

25 January 2019

Inspection and Peer Support

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

This report briefly summarises the results from the first tranche of inspections of Fire and Rescue Services by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, sets out the current LGA support offer to Fire and Rescue Authorities and seeks members' views on what additional support the LGA could offer to the sector to respond to the inspection process.

Recommendation

That members support the proposals in paragraphs 12 - 16 and 20 and make further recommendations having discussed the questions in paragraphs 16-19.

Action

Officers to develop a sector support offer as directed by members.

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Inspection and Peer Support

Background

1. In December Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published reports on the first tranche of 14 inspections and a summary of findings from tranche one. The results are set out in a table at **Appendix A**. The timetable for the second and third tranches is set out in **Appendix B**¹.
2. The inspections focused on three themes: Effectiveness, Efficiency and People. The headline findings in the Inspectorate's view were that most services are good at responding to emergencies but that protection efficiency and diversity were causes for concern. A more detailed analysis of the inspection results and the issues they identified are set out in the confidential report on the inspection results later on the agenda.
3. HMICFRS accepted that 14 services was too small a sample from which to draw firm conclusions (and it is worth bearing in mind that one of the inspected services had already been identified as failing on a number of fronts and asked to be inspected in tranche one as part of its improvement journey).
4. The reports demonstrated that there is a lot of good practice in the sector and their more critical findings did not generate significant public concern or criticism; nevertheless, the findings raise a number of issues that require members to act and which need to be considered in detail.
5. Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) need to ensure that their service responds effectively to the findings (and in the case of those yet to be inspected, takes heed of the emerging trends) and that Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) are held to account for producing effective improvement plans.
6. The FSMC will want to consider what it can do to support the sector both directly and through oversight of activity by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).
7. The rest of this paper details our support offer and sets out some additional steps.

Existing LGA and NFCC Peer Support offer

8. As members will be aware from reports to previous meetings, the LGA and NFCC have developed a Peer Support Framework, which comprises of a flexible and tailored set of products to meet the changing and different needs across the sector, including issues raised by the inspection. The Peer Support Framework encompasses technical and

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operational issues as well as strategic leadership, governance and policy. These include but are not restricted to:

8.1. Inspection Peer Support - to take place either before or after an inspection and to focus on broad areas or more narrowly defined areas.

8.1.1. To date the LGA has worked with several FRA's including Essex and Suffolk, who both reported positively on its pre-inspection support.

8.1.2. The LGA is also supporting Avon FRA through representation on its improvement board, provision of a wide range of peer support and the provision of a peer challenge to assess its progress against its improvement priorities.

8.2. Leadership & Governance Peer Support - With changes in governance arrangements in some places, the need to strengthen scrutiny and improve the oversight by the FRA of the service, the LGA is well placed to provide peer support through its elected member peers. This includes both Leadership Essentials Development and Peer Challenge.

8.2.1. The LGA is currently working with Dorset and Wiltshire FRS to provide peer support around its newly established governance and leadership arrangements.

8.2.2. In addition and in anticipation of the findings around culture, inclusion and diversity, the LGA has organised five events for members. The LGA also runs two Leadership Essentials courses a year.

8.2.3. The LGA also offers a Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF). The FRSEF was revised in 2017 and is supported by a chargeable peer challenge and has five priority areas:

8.2.3.1. Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

8.2.3.2. Community knowledge and engagement

8.2.3.3. Effective service delivery

8.2.3.4. Employment conditions, health and wellbeing

8.2.3.5. Recruitment, training and progression

8.3. Targeted Peer Support - Overseen by the LGA Principal Advisers based in the regions, and working closely with NFCC, targeted peer support would entail a team of sector peers working alongside an FRS/FRA to address areas of under-performance identified either as part of an inspection or independently. This approach demonstrates that the sector is collectively responsible and has the capacity to address its own improvement.

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8.3.1. To date all targeted peer support has been commissioned outside of the inspection process. Some examples are where the LGA has provided Peer Challenge and support to West Yorkshire FRA on procurement and are in discussions with London Fire Brigade on providing a peer challenge on its Safe and Well programme

Additional support proposals

9. The LGA is continually adapting and modifying its Peer Support Framework to reflect the changing needs and improvement priorities of FRAs. We envisage that following the inspection results, take up of the offer will increase and we can continue to learn and adapt the offer accordingly.
10. Peer support has proved extremely effective and will continue to be provided as part of the LGA's offer to the Fire and Rescue sector.
11. It is proposed that the culture, inclusion and diversity events be continued, either as repeat sessions or an e-learning tool.
12. The LGA is currently seeking to identify funding to make the FRSEF peer challenge available without charge to priority FRAs.
13. To further develop the offer and to ensure the issues raised amongst the first tranche of the HMICFRS Inspection are addressed, it is proposed that the LGA, develops some targeted support in the form of a toolkit for all FRAs to improve the way they scrutinise and challenge their services and in particular how they address and respond to the outcomes of the inspection. This could be provided as an e-learning module supported by a hard copy publication, both to be available before the second tranche reports are published in June, and could include a peer support element to provide external challenge.
14. The LGA could offer a form of direct scrutiny training, building on the experience of training previously commissioned for 10 police and crime panels when they were first established in 2012, or on work delivered as part of the member training recently provided to Avon FRS.
15. The LGA already runs a leadership programme that focusses on the relationship between chief executives and leaders and this could be adapted to consider the relationship between FRA Chairs, FRAs and CFOs.
16. The Inspection process identified a lot of good work. One way to share this good practice would be to produce 15-minute mini-masterclass video presentations from the services

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and put them on the LGA website. **Do members have suggestions for disseminating good practice identified through inspections?**

17. It is positive to see that all three services rated as Inadequate or Requiring Improvement in their response to emergencies had improvement plans in place by the time the reports were published. **How can all FRAs learn from each other in devising high quality, robust improvement plans and how the experience of these services in producing improvement plans can be used to support others? Should we rethink the annual conference agenda to include something on the response to inspection?**
18. A number of findings within the report indicate disparities between services even where geography and demographics are similar (for example in response times). **What more can be done to make it easy for FRA members to compare their service with others, while recognising local differences?**
19. One theme to emerge from the report is the criticism of some Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs), the suggestion that inconsistencies in IRMP production are problematic and the associated failure of some services to resource to risk. Members will want to consider how they can work with NFCC to ensure that the national-level work the NFCC is undertaking, for example on IRMP production but also in other areas, is supported and challenged by members and delivered in a way that responds effectively to the Inspectorate's concerns. **Would members like NFCC to report to the next meeting on its response to the first tranche inspections reports?**
20. It is proposed that the FSMC writes to all FRAs asking them to ensure that all members read the tranche one national report, stressing the need for FRA leadership in responding to reports and setting out the LGA's proposals for support to the sector.

Implications for Wales

21. There are no implications for Wales, as Welsh FRAs are not inspected by HMICFRS.

Financial Implications

22. If members approve the additional support proposals, these will require funding from the LGA's improvement budget. Preliminary indications are that there may be underspend elsewhere in this year's budget which can be utilised for additional fire support and discussions over next year's budget will take into account any recommendations members make.

Next steps

23. Officers to develop the LGA's sector support offer as directed by members.

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ⁱ This include Kent FRS in the first tranche of inspections but the inspection was moved into the second tranche.