



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Report by the Secretary of State on Fire and Rescue Authorities' Compliance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 25 of the Fire
and Rescue Services Act 2004



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Introduction

Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament every two years on:

- a. the extent to which fire and rescue authorities are acting in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (“the National Framework”); and
- b. any steps taken by the Secretary of State for the purpose of securing that fire and rescue authorities act in accordance with the National Framework.

The previous report was published in June 2023 and covered 2019-20 and 2020-21. This report covers the subsequent reporting periods from 2021-22 to 2024-25.

This report also discusses His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection activity; the response to the Grenfell Tower public inquiry and oversight of implementation of its recommendations by fire and rescue services and reviews into culture and professionalism within services. These sections further demonstrate how additional assurance and oversight on key fire and rescue functions has been delivered over the reporting period. The report also summarises progress on developing a revised National Framework as a key component of the Government’s programme of fire and rescue reform and how as part of this the assurance process will be reviewed going forward to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

The assessment of the extent to which FRAs are acting in accordance with the National Framework is distinct from HMICFRS’s assessment of operational performance. The assurance report considers whether FRAs have had regard to, and demonstrated assurance against, the requirements of the Framework rather than providing an assessment of service performance.

Assurance

This report relates to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, which was published in 2018 under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The Framework sets out the Government’s priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England. The Government is currently working with the fire and rescue sector to revise and update the National Framework, with publication anticipated in 2027.

Guidance on Statements of Assurance, published in 2013, sets out the areas which FRAs are expected to cover when providing assurance on compliance with the National Framework, including financial, governance, operational and improvement matters.

With one exception, each FRA in England published annual Statements of Assurance throughout the reporting period. One FRA was unable to publish a Statement of Assurance for 2023-24 owing to extenuating circumstances within the service but published statements in the years before and after and met all other requirements.

These statements have been examined by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Ministry's assessment is that these provide sufficient assurance that FRAs have had regard to, and are acting in accordance with, the National Framework.

Additional material that demonstrates assurance, published by FRAs on financial, governance and operational matters, has also been considered by the Ministry. This material included, where appropriate, documentation such as Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) or Community Risk Management Plans (CRMPs), Governance Statements and Medium-Term Financial Plans (MTFPs) prepared by the authority for the periods covered by this assurance report.

MHCLG also undertook a more detailed review of a representative sample of FRA assurance statements covering both reporting periods. This analysis considered the financial, governance, operational, framework compliance and improvement themes set out in the 2013 guidance and provided further assurance on compliance with the National Framework.

Having considered the evidence available, the Secretary of State is satisfied that fire and rescue authorities have provided sufficient assurance that they are acting in accordance with the National Framework.

Inspection of Fire and Rescue Services

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) completed publication of the third full round of fire service inspections in August 2025. The current 2025-27 inspection framework (Round 4) commenced in 2025. HMICFRS inspections of fire and rescue services are organised under three pillars: effectiveness; efficiency; and people.

- Effectiveness - the Inspectorate considers how well the fire and rescue service understands its current and future risks, works to prevent fires and other risks, protects the public through the regulation of fire safety, and responds to fires and other emergencies;
- Efficiency - covers how well the fire and rescue service uses its resources to manage risk, and secures an affordable way of providing its service; and
- People - the inspectorate assesses how the fire and rescue service promotes its values and culture, trains its staff and ensures that they have the necessary skills, ensures fairness and diversity for its workforce, and develops leaders.

Inspection reports shine a light on fire and rescue service performance, on what is working well, what could be better and any areas of risk. They also provide the public with a clear, independent, impartial view of the quality of their local service and can also help identify areas of positive and innovative practice.

In designing the inspection programme and framework for the next inspection round, due to commence in 2028, additional emphasis will be placed on evaluating:

- the impact of FRAs' governance, oversight and scrutiny of their FRSs;
- leadership at all levels in FRSs; and
- further examination of FRSs' local resilience work.

The Inspectorate also provides assurance to the Secretary of State through its annual State of Fire and Rescue report. During this National Framework reporting period, HMICFRS' Chief Inspector submitted two reports to the Secretary of State under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, published 20 January 2023 and 9 May 2024 (with a further report published on 5 November 2025). These reports were also laid in Parliament. The reports draw on findings from inspections of all fire and rescue services in England, to provide an overall assessment of their effectiveness and efficiency.

Monitoring is an important part of HMICFRS' work to help promote improvements. If a service is not responding to a cause of concern, or if it is failing in managing or mitigating a cause of concern at a reasonable rate, it can be placed into HMICFRS' 'Engage' phase of monitoring. This is the stage where a meeting of the Fire Performance Oversight Group is triggered. This mechanism is a powerful way of scrutinising FRSs and helping them to take the necessary remedial action, signposting support and helping to ensure that services deliver their improvement plans as quickly and effectively as possible.

Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry

The Grenfell Tower tragedy on 14 June 2017 took 72 lives. It was a national tragedy, and a personal tragedy for all those bereaved, the survivors who lost their homes, and the community of which they were all a part.

The hundreds of individual firefighters who attended the fire at Grenfell Tower showed incredible bravery and dedication in tackling the fire, whilst those in control rooms operated in hugely difficult circumstances. But there is no doubt that mistakes were made by London Fire Brigade (LFB), both in their preparedness and decision-making during the incident, which had implications for all fire and rescue services across the country.

On 30 October 2019, the Inquiry Chair Sir Martin Moore-Bick published his Phase 1 report covering the events on the night of the fire, including the role of the emergency services. Sir Martin made 46 recommendations for central government, fire and rescue services and other emergency services.

Since the Grenfell Tower fire, LFB has transformed the way it tackles fires in high-rise buildings. The Brigade has significantly upscaled its training for firefighters and control officers, underpinned by new equipment and new and updated policies for high-rise firefighting, evacuation and rescue and fire survival guidance. Elsewhere, other fire and

rescue services, supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), have made good progress in modernising response procedures and procuring new equipment to ensure they are better prepared and equipped to respond to large-scale incidents in the future.

The Home Office published a final tracker of progress against the Phase 1 recommendations on 26 February 2025, which can be found on gov.uk¹. This reported that all 44 services in England had addressed all of the recommendations directed to them that were made by the Inquiry as part of its Phase 1 report. As a result, services are now better trained and equipped to handle the largest scale incidents in high-rise residential buildings.

The Phase 2 report, published on 4 September 2024, highlighted the need for further improvements in firefighter competence and the systems and equipment that support them. LFB is committed to learning from incidents and ensuring that good practice is shared across the organisation and with key agencies. Improvements have been made to the way LFB learns and collects data from operational incidents and the brigade has adopted a more open and supportive approach to learning, reflecting best practices from sectors such as health and aviation. Through these changes the Brigade is committed to continuous improvement and ensuring change is sustained.

The recommendations from the Phase 2 report concerning LFB had broader implications for all fire and rescue services. These include the recommendations for HMICFRS to inspect LFB's control room, incident commander training, and processes for collecting, storing and distributing information related to higher-risk buildings. HMICFRS published its findings to address these three inquiry recommendations through its inspection of LFB, published in November 2024. The NFCC is surveying services to understand how they might support them to continue to act on these wider lessons of the tragedy and has produced a delivery plan outlining further actions they will take.

HMICFRS plays a crucial role in identifying and driving performance improvements linked with Grenfell Tower Inquiry findings across services. Since the Inquiry's Phase 1 report was published in 2019, many recommendations have been integrated into its inspection framework. Findings based on 25 service inspections from the Inspectorate's third round of inspections, published on 12 February 2025, show progress made by services in addressing Phase 1 recommendations and affirmed that there have been many improvements in practices. However, some areas were identified where there is scope to do more to further embed the changes and instil better ways of working. Innovations such as electronic systems for managing fire survival guidance have been implemented, but challenges remain in training effectiveness, accurate record maintenance, use of electronic systems to manage incidents and with sharing learning. It should be noted that some of the service inspections took place from early 2023 and it is therefore likely that further improvements have been made since.

Further inspections by HMICFRS from 2025 to 2027 are ensuring ongoing scrutiny of the implementation of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 recommendations. The NFCC will continue to provide oversight and coordination and support to help services share best practices and act on lessons from the tragedy. The Government will continue to work with HMICFRS

¹ [Progress against the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations, February 2025 - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)

and the NFCC to maintain focus on embedding and sustaining improvements made in the Inquiry's reports, to secure tangibly improved outcomes for communities.

The Government continues to report regularly on the implementation of the Inquiry recommendations. The latest progress report was published on 10 September 2026 on gov.uk². We have now closed 30 recommendations. We will publish the next progress report in December and expect all recommendations to be implemented by the end of 2029.

Culture, Integrity and Tackling Misconduct in the Fire and Rescue Service

Since the first *State of Fire and Rescue* report in 2020, HMICFRS has consistently identified concerns about culture, ethics and professional standards within fire and rescue services in England. In 2023, HMICFRS published its *Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services* report, followed in 2024 by *Standards of Behaviour: The Handling of Misconduct in Fire and Rescue Services*. Together, these reports highlighted issues including bullying, harassment, discrimination and misconduct, and made 50 recommendations to strengthen culture, integrity, leadership and professional standards across the sector.

Culture remains a key area of focus for both HMICFRS and the wider sector. The National Framework requires fire and rescue authorities to maintain people strategies covering behaviours, leadership, diversity and inclusion, and professional standards. During the reporting period, the previous and current Government worked with HMICFRS, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and fire and rescue services to support implementation of these recommendations, supported from December 2024 by the Ministerial Advisory Group on Fire and Rescue Reform (MAGFRR).

During the period from April 2025 to the present, the NFCC has also continued to lead sector-wide improvement through its Culture Action Plan and subsequent People, Culture and Leadership Programme, while the Independent Challenge and Support Panel reported in 2025 on progress to improve integrity, inclusion and misconduct processes. Alongside this work, the Government has continued to strengthen assurance and oversight through inspection and intervention activity where concerns arose, including the use of Best Value inspection powers to examine governance, leadership, culture and organisational performance.

The Government will continue to work with HMICFRS, the NFCC, fire and rescue authorities and fire and rescue services to support lasting culture change, strengthen professional standards and improve public confidence across the sector.

² [Grenfell Tower Inquiry Government Progress Report: September 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

Fire and Rescue Reform and Reviewing the National Framework

The Government recognises the dedication and commitment of firefighters and fire and rescue staff and their invaluable contribution to keeping the public and communities safe. We are committed to supporting the work of the sector and maximising its ability to deliver services that support safer and more resilient local communities.

Through the MAGFRR, the Government and the sector have agreed a shared vision for improved services, and sector leaders have endorsed the priorities for government action in this Parliament. As part of this work, the Government agreed to revise the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England to provide clear strategic direction to the sector. The Government will continue to work with the fire sector to develop a revised Framework, with publication anticipated in Spring 2027.

As part of this ongoing work the Government will seek views on the assurance process. This will include considering how to provide robust and clear assurance going forward, and whether this type of assurance report continues to be the most effective way to achieve the goal.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The National Framework remained unchanged over the period covered by this assurance report. It is therefore considered there are likely to be neutral impacts on people with protected characteristics and society overall as a consequence of this reports' publication.