

28 June 2019

HMICFRS: Tranche Two Inspection Reports

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

The report summarises Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) report on the second tranche of inspections and provides a brief analysis of the results.

Recommendation

That members of the Committee note and discuss the report as necessary.

Action

Officers to take into forward any actions as prescribed by members.

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Background

1. At its January meeting the Committee considered the results of the [first tranche of inspection results](#). The second tranche of individual and national reports have now been published and can be found on the HMICFRS website [here](#). The Inspectorate will publish a final tranche of inspections results in December and make further recommendations in its first State of Fire and Rescue report, which we anticipate will be published at the same time.
2. The results of the second tranche are in general more positive than those in Tranche 1. However there is no room for complacency. There is only one finding of inadequate in this tranche, but there are also none of outstanding, and while the majority of findings are Good rather than Requires Improvement, it is a very slim majority.
3. The areas of concern and themes for improvement are similar to those identified in the first tranche of inspection.
4. A summary of scores and a breakdown by service are provided in **Appendix A** and the full report is at **Appendix B**.

Main findings

5. The inspectorate highlights 'considerable variation in definitions and how things are done across services' and cites localism as the reason for unhelpful variation.

Effectiveness

6. Responding to emergencies continues to be a strength for the sector, but up-to-date risk information continues to be an issue with some services working with out-of-date or inaccurate information or relying on poor technology to access that information.
7. Protection remains a concern – protection teams continue to be under-resourced to meet risk-based inspection programmes and a lack of national standards and legislation means services fulfil their responsibilities in varying ways i.e. different definitions of risk, frequency of audits, and use of enforcement action.
8. Some services are well resourced, whilst others struggle to carry out core functions – Northamptonshire and Northumberland are highlighted as being unable to 'absorb further budget reductions without adverse implications for public safety'.
9. FRS's are ready for large-scale incidents, but national capability needs to be reviewed further – Greater Manchester was explicitly mentioned within this; at the time of inspection they had no internal capability to respond to terror-related incidents, instead

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they had an agreement with Merseyside to provide this capability. The Inspectorate believe this is a public safety concern and must be dealt with urgently.

Efficiency

10. Prevention activities are not always targeted at those at most risk of fire meaning resources aren't being used to their best effect.
11. Services not exploiting the benefits of technology – nearly half of the services inspected were using broken, dated or unreliable IT systems and some were relying on paper-based systems, hindering their productivity. Services are also too often working in isolation when designing technical solutions.
12. Operational learning is still not always gathered and used to improve the service, particularly from smaller incidents. Similarly services are not effectively evaluating, reviewing and monitoring collaboration activities to ensure they are achieving the desired benefits.

People

13. Overall the people pillar findings are more positive in this tranche with better culture and values and provision of health, wellbeing and mental health support. However, not enough progress is being made on recruiting a diverse workforce and in some areas diversity amongst the workforce is actually decreasing. There are some allegations of bullying, with senior leaders not responding adequately to staff feedback.

Recommendations

14. These findings give rise to two recommendations in 'areas which stand out as requiring immediate attention and action':
 - 14.1. The need for greater consistency in approach; and
 - 14.2. The need for the sector to be supported in its quest to reform through enhanced capacity and capability.
15. The Inspectorate believes that 'these are matters on which there is little, if any, dissent across the sector' and the recommendations, discussed below, are ones which members may wish to support at least in general terms. We have asked the Inspectorate to clarify the status of these recommendations in the context of its statutory role when they attend the meeting.

Recommendation 1: The need for greater consistency in approach

16. This recommendation comes in two parts:
 - 16.1. As soon as is practicable the Home Office, National Fire Chiefs Council and Local Government Association, in consultation with the Fire Standards Board and

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Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, should establish a programme of work that will result in consistency four priority areas (these are listed in para 18).

16.2. By December 2020, there will be completion or significant progress in the four priority areas towards a common set of definitions and standards for fire and rescue services to adopt and apply as soon as reasonably practicable.

17. The report argues that 'Localism has created considerable differences between services' both in the definitions used and the standards set. It lists examples as:

17.1. Different response standards and how response standards are calculated;

17.2. Variation in how services record and report on response standards;

17.3. Different approaches to defining high-risk properties;

17.4. How often high-risk premises should be audited;

17.5. Identification and definition of risk;

17.6. How risk should be mitigated

18. The report identifies four priority areas in relation to this process:

18.1. Identifying and measuring emergency response standards and approaches;

18.2. Identifying and determining risk as part of the IRMP process;

18.3. Defining what are high-risk premises for the purposes of fire protection; and

18.4. Setting an expectation for how frequently high-risk premises, and parts of those premises, should be audited for compliance with fire safety legislation.

19. The last two parts of this recommendation need to be considered in the context of the ongoing work around the Hackitt report. As far as residential premises are concerned the forthcoming building safety reforms is likely to provide statutory guidance on what is to be treated as a high risk premises and how often it should be inspected or provide for a statutory national regulator to do so.

Recommendation 2: resourcing

20. The report expresses concern about resources, highlighting services where there are not enough fire engines available on a regular basis to meet the identified foreseeable risk and that senior managers are regularly not informed of this. The report also highlighted cases of firefighters working outside of their contracted hours to manage workload and that they were often working with out-of-date or inaccurate information due to poor technology.

21. Most significantly the report drew attention to 'some services...struggling to carry out their core functions', and singled out two services as having particular difficulties:

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21.1. 'Unlike in the first tranche, we have inspected two services – Northamptonshire and Northumberland – who are operating in a difficult financial environment. This is making it harder for them to effectively carry out their core functions of prevention, protection and response. It will be difficult for them to absorb any further budget reductions'.

22. It went on to say that:

22.1. 'A great deal of change is happening across services and the sector as a whole. Services in this tranche are responding to governance changes, reducing their budgets, implementing large technological improvements and using collaborative functions, such as joint control rooms. And further changes are planned: since our last report, the Fire Standards Board has been formed and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry is due to publish shortly. The sector and some services need to have enough capacity and capability to bring about this change'.

23. And to recommend that:

23.1. As part of the forthcoming Spending Review, the Home Office in consultation with the Fire and Rescue Sector should address the deficit in the fire sector's national capacity and capability to support change.

24. Unfortunately the recommendation has a very narrow focus on the need for greater capacity to support improvement work. While this is welcome in itself, it will be of little use if the service lacks the resources to perform basic functions.

25. It will of course be necessary to ensure that members are not bypassed by these developments.

Next steps

26. The committee has previously discussed revisions to the LGA's support offer and the need for Fire and Rescue Authorities 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 are held to account for producing effective improvement plans.

Financial Implications

27. None

Implications for Wales

28. The Inspectorate does not cover Wales.

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Appendix A

| | Outstanding | Good | Requires improvement | Inadequate |
|---------------|-------------|------|----------------------|------------|
| Effectiveness | 0 | 9 | 7 | |
| Efficiency | 0 | 9 | 7 | |
| People | 0 | 8 | 7 | 1 |

| | Effectiveness | Efficiency | People | |
|----------------------|---------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Dorset and Wiltshire | G | G | G | All Good |
| Greater Manchester | RI | RI | RI | All require improvement |
| Humberside | G | G | RI | Mixed |
| Kent | G | G | G | All Good |
| Leicestershire | RI | RI | RI | All require improvement |
| Merseyside | G | G | G | All Good |
| Norfolk | RI | RI | RI | All require improvement |
| Northamptonshire | RI | RI | RI | All require improvement |
| Northumberland | RI | RI | RI | All require improvement |
| Nottinghamshire | RI | RI | RI | All require improvement |
| Oxfordshire | G | G | G | All Good |
| Royal Berkshire | G | G | G | All Good |
| Shropshire | G | G | G | All Good |
| Tyne and Wear | G | G | G | All Good |
| West Midlands | G | G | G | All Good |
| West Sussex | RI | RI | Inadequate | |