



Fire Services Management Committee

Date:	06 October 2023
Title:	NFCC Chair's Update
Presented by:	Mark Hardingham, NFCC Chair
Contact:	chair@nfcc.org.uk

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides an update on key work within the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

2. General Update

Moroccan Earthquake – Firefighter Deployment

- 2.1 A contingent of 60 firefighters from across UK fire and rescue services (FRSs) was deployed to Morocco following the devastating earthquake. They returned to the UK ten days later.
- 2.2 The UK International Search and Rescue (UKISAR) team was deployed through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office following a request for support from the Moroccan Government. UKISAR is part of NFCC's National Resilience function and is on permanent standby, ready to mobilise and assist when requested by disaster-affected countries.
- 2.3 The deployment team comprised firefighters and staff from 14 fire and rescue services; Cheshire, Essex, Greater Manchester, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Mid and West Wales, Merseyside, Scotland, South Wales, and the West Midlands. Four specialist search and rescue dogs were also deployed.
- 2.4 Previous UKISAR deployments include Iraq, Turkey, Algeria, Pakistan, India, Iran, Mozambique, Indonesia, Haiti, New Zealand, Japan, Bosnia, Nepal, and, most recently, Turkey and Syria following the earthquake in February.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

- 2.5 NFCC is working with FRSs and partners to raise awareness of the issues associated with RAAC.
- 2.6 There is a risk of sudden full or partial structural collapse in buildings featuring RAAC, due to the instability of the material. Although there has been little research into how this material behaves in the context of fire, it is thought that thermal radiation may trigger structural collapse. This has operational implications for the UK FRS.
- 2.7 NFCC has sought ministerial support in encouraging the Government to produce a list of all buildings where RAAC is present or suspected. Once this is received, NFCC hopes to enable a more targeted approach for FRS support and interventions related to RAAC safety issues across the built environment.
- 2.8 NFCC has undertaken significant work to highlight and address concerns, including the development of an e-learning training module entitled '[Safety Concerns with RAAC](#)', to support the UK FRS with RAAC-related risk.
- 2.9 NFCC previously released an action note to UK FRSs to raise awareness of the Standing Committee on Structural Safety's [published findings](#) on the risk surrounding RAAC, dated February 2022. A revised note was issued by NFCC to UK FRSs on 20 September 2023.
- 2.10 NFCC has distributed Local Government Association (LGA) [guidance](#) to all Estates leads in the UK FRS, highlighting the need to identify any properties constructed using RAAC and review the potential risks appropriately.
- 2.11 NFCC has worked with the Department for Education to provide fire safety advice to schools dealing with RAAC to help ensure the continued safety of staff, students, and responding firefighters.
- 2.12 FRSs are working hard to provide the Home Office with a comprehensive overview of the extent to which England's FRS estate is affected by this issue. Fire headline figures are returned to the Home Office daily and, as of 21 September 2023, show that 25 percent of FRSs have confirmed no RAAC within their estate, whilst 75 percent need to undergo more intrusive investigation to determine the nature of the method and materials used in the construction of their buildings.

3. Protection Update

Building Safety Regulator (BSR)

- 3.1 The new BSR is progressing and commenced on 1 October 2023 for new buildings. April 2024 is the commencement date for existing occupied buildings. The Protection Reform Unit (PRU) is working on multiple workstreams in relation to overall project delivery. More recently, we have been working on interim arrangements to support the

working of multi-disciplinary teams and the IT systems that will manage case allocation and information exchange and recording.

- 3.2 Arrangements have been put in place for service to be provided to the BSR through nine regional teams. These align with the established NFCC regions. Each region has been assigned a regional manager to oversee the work of the team.
- 3.3 London Fire Brigade (LFB) has agreed on the arrangements for the formation of the new central administrative function that will help to coordinate the regional teams and function as an interface between the BSR and FRSs.

Enforcement Review

- 3.4 The enforcement review will develop NFCC's understanding of the range and frequency of enforcement activities carried out by FRSs, discover inconsistencies, and look to promote best practice. The second phase has been completed. This involved a survey of all FRSs and nine face-to-face meetings to focus on specific areas of enforcement. The Enforcement team is currently reviewing the feedback and will produce a final report with recommendations for approval by the Protection Board.

Fire Engineering and Technical Officers

- 3.5 The Fire Engineering team continues to work on several reviews of British Standards (BS), including BS 9991 and BS 5839, as well as Approved Document B, and is in the initial stages of developing PAS 8700 for modern methods of construction.
- 3.6 The team are establishing two new working groups to provide guidance on best practice, encourage consistency of response, and improve effectiveness and efficiency throughout FRSs. The Building Regulations Group will focus on work directly related to the application of the Approved Documents and the associated processes. A sub-group of the Fire Engineering Technical Standards Group will focus on student accommodation and issues in the consistent application of design guidance.

Second Staircases

- 3.7 The PRU welcomed the Government's announcement that it is mandating multiple staircases in new high-rise residential buildings over 18 metres or seven stories. This has vindicated the hard work of the PRU in promoting the NFCC's position on multiple staircases and supporting others in the industry, such as the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), to bring about this change.

Responsible Persons

- 3.8 The team has been supporting the development of the presentation on Section 156 of the Building Safety Act, which is now [available](#). This aims to help both FRSs and Responsible Persons (RPs) understand the changes to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.

- 3.9 NFCC has supported a joint statement by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the BSR, and the LGA warning building owners to progress remediation work or face enforcement action. Building owners are responsible for addressing fire safety defects but some are delaying crucial remediation work, which negatively affects residents' lives.

Consultations

- 3.10 Following the consultation on the Fire Safety England Regulations Guidance, the PRU is currently conducting a comment resolution process and will produce the updated version shortly.
- 3.11 There are currently three significant public consultations that NFCC is preparing responses to: the guide to Fire Safety in Purpose-Built Blocks of Flats, which received significant attention during the Grenfell Tower Inquiry; Smarter Regulation: UK Product Safety Review, which emerges following the role of products in the Grenfell Fire; and Smarter Regulation: Fire Safety of Domestic Upholstered Furniture, a review of the existing regulations for furniture and furnishings that aims to assist a reduction in domestic fire deaths.

4. Prevention Hub Update

- 4.1 The new Prevention Partnership Board met in June 2023 and the Prevention Committee met in July. The Prevention regional leads have met together to share key themes and areas for development. The Prevention Hub has worked with the Home Office to develop aligned structures to engage with FRSs to support the 2023 Fire Kills campaign.
- 4.2 The Children and Young People (CYP) Executive Board and the Home Safety Committee held an away day with stakeholders to support their planning and delivery. The Prevention Hub is currently planning the NFCC Prevention and Protection Conference in November 2023.

Safeguarding

- 4.3 Following engagement between NFCC and Government officials, Fire and Rescue Authorities are now listed in Schedule 1 of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions). These amendments came into force in July 2023, ahead of the expected October achievement date.
- 4.4 Following a public consultation with key stakeholders and subsequent review, three pieces of guidance were approved at the NFCC Safeguarding Board in June and were [published on ukfrs.com](#) in July: the Joint Guidance on DBS Eligibility Checks for Fire and Rescue Authority Roles, the NFCC Positive Disclosure Risk Assessment Guidance, and the Managing Allegations Guidance. These will be transferred to the new NFCC website.

Serious Violence Duty

- 4.5 NFCC's single points of contact (SPOCs) for the Serious Violence Duty have been established within all FRSs and new guidance has been created and launched to support the sector.

Children and Young People

- 4.6 The CYP Executive Board has refreshed the NFCC CYP Strategic Intent to be shared with all FRSs. The UK Fire Cadets National Games was hosted by Merseyside FRS in August. Our Early Interventions Officer and Prince's Trust Officer have delivered one-to-one, in-person meetings with FRSs to support the delivery of interventions. FireSetters has changed its name to Fire Safety Interventions. [StayWise](#) is developing an implementation toolkit for FRSs.
- 4.7 The Fire Cadets were part of the King's Coronation events, delivered Cafe de Cadet meetings and Fire Cadet Leaders Participation Support Groups, and have been planning for UK Rescue Organisation (UKRO) challenges. We have recruited a UK Fire Cadet Participation Officer to support our work with Youth United.

Home Fire Safety

- 4.8 The [online home fire safety check tool](#) has been adopted by 86% of English FRSs. A new Home Fire Safety Visit Competency Framework has been developed and was trialled by an FRS in September 2023. The Home Fire Safety Visit Evaluation Framework is being developed as a digital tool to support the implementation of the competency framework.
- 4.9 The Prevention Hub has launched a new seven-step guide to prevent smoking-related fires. We have been working with NFCC's Emerging Technology and Electrical Safety leads and the Home Office to develop campaign materials on e-bikes and e-scooters.

Road Safety

- 4.10 The first renewed NFCC Road Safety Group meeting took place in August. This group has agreed on its governance structures and terms of reference and has begun to create an NFCC Road Safety Strategy. NFCC's Road Safety SPOCs are being surveyed to identify specific themes and gaps and develop our understanding of road safety activity across FRSs in the UK.

5. People, Culture and Leadership (PCL) Programme Update

Culture Action Plan

- 5.1 The NFCC Culture Action Plan is a renewed call to action to improve culture and address all forms of discrimination, bullying, and harassment across FRSs in the UK.
- 5.2 NFCC published its [Culture Action Plan](#) to improve culture and inclusion within the fire and rescue sector in July 2023. An independent Challenge and Support Panel has

been established to provide external scrutiny, challenge, and advice to NFCC in its work around culture and inclusion, including delivery against the Culture Action Plan. The seven panel members' expertise, insight, and experience from a range of sectors will inform NFCC's work around culture, diversity, and inclusion.

- 5.3 The Challenge and Support Panel is chaired by Anthea Sully, Chief Executive of White Ribbon UK, a charity working to end men's violence against women. The other panel members are Sal Naseem, a Former Regional Director of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC); Susannah Fish OBE, a former Chief Constable; Katrin Hohl, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at City, University of London; Alex Johnson, a former Chief Fire Officer and Vice Chair of Women in the Fire Service; Eimear Meredith-Jones, Deloitte; and Baljit Ubhey, Director of Strategy and Policy at the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The panel will next meet later this month.

Health and Wellbeing Framework

- 5.4 This project aims to produce a comprehensive framework that answers the recommendations and priorities identified in Nottingham Trent University's (NTU) research into the health and wellbeing support provided in the FRS, [published earlier this year](#). This is currently in the pre-project phase. Lead researchers from NTU and members of NFCC's Health and Wellbeing Board are determining the next steps.

Recruitment, Fitness, and Medical Standards Research Project

- 5.5 This is currently in the pre-project phase, with an outline business case under development.

On-Call Research Project

- 5.6 The On-Call Research Project is part of NFCC's strategy to reduce community risk and vulnerability. The project will address workforce challenges in the On-Call Duty System (OCDS) by conducting a national review to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of on-call resource management and systems across the country. The project will also deliver a standardised data set and approach to on-call data management which will provide the basis for future change. The project will be entering the initiation stage in Quarter 4, subject to a partnership with the Fire Service Research and Training Trust.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Toolkits

- 5.7 New EDI toolkits for FRSs on faith and disability are to be developed as part of the Culture Action Plan. A working group is being developed to review the current material available and scope the project requirements.
- 5.8 NFCC will work with the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) to further develop and promote its Religion and Faith Toolkit.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Lunch and Learns

- 5.9 NFCC's EDI Hub will host a series of Lunch and Learn sessions to develop knowledge and share experiences on a variety of topics. A working group is currently scoping potential topics, identifying guest speakers, and developing a schedule.

Direct Entry

- 5.10 The Direct Entry scheme, delivered in partnership with the Fire Service College, supports FRSs to provide new routes for entry into FRS careers and will help to improve and diversify leadership. The scheme ran a recruitment campaign for station managers across seven FRSs from April to June 2023. Six candidates (three men and three women) received conditional job offers, with appointments expected between now and November 2023.
- 5.11 Project work has focused on attaining accreditation for the training programme to provide a professional, credible, and quality-assured product. The project team has been working closely with Skills For Justice (SFJ), who offer free resources to support the development of the qualification. The accreditation will be developed in three phases. Phase one (covering this cohort) involves a custom certification route (through the SFJ Awards) which is designed to support organisations that develop their own high-quality learning programmes that are not part of the national Regulated Qualifications Framework. Phases two and three (for future cohorts) will require separate approval by NFCC.

Middle Leadership Programme (MLP)

- 5.12 The MLP procurement process closed in June 2023, with bids submitted by eight suppliers. Following a robust evaluation process, four suppliers were invited to deliver a presentation to the project board. The winning bid for the creation of the programme was awarded to the Chartered Management Institute.

Strategic Continued Professional Development (CPD) Masterclasses

- 5.13 There has been an excellent response to the masterclasses, with over 98% of FRSs having attended at least one session. The most recent masterclass, titled *Beyond the Response – Preparing for Scrutiny*, was delivered by LFB in September 2023. Current and future FRS leaders were encouraged to consider how well prepared they and their organisations are to deal with potential scrutiny that may arise following a major incident or event.

Core Code of Ethics

- 5.14 Another meeting between the LGA, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and NFCC is planned for December 2023. HMICFRS has published its *Effectiveness, Efficiency, and People 2023/25* inspection reports for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Cheshire FRSs. All three services are noted for their adoption of or compliance with the Core Code of Ethics.

NFCC Interactive Leadership and Careers Pathways

- 5.15 An outline business case for a new project to develop interactive leadership and career pathways has been approved by NFCC's Leadership Programme Board. This interactive tool will be hosted on the new NFCC website and deliver a clear, intuitive, and professional landing page to attract people to the fire sector, helping to support FRSs' recruitment campaigns and showcase the range of career and development opportunities across FRSs in the UK.
- 5.16 The interactive pathways will provide all FRS staff with opportunities and roadmaps that enrich their professional development, either vertically (through promotion) or horizontally. It will provide a clear leadership pathway with the appropriate tools and products to support existing and future FRS leaders and become a central hub for all existing and future PCL products.
- 5.17 The interactive pathways will initially align with areas of work under the PCL programme as a proof of concept, with the aim to widen the scope in phases to ensure it is scalable and manageable.

6. Community Risk Programme Update

- 6.1 The programme has almost completed its original aims and is moving toward closure and the transition of products to business as usual. The programme has identified areas for further work and business cases will be produced for future consideration.

Economic and Social Value Project

- 6.2 The final delivery of a digital tool to assist FRSs in using the methodologies is in its test phase. Once the test is completed and delivered, the project will close.

Guidance Project Update

- 6.3 The final guidance documents are to be submitted to NFCC Council for approval at its next meeting: Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Risk Analysis Guidance, Hazard Identification Guidance, Decision Making Guidance, and CRMP Process Assurance Evaluation Guidance. These complete the suite of guidance. A workshop to familiarise FRSs with the guidance was held in September. The project will close once the workshop is complete and the guidance documents are published.

Definition of Risk Project Update

- 6.4 A methodology for assessing the risk of road traffic collisions has been approved and is undergoing final branding prior to delivery. A methodology for other building fires has been through a consultation process with FRSs, which highlighted the need to increase the number of building categories used. A change request to refine the methodology has been approved and the refined methodology is under development, with completion expected soon. Once these items have been delivered the project will move into the closedown phase.

Competencies for Risk Management Project Update

- 6.5 The competencies framework developed by the project was [published](#) earlier this year, and this project is now closed.

Evaluation of FRS Interventions Project update

- 6.6 The evaluation project has produced a framework for the evaluation of FRS interventions which will be submitted to the next NFCC Council meeting for approval to publish.

7. Operational Response and Fire Control Hub Update

Personnel Update

- 7.1 Three lead officers will be recruited shortly. These leads will focus on; Fire Control; Operational Response and Sustainability; and Climate, Environment, and Emerging Technologies. NFCC is also looking to secure a subject matter expert to assist in reviewing the suite of hazardous materials products.

Emerging Technologies

- 7.2 Emerging technologies such as the use of lithium-ion batteries in domestic and commercial settings create challenges across Prevention, Protection, and operational response. NFCC is drafting an action plan to deliver a suite of policy and guidance products on these technologies.

Contaminants

- 7.3 NFCC's Health and Safety lead has established a new contaminants group. A guidance note advising FRSs on the procurement of fire hoods (flash-hoods) will be shared with FRSs via Workplace. Key information will be incorporated into the new draft Firefighting Guidance, for which we will create a scrutiny panel.

NFCC Wildfire Debrief Report

- 7.4 The NFCC Wildfire Debrief Report has been drafted by the NFCC lead. The report contains several recommendations, and work is taking place across NFCC to ensure these are contextualised, analysed, and prioritised effectively.

Manchester Arena Inquiry

- 7.5 A Manchester Arena Inquiry recommendation tracker has been issued to UK FRSs to capture progress on the recommendations and support reporting.

Emergency Alerts System

- 7.6 The Home Office's Emergency Alerts System is now in a live pilot phase, and the Operational Response and Fire Control Hub are working to agree on implementation and requisite training.

National Operational Guidance (NOG)

- 7.7 Ten guidance products have been approved by the Operations, Preparedness Response, and Resilience Committee to be considered at the next Steering Group meeting: NOG 088 Operations: Hazards – Psychological Trauma and Suicide; NOG 090 Search, Rescue and Casualty Care: Hazards – Multiple casualties (Carry Out Triage); NOG 085 Flooding and Other Geophysical Hazards Scenario; NOG 082 Transport: Hazards – Road Vehicle Safety Systems; NOG 065 Aircraft Rescue Scenario; NOG 087 Utilities and Fuel: Hazard – Photovoltaic Systems; NOG 009 Major Incidents; NOG 083 Search, Rescue and Casualty Care – Exit Strategy; NOG 091 Hazardous Materials Guidance – Initial Operational Response and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Materials; MTA Joint Operating Protocols (JOPs), third edition.

Consultations

- 7.8 The Hub is inputting into a National Highways consultation on the concept of emergency corridors. A consultation survey is currently being devised for the working at height competency framework produced with UKRO. Work to progress the Incident Command Competency Framework continues.

8. Digital and Data Programme (DDP) Update

- 8.1 The Data, Digital, and Technology (DDaT) Committee continues to develop its governance structure. A Data Board and a Digital, Technology, and Cyber (DTC) Board are being established below the Committee to lead on their respective areas, with subject matter experts as members. A recruitment process recently concluded to determine the new voluntary chairs of each board. The chairs will also become the respective lead officers for each subject area. Terms of reference for both boards are under development.
- 8.2 The DDaT Committee continues to work on a strategic roadmap for the sector. To gain an understanding of the current landscape, a survey has been shared with all other NFCC committee chairs to identify any current and planned committee activity that has a DDaT element and their respective priorities. Initial findings are expected in Quarter 3 of this year.
- 8.3 A strategic partnership with techUK has been drafted and is undergoing review to ensure any partnership complements the ambitions of the transition of national procurement to Blue Light Commercial, which is led by policing. The strategic partnership will foster a culture in which NFCC and tech companies work collaboratively, exchanging ideas, knowledge, and skills. The partnership aims to overcome barriers to industry collaboration with NFCC and to provide technology companies with an opportunity to showcase their solutions, problem solve, horizon scan, and drive innovation across the sector.

National Fire Data Collection System (NFDCS)

- 8.4 The NFDCS is a Home Office-led project to transform the existing Incident Recording System (IRS) into a more comprehensive, flexible, and scalable national fire data collection system. There are two major workstreams underway: the technical development of the new system and a data review. The suppliers are fully mobilised and have begun the alpha phase of development. The data review focuses on incident data and is predicted to last until the end of 2023, with a review in January 2024. The review of other datasets, including those for Prevention, Protection, and workforce, will likely commence after spring 2024. The target for an initial solution to be in place for incident data is summer 2024.

Data Management Framework (DMF)

- 8.5 Following the publication of the Data Management Fire Standard in 2022, the team defined and developed the underpinning guidance and tools for the new standard. The DMF has undergone peer review and amendments to the guidance have been made ahead of full consultation, which closed in September. Updates based on feedback will be made in autumn, with final publication anticipated by the end of Quarter 3.

Digital, Technology, and Cyber

- 8.6 Work on the five-point framework for DTC remains a key focus. The framework comprises: strategy; standards; governance and structure; cyber; and promote, engage, motivate, and collaborate.
- 8.7 The Home Office has allocated three years of funding to improve cyber resilience in English FRSs. The Home Office has partnered with IBM to conduct detailed research into FRS compliance with the Cyber Assessment Framework. This will inform how the next two years of funding are targeted and the role NFCC will play in supporting improvement. The DDaT Committee will support the development of an action plan for the sector based on the findings, which will be shared soon.
- 8.8 The DDaT hub will collaborate with the Fire Standards Board to commence production of DTC fire standard(s) in Quarter 4. Supporting guidance and tools will be identified in 2024 as the standard(s) develop.