect from inspection

The next section outlines how we expect inspections to operate in most cases, based on the learning we gathered throughout the pilot inspections and wider consultation. However, in some cases involving urgency or unusual or exceptional circumstances, we reserve the right to depart from this approach.

Methodology development

Question set

We are inspecting fire and rescue services, rather than the governance arrangements provided by fire and rescue authorities. We are focusing on the service provided to the public by the fire and rescue service.

We have designed a bespoke inspection methodology for the fire and rescue sector. We have used our experience of inspecting policing where relevant. This is the first time we have undertaken a fully integrated inspection of a whole organisation. We developed the methodology with the ERG, and the wider fire sector.

As a result of this learning we:

- reflected that fire and rescue services are funded according to level of risk, not demand for services. We revised the relevant question set to focus on risk and moved it to the effectiveness section to reflect its operational relevance; and
- adapted the inspection approach to accommodate the range of FRS governance models, considering who we talk to as part of the inspection and how we can use data.

Judgment criteria

We will assess each English fire and rescue service, giving graded judgments for the three main areas in the inspection methodology of efficiency, effectiveness and people. Our categories of graded judgment are: outstanding, good, requires improvement, and inadequate.

The judgment criteria provide an indication of the expected levels of performance consistent with each grading. Judgment criteria allow our inspectors to make consistent assessments across services and for services to see what they are being graded against. The criteria will also allow the public to see what performance they can expect from FRSs. The criteria are examples to help inspectors to determine appropriate judgments. They are not intended to prescribe specific standards, relate directly to the sub-diagnostics, or to be exhaustive lists of how we expect FRSs to perform at these levels. They are designed to be characteristic of these levels.

We will not provide an overall judgment for each fire and rescue service in the first full round of inspections. The three pillar level judgments will give the public (and services) a clear and succinct summary of our findings and will help services improve where necessary.

We developed our judgment criteria with advice from the ERG and in consultation with the sector more widely.

Data collection for inspections

We will make sure our requests are proportionate, avoid duplication and result in us having a consistent and comparable dataset to support and inform our inspection activity. We consulted the Home Office, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and all fire and rescue services directly to understand what data exist and what value they could bring to the inspection regime.

We are using the wealth of nationally-collected data about fire and rescue services for inspection purposes. The final data collection was issued to all 45 services in early April 2018. All services responded within the timeframe, and we are in the process of checking that data ahead of providing it back to services and using it to inform our first tranche of inspections. The collection was in three parts:

1. Service data already provided to the Home Office via the incident recording system (data on incidents attended, response times, etc.) and the operational statistics data collection (for example, workforce data and protection activity).
2. CIPFA data – financial data most services provide to CIPFA annually. Services that provided data to CIPFA in 2016/17 were asked to confirm accuracy and make any necessary corrections. The rest of the services were asked to provide these data.
3. HMICFRS data collection – this is the extra data we asked services to provide to inform the inspection.

We have also requested feedback from all 45 services, and will be analysing this to identify any improvements that can be made for future collections.

Evidence gathering techniques

In addition to the changes we made to our approach identified above, we also refined a number of ways we worked in other areas.

Document review and self-assessment

As part of our evidence gathering, inspectors review important documents relating to a service. There is a statutory requirement to publish certain documents, such as an integrated risk management plan (IRMP) and statement of accounts. There are also

similar documents in all services that cover aspects of their work – for example, prevention strategies, risk registers and workforce policies. It is inevitable with 45 services that there will be inconsistencies in titles of documents. We have worked with sector experts to make sure we are as accurate in our requests as we can be, and offer a description or clarification where we need to.

We tested a list of 51 documents with the pilot services, before issuing the final list of documents in April 2018 to the first tranche services. The number has stayed at 51. We have also set up the file sharing platform Huddle for all services, to make the process as easy as possible. If a service does not have the document or policy we are asking for, there is no need to create one for the inspection.

We will ask all fire and rescue services to complete a self-assessment in advance of the fieldwork. This is a valuable tool to help us understand the context a service operates in, the achievements, and the biggest problems faced as part of pre-inspection analysis. The self-assessment should form the basis of the strategic briefing. Again, we tested this approach with the pilot services and found it worked well.

Strategic briefing

The strategic briefing is the opportunity for the chief fire officer and their senior team to brief the HMI, service liaison lead and inspection team ahead of fieldwork. We also invite the lead governance member (chair of fire authority, police, fire and crime commissioner or equivalent) to attend. The briefing allows services to set out their overview of performance and any successes or areas for improvement. We expect the strategic briefing to take around three hours and be based on the self-assessment. We will provide lines of enquiry we would like services to cover in the strategic briefing.

We tested holding the strategic briefing in advance of fieldwork. This allowed time for inspectors to look at any areas identified during discovery or the fieldwork week itself. This worked well in pilot inspections, so we will keep doing it. The pilot briefings proved to be very effective, and provided inspection teams with the right level of detail and understanding to proceed.

Discovery

Ahead of fieldwork, we determined that inspectors need more time with services to gather evidence for the inspection. These visits, called discovery, will preferably happen before the strategic briefing and the fieldwork inspection week. Discovery is part of an inspection, although it will take place separately to fieldwork, and will help inform it.

We have refined the content of the fieldwork week and discovery phase to make sure there is a balance between the two.

Discovery will be specific to each service, but will include the following areas:

Prevention	Interview with prevention team manager to understand how prevent activities (for example, home safety visits and campaigns) are managed.
Protection	Interview with protection team manager to understand how fire safety audits and regulatory activities are managed.
Operational debriefs and critical event (people/wellbeing) debriefs	We will select and review a sample of debriefs from incidents considered critical, risk critical or significant, and those which could have resulted in potential stress or trauma to FRS staff. This is to review how learning is recorded and how the wellbeing of staff is managed.
Site specific risk information (SSRI)	We will interview the risk information team manager to understand how risk information activity is managed.
Grievance and complaints	We will review a sample of records relating to the grievance procedure. This will assess if due process was followed, including learning and staff wellbeing. We will need a member of staff to support this review.
Intranet/internet	We will need access to the FRS intranet to assess internal messaging to the organisation and ease of access to information. We will need a member of staff (potentially the SLO) to access the intranet and support this activity.
Competencies	We will review a sample of records relating to staff competency. We will need access to the database that holds staff competency and training/accreditation records. We will select and review a sample of records to assess whether staff are appropriately skilled and trained in line with their role and service expectations. We will need a member of staff with appropriate access rights to support this. This should not be a manager as the activity is reviewing records and we will interview the managers during fieldwork.
Command and control room	We will visit the control room and speak to operators and supervisors (at their desks). In the case of a collaborated

	control room, we will interview a manager too.
Retained stations	We will visit retained stations and speak to members of staff. These visits will be agreed with the SLO so appropriate notice and arrangements can be made.
Compliments and complaints	We will speak to the member of staff who manages this and then examine some of the records.

Debrief

The purpose of the debrief is to give the service an early indication of any findings. This would include any areas of concern. This debrief will cover:

- the evidence we started the inspection with and gained during the week;
- how we will consider that evidence to inform the report; and
- an opportunity for the chief fire officer to provide feedback on the inspection process.

We will continue to explore the debrief process with the sector, ahead of tranche one, to refine our approach.

Next steps

The first tranche of inspections began in June 2018. We are working with services to set up all related visits and meetings. We will conduct a rigorous moderation process, after which we will give draft reports to FRSs for pre-publication factual checking only. In autumn 2018, we will publish the final reports on our website. We will begin to work with tranche two services to set up inspections, which are due to begin in autumn 2018.

We are focusing on the services provided to the public. However, if something comes to light during the inspection that suggests the actions of the authority inhibit the chief fire officer from running an effective and efficient service, we will carry out an inspection of corporate governance. We are designing a model of inspection to use if we need to. This is in the very early stages and we will consult the fire sector and interested parties as it develops.

We will conduct a short staff survey. We will be conducting a survey of the public and their experiences of fire and rescue services. This work will be published at the same time as the first tranche of service reports.

Conclusion

As an inspectorate, we found the pilot inspections invaluable in shaping our methodology and approach. We are very grateful to all who have helped us to develop our inspections. This engagement will continue throughout the inspection programme, and we will update the sector on our progress.

Annex A

Consultation – our learning and your responses

Fire and rescue services inspection programme and framework 2018/19 consultation

The public consultation ran from 19 December 2017 to 19 February 2018. We asked the following questions:

1. What do you think of the proposed approach to FRS inspection that HMICFRS proposes to conduct in 2018/19? How could this be improved?
2. Do you agree that an integrated inspection of fire and rescue services' effectiveness and efficiency, and how they look after their people, is better than separate thematic inspections?
3. Are there any other areas of fire and rescue services' activity that should be included in the integrated inspections?
4. Does the draft inspection methodology include the right questions to gather evidence for a rounded assessment of fire and rescue services? How could this be improved?
5. How else could HMICFRS adapt the way in which it acquires information to take full account of the circumstances of fire and rescue services and of risks to public safety?
6. What, if any, new or emerging problems for fire and rescue services should HMICFRS take into account in its inspections?
7. What else should HMICFRS consider doing to make its fire and rescue service assessments as fair as they can be?

We received 65 responses to the consultation, including 45 from fire and rescue services and authorities, six from representative bodies, eight from members of the public, and others including police and crime commissioners.

In response to the consultation, we added a sentence to the foreword of the programme and framework recognising that we will 'consider how fire and rescue services discharge the statutory functions of the fire and rescue authority as well as the wider work they do to ensure public safety'. The final document was published on 29 March 2018.

Draft judgment criteria consultation

We developed the judgment criteria with the ERG and sector experts. However, it was important we gave the whole service, and wider interested parties, the opportunity to review them. Our consultation on the judgment criteria, which ran between 11 April and 10 May 2018, asked three questions and allowed for general comments:

1. How can the draft judgment criteria be changed or improved?
2. How will these criteria work when assessing the range of governance models across fire and rescue services?
3. What else do we need to include to clarify the difference between the descriptors of 'good' and 'requires improvement' grades?

We will address the questions about the detail of the criteria with the sector at engagement events ahead of tranche one. We have reflected the feedback in minor changes to the published version.