



Fire Standards Board

Summary

1. This paper provides a short summary of the background to the establishment of the Fire Standards Board (FSB).

Background and Information

2. The requirement for professional standards within the fire and rescue services was identified as part of the Fire Reform programme launched by Government in 2016.
3. While some standards exist, there are gaps, inconsistent application and no national oversight. The absence of any nationally agreed set of recognised standards has led to services using a range of standards selected locally to suit their needs.
4. The commitment was made to create a coherent and comprehensive suite of professional standards for English fire and rescue services. Therefore, the aim of establishing and maintaining professional standards is to:
 - define what 'good' looks like
 - be a key component to drive continuous improvement
 - allow the benchmarking of activity – something welcomed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)
 - help further professionalise the sector
5. It is proposed that the standards are "outcome focused" and written as clearly as possible following Plain English protocols. This approach has worked well in other public sectors including health, education and justice.

Evolution of Fire Standards Board

6. In March 2017, the Home Office initiated the Professional Standards Body Project (PSB Project) to research and evaluate the best way in which professional standards could be delivered. The project's conclusions were presented in a business case provided to the Minister in March 2018. This included the results of a national survey providing the current standards landscape, proposals for how standards should be developed and proposed operating models.

The recommendation for a sector-led model was supported by the Minister.

7. This approach included:
 - the establishment of an independently chaired Fire Standards Board;
 - a comprehensive suite of professional standards; and
 - the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Central Programme Office (CPO) providing support and coordinating work on the development of professional standards.
8. A national survey was conducted in 2017 across all fire and rescue services to help establish the current standards landscape. It sought feedback on the standards and qualifications used across all areas of business for a fire and rescue service both organisational and individual standards. The

survey results helped to clarify the current standards landscape and assisted the project team in proposing priority areas for professional standard development.

Proposed Areas for Professional Standards

9. The broad areas relate to the functions that are directly applicable to fire and rescue services. These include:

- Strategic deployment of fire and rescue service resources based on risk
- Prevention of fires and other emergencies
- Protection of people and property from fires and other emergencies
- Response to fire and other emergencies
- Business continuity and resilience to fires and other emergencies
- Workforce development within fire and rescue services

It is proposed such standards are likely to be applied at several levels, namely;

- **Organisational**
Expectations of good practice that require contributions from different parts of the organisation
- **Functional**
Expectations of particular specialisms within each organisation
- **Individual**
Expectations of individuals carrying out specific roles

10. The NFCC has work in progress currently which will inform professional standards in many of these business areas including:

- Workforce reform including:
 - Leadership (both managerial leadership and incident command)
 - Apprenticeship standards
 - Career and Learning Pathways
 - On-Call
 - Inclusion, equality and diversity
 - Health and wellbeing
- Community Risk Reduction
 - Integrated Risk Management Plans
 - Prevention delivery activities underpinned by evaluation methodologies
 - Fire Safety Competence
 - National Operational Guidance to bring about consistency in operational response
 - Incident Command Competence following (a review of the underpinning guidance)
- Digital and Data
 - Data
 - Enhancing digital capacity to the benefit of all services

11. National practitioner working groups operating below NFCC Committee level have been in place for many years. Many of these groups have developed a range of guidance before arrangements for professional standards had been agreed. Some of this work is being driven by legislation, some by

learning from incidents and events. All of which are aiming to achieve effective outcomes, standardise approaches and resolve issues identified at practitioner level.

12. It is proposed that the CPO working with the respective NFCC committees will plan reviews of completed work and carry out quality assurance of the work as some may warrant being recognised nationally as standards.

Pilot Standards

13. The first two standards to be produced are currently in development. They are;

- National Operational Guidance (NOG)
- Emergency Response Driver Training (ERDT)

14. These two areas have been selected primarily because underpinning guidance is already in place or nearly complete and because the majority of services are already operating in line with the national guidance that is published for these areas of business activity.

15. In addition, for ERDT there is a legal obligation on all fire and rescue services from the Department of Transport to be able to meet the requirements of the exemptions for high speed driving as stated in the Road Safety Act which is planned for enactment in 2020.

16. These two standards will act as pilots, enabling the CPO to assess and evaluate the overall development and assurance process.

Benefits Identification and Realisation

17. The Benefits and Change function within the CPO will be responsible for managing the benefits of professional standards. This will include the identification of proposed benefits at the scoping stage and then monitoring implementation and measurement of benefits post-implementation. The identified benefits will form part of supporting information about the professional standard when they are presented to Board for commissioning.

18. Full benefits realisation is not likely to be immediate. Only after the standard has been used for a period of time will it be possible to measure and evaluate benefit realisation.

19. Ongoing monitoring and reporting of benefits realisation will be provided to the Board following the publication of professional standards. This will allow the Board to consider the impact and effectiveness of and particular professional standard and, where required, provide the driver to initiate reviews where needed.

Impact of Professional Standards

20. As part of the research and development phase of standards development, the CPO will carry out appropriate impact assessments to ensure the needs of, and impact on, fire and rescue services irrespective of their Governance model are considered. It will be the responsibility of the Board to ensure that it is satisfied that appropriate impact assessments have been done before approving any professional standards presented to it.

Progress Reporting

21. Once the priorities and work programme have been defined and agreed, the Board will be responsible for monitoring progress against agreed objectives and timelines. The CPO will be responsible for providing appropriate progress reporting to the Board at each meeting.

Approval

22. Following the completion of any standards development work, the FSB will be presented with the final professional standard and any supporting information, along with the assurance reports, for review.
23. The Board will be responsible for reviewing the finalised standards, including the quality assurance, before approving them for publication. When the Board is satisfied and assured that both the content and quality of the resultant products meet their requirements, the professional standard will be considered approved for release.
24. The CPO will be responsible for publishing all approved standards on an agreed digital platform, appropriately linked to any related guidance materials or information, which will allow all stakeholders access to them in a consistent and user-friendly way.