



Fire Services Management Committee

Date:	11 March 2024
Title:	NFCC Chair's Update
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1. Purpose

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

2. Protection Update

Building Safety Regulator (BSR)

- 2.1 The new BSR reached a significant milestone on 1 October 2023, as the design and building of new and refurbished high-rise residential buildings are now under the effect of the new regime. The uptake of the new process has been slow, with only a few projects having been passed to FRSs for assistance at the time of writing. A significant increase in workload is expected from May 2024 when work will start on assessing current occupied high-rise residential buildings under the new regime. NFCC's Protection Reform Unit (PRU) has assisted FRSs in readying themselves to support multi-disciplinary teams under the new regulator. The PRU continues to work closely with partner agencies on multiple workstreams in relation to the delivery of the overall project.

Fire Protection Board

- 2.2 NFCC's Enforcement Review was discussed at December's board meeting. We are working with the Home Office on the direction and focus whilst simultaneously working on an audit review and the potential for a more consistent and joined-up approach to guidance. The Board also discussed work on emerging hazards, which involves a multi-stakeholder group that will explore new risks in the built environment and what mitigation and gaps there are at present.

Legislation and guidance update

2.3 Following on from the announcement by Michael Gove in the summer of 2023, NFCC this month released an Opinion Paper on the Provision of Multiple Routes for Evacuation of Residential Buildings to try and counter uncertainty as to what a second staircase should look like in a building. NFCC's opinion centres around three objectives:

- Stairways are independent of each other and therefore a single fire cannot impact multiple escape routes.
- Safe egress is provided for all building users, including those who would be unable to or would find it difficult to descend stairs.
- Suitable resilience and flexibility are provided for firefighting. This should include appropriate access and facilities, with sufficient resilience and redundancy in the design.

2.4 Further to the publication of the paper, a written ministerial statement was published on 19 February 2024 which outlines "the need for a second staircase in new multi-occupancy residential buildings that have a top occupied storey above 18 metres," though it noted "that evacuation lifts will not be called for as a matter of course." In light of the announcement, NFCC will review the Opinion Paper and the Single Staircase Position statement to understand the need for further actions to represent the needs of residents in newly built high-rise buildings, particularly those who cannot use stairs to evacuate buildings.

2.5 The PRU continues to assist the Home Office with the technical guidance programme that involves updating all the guidance on the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order. Current guidance under review includes sleeping accommodation, animal premises, an overarching fire risk assessment document, stables, and purpose-built blocks of flats.

Protection Uplift Fund

2.6 The PRU and NFCC's Data and Governance teams continue to support FRSs to ensure that this funding is being used effectively and efficiently.

General update

2.7 The PRU continue to sit on many British Standards Institute committees, boards, and working groups to assist in improving both public and firefighter safety. The PRU continues to support FRSs around complex enforcement and fire engineering issues via a peer review process. The PRU continues to support DLUHC and the Home Office with the introduction of the Major Decant Protocol for use by local authorities and partners when evacuation of residential premises is being considered.

3. Prevention Hub Update

- 3.1 The Prevention Committee met in January 2024 and was chaired by the new Prevention Committee Chair. NFCC Prevention webpages have been updated to make guidance and tools more accessible to FRSs.

Safeguarding

- 3.2 NFCC and DBS hosted joint webinars in July-December 2023 to support FRSs on what legislative change means, how to request the application of DBS checks within fire and rescue authorities, as well as the appropriate levels of DBS checks that FRSs can request for employees and volunteers.
- 3.3 After the success of these webinars, NFCC's Safeguarding Board subsequently agreed that additional webinars should be made available to strategic leads to understand both the legal and moral duties pertaining to legislative change. The three strategic webinars were made available to individuals who hold corporate risk and responsibility within their FRS to learn more about the DBS, how the legislation works and the legal position concerning appropriate levels of DBS checks and the DBS Barring List.
- 3.4 The team have supported the Fire Standards Board to review any amendments to the Safeguarding Fire Standard. The Safeguarding Practitioners Group and regional groups continue to meet online with a focus on safer recruitment training.

Serious Violence Duty

- 3.5 The FRS Serious Violence Duty guidance is being promoted to FRSs, with workshops being planned for FRSs and the Home Office in September 2024.

Children and young people (CYP)

- 3.6 The CYP Executive Board continues to meet quarterly. The CYP team are currently producing an infographic to highlight the key outcomes of the NFCC CYP survey which was completed by 81% of FRSs.
- 3.7 The Fire Safety Interventions Practitioners Foundation training course has been delivered and the monthly practitioner's meetings continue to be delivered virtually. The focus for Princes Trust and NFCC has been supporting areas around Safeguarding, Information Sharing Agreements, and support to those delivering the training.
- 3.8 We have supported 91 Fire Cadets to attend the Firefighter Memorial Service, United Kingdom Rescue Organisation (UKRO) events, and the National Remembrance Parade.
- 3.9 The establishment of a national voice for Fire Cadets is progressing well. There are 17 FRSs signed up to be a part of the National Cadet Voice and they have identified Cadet Champions to help develop the initial structure and key points of contact for their service. Three meetings have been held so far with a launch event being planned.

- 3.10 As part of the Early Intervention workstream, Tyne & Wear FRS have secured approximately £220k via the Home Office Safer Streets funding which aims to tackle violence against women and girls in the wake of Sarah Everard's murder.

Home fire safety

- 3.11 The Home Fire Safety Competency Framework has been approved by the Prevention Committee and will be launched with a new e-learning package which is being developed in partnership with FRSs and NFCC's Learning Team.
- 3.12 A Home Fire Safety Evaluation Framework and survey tool have been completed and are awaiting further approvals in the post-service pilot phase.
- 3.13 The online home fire safety check tool has been adopted by 95% of FRSs and is now available via the Google app store.

Water safety

- 3.14 NFCC launched a new video in January 2024 in collaboration with the Coastguard and RNLI. It features the story of Gareth Jones who lost his life in rough sea in January 2021 off the coast of Hove after trying to rescue his dog. The #Be Water Aware Campaign is planned for the week beginning 22 April 2024.

Road safety

- 3.15 The new Road Safety Board and Road Safety Practitioners Group have now met following recent survey outputs from FRSs and are working to define priorities and create working groups.

4. Operational Response and Fire Control Hub Update

Emerging technologies

- 4.1 Emerging technologies create challenges across prevention, protection, and operational response. The NFCC lead for emerging technologies is drafting an action plan to deliver a suite of policy and guidance products including an NFCC Energy Strategy. Some recent work includes:
- Supporting Electrical Safety First in attending an All-Party Parliamentary Group event on electrical safety.
 - A review of current Grid-Scale Battery Energy Storage Guidance for FRSs.
 - Supporting the Home Office and Department for Transport to produce and publish [public safety information](#).
 - Working with the US Fire Administration and US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to share information and learning (on workstreams such as contaminants and wildfires) between countries. This forms part of the Home Office's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the US Government.
 - A survey on the position of lithium battery incidents in 2023/24 recently closed. NFCC is now analysing the results.

- Support to the Home Office at the Cross-Government Portable Light Electric Vehicle Working Group.
- Provision of online continuous professional development (CPD) events to FRSs.

Contaminants

- 4.2 The NFCC Contaminants Group lead officer is working to agree on the additional content required to finalise the firefighting guidance foundation material before publication.

Wildfires

- 4.3 We have completed an analysis of the Wildfire Survey and Debrief Report for the 2022 Wildfire Season Executive Summary and created a gap analysis and action tracker, which was shared with wildfire lead officers and a group of subject matter experts to commence key priorities for Q4 2023/24, which include a suite of online training packages.
- 4.4 Ongoing support for the wildfire subject matter experts' group is being provided to maintain traction with the delivery of key priorities and objectives.

Rope rescue

- 4.5 We are undertaking an analysis of the current UKRO and Working at Height competency frameworks to understand structure, content, and application suitability across FRSs. We are aiming to standardise frameworks across all products where applicable.

Water rescue

- 4.6 We are analysing the submission of a new competency framework from the Inland Water Group to understand structure, content, and application suitability across FRSs.

Right care right person (RCRP)

- 4.7 Police forces are working to introduce RCRP (a National Police Chiefs Council directive) and expect to have every force on board by the end of 2024. This links to 'affecting entry' MoUs that FRSs may have and dealing with persons in crisis and need of rescue. NFCC was not consulted but has attended a meeting with the Police and the Home Office and is collecting information regards the impact on FRSs.

Updated products

- 4.8 Three guidance products have been approved by the Operational Preparedness, Response, and Resilience Committee and will go through NFCC's internal sign-out process before being published. They are:
- Change request 092 – Search, rescue, and casualty care – electrical injuries.
 - Change request 093 – Transport – various minor changes.
 - An addition of introductory wording applicable to all training specifications for operational guidance.

Fire Control guidance

- 4.9 Following stakeholder engagement and peer review that included fire control, prevention, equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) subject matter experts, and BT, the consultation for emergency call management and mobilising guidance was extended and closed in January 2024. Analysis of the feedback and re-drafting of content (where needed) is taking place before the final draft is published.
- 4.10 The development of business continuity guidance continues, with consultation planned to begin shortly.
- 4.11 Research and scoping have begun for incident management guidance. It is anticipated that this guidance will deal with incident management from a fire control perspective in a range of contexts, such as transport incidents, including those on or near railways.

Operation Willow Beck

- 4.12 NFCC continues to support the use of Operation Willow Beck, assisting with the development of a familiarisation video for fire control personnel. The video is being developed to supplement training and is underpinned by multiple calls and multiple incidents guidance. Quality assurance is being carried out before the video is made available for use.

Multi-Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT)

- 4.13 The contract for MAIT was awarded to AVR Group in June 2023, and work is underway to create an implementation/roll-out plan. A letter has been circulated to all Chief Fire Officers in England, updating them on the contract award and next steps. AVR is working with three FRSs as early adopters to create a pilot of the MAIT Web product, which will go live this year.
- 4.14 An online communication session is being arranged to allow key stakeholders from English FRSs to meet with the project team to discuss the work required 'in service' to implement MAIT. A fire user group has been established, and their recent work has included participation in user acceptance testing for MAIT Web at AVR Group premises. The fire control team supports the group in developing procedures so that ways of working are consistent, and the information shared between fire controls is standardised.

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

Culture Dashboard Methodology

- 5.1 NFCC is developing a Culture Dashboard Methodology that provides a framework to help FRSs work through the creation of their own culture dashboards. This comprehensive guide is designed to help services understand the principles and components needed to create an effective dashboard that can provide valuable insight and analysis and drive actionable outcomes by aligning with a service's strategy, objectives, and metrics. It is important to note that the guidance is not meant to be definitive, as strategies, objectives, cultures, and protocols may vary across FRSs.

- 5.2 The guidance highlights two specific workplace issues; firstly, building a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing, and secondly, creating workplaces free from harassment and discrimination. By measuring and analysing data related to these issues, FRSs can identify risk factors, determine the effectiveness of interventions, and take appropriate action. The journey from strategy to metrics, data to information, and information to action is crucial in achieving positive outcomes.
- 5.3 The Culture Dashboard Methodology is being consulted on over March 2024, with final publication anticipated in June 2024.

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 FRSs, published in 2023. NFCC is procuring an academic partner from within NTU, and a working group of sector subject matter experts have been identified to quality assure the draft framework document.

On-Call Research Project

- 5.5 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 soon, subject to a partnership with the Fire Service Research and Training Trust.

Educational and behavioural programmes

- 5.6 NFCC continues to develop several educational toolkits that form part of our Culture and EDI Hub. This includes a Challenging Behaviour Toolkit, which is a collation of positive practices that is presented in an accessible and easy-to-use format. It is designed to provide clear advice and guidance to anyone on the best ways to challenge poor behaviour. Consultation on the Challenging Behaviour Toolkit is taking place over March 2024, with publication planned for June 2024.
- 5.7 The programme has also produced three thematic EDI toolkits, covering faith and religion, disability, and menopause. These were developed with support from the Asian Fire Service Association, Women in the Fire Service, and the Menopause Champions Network. The three EDI toolkits have been through a consultation process and will be published by the end of March 2024.

EDI Listen and Learn sessions

- 5.8 NFCC's Listen and Learn sessions are typically hosted by the EDI Project Executive (Chief Fire Officer Kathryn Billing) and led by a guest speaker discussing key aspects

of the topic area and sharing lived experiences where relevant. Sessions are promoted to all FRS staff and wider partners and delivered remotely using Microsoft Teams. All sessions are recorded and made available online as podcast episodes via NFCC's YouTube channel.

- 5.9 13 sessions have been delivered in the financial year 2023-24, on topics including menopause awareness, Women in the Fire Service, menopause in fire, freedom to speak up, Black History Month, men's mental health, LGBTQ+ inclusion, intersectionality, reverse mentoring, standing up to bullying, International Women's Day, Transgender Day of Visibility, and violence against women and girls.
- 5.10 Listen and learn sessions have been attended by over 1,000 representatives from across UK FRSs as well as government and other industry partners.

Direct Entry

- 5.11 The Direct Entry Scheme has successfully appointed six direct entrants as Station Managers. All six are settling into their services well.
- 5.12 The direct entrants have completed a six-week Operational Foundation Course at the Fire Service College which commenced in January 2024 with their 'passout' ceremony in February 2024.
- 5.13 NFCC has been provisionally approved as a Skills for Justice Awards Centre – the first step towards becoming a fully approved training centre. This means that NFCC can register learners on the following Certificate of Achievement programme: 'Leading the Function in the Fire and Rescue Service (Direct Entry Route) (ACH)'.
- 5.14 The direct entrants will continue with training coordinated and managed by NFCC's Direct Entry Operational Training and Development Course Director in collaboration with each participating service and the Fire Service College.

Middle Leadership Programme (MLP)

- 5.15 The MLP project is on target to launch in April 2024.
- 5.16 The project has developed four training modules aligned to the NFCC Leadership Framework which have been quality-assured by voluntary groups within the sector. Several embedding guidance documents have been developed to support learners and their line managers, along with an Evaluation Framework.
- 5.17 Each FRS will receive 20 free licences to the MLP over the coming two years, with additional licences available for purchase.

Strategic CPD Masterclasses

- 5.18 Six masterclasses are now uploaded onto the [NFCC Website](#) and accessible to all NFCC members.

Core Code of Ethics (CCoE)

- 5.19 NFCC representatives recently met with CCoE partners, including the Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, to

consider the code's future. Discussions are ongoing and will be informed by HMICFRS thematic reviews due for release in summer 2024.

Interactive leadership and careers pathways

- 5.20 An outline business case for a new project to develop interactive career pathways has been approved to progress.
- 5.21 Content, design, and development work have begun, and a leadership pathway has already been designed. Information-gathering exercises will take place in March and April 2024, which will include regional FRS workshops and one public-facing forum. This will ensure there is buy-in to the project and help define the content the sector wishes to see.

360-Degree Feedback Guidance

- 5.22 The draft national 360-Degree Feedback Guidance underwent consultation in late 2023. Feedback confirmed that FRSs welcomed the guidance and would benefit from it. Four explanatory videos have been produced by NFCC to support all FRS employees in understanding the benefits of this feedback method.
- 5.23 NFCC's Coordinating Committee will soon review the guidance, after which it will be launched on NFCC's website.

6. Data, Digital and Technology (DDaT) Hub update

DDaT Strategy and Roadmap

- 6.1 The DDaT Committee and associated governance boards were established in 2023. A key priority was to collaborate with the sector, partners, and wider stakeholders to develop a DDaT Strategy and Roadmap for the fire sector, to commence from 2024-26. This strategy builds on NFCC's Digital and Data Strategy of July 2020 and reflects the changes within the organisation and the technology landscape since then.
- 6.2 The strategy sets out our high-level priorities for moving toward a digitally transformed fire and rescue sector, recognising the need for flexibility and innovation within those priorities to take advantage of new advances that may present themselves.
- 6.3 The strategy is accompanied by a high-level roadmap that sets out specific project and product development timelines over the next two years. Some projects will have a longer lifespan, and we acknowledge the significant differences in available resources and governance across the sector which may affect the progress of longer-term goals.
- 6.4 The DDaT Committee has signed off the draft DDaT Strategy and Roadmap, which is now progressing through NFCC's final sign-out stages, including a presentation at Council.

techUK partnership

- 6.5 [An MoU](#) for NFCC's strategic partnership with techUK has been signed. The strategic partnership aims to facilitate and foster a culture wherein NFCC and tech companies work together collaboratively exchanging ideas, knowledge, and skills. The

partnership will aim to overcome barriers to industry collaboration with NFCC and provide tech companies with an equal opportunity to showcase their solutions, problem solve, horizon scan, and drive innovation across the sector.

National Fire Data Collection System (NFDCS)

- 6.6 NFDCS is a Home Office-led project to transform the existing Incident Recording System into a more comprehensive, flexible, and scalable NFDCS. There are two major workstreams underway, firstly the technical development of the new system, with the second comprising a data review. The suppliers are fully mobilised and have started the alpha phase of the system's development. A review of other datasets, including those for prevention, protection, and workforce, will likely commence after summer 2024. The target for an initial solution to be in place for incident data is autumn 2024.

Data Management Framework (DMF)

- 6.7 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 been published](#) and a series of sector engagement sessions were undertaken in February 2024.

Digital, technology, and cyber

- 6.8 The Home Office has allocated three years of funding to improve cyber resilience in English FRSs. A partnership with IBM has been established to conduct detailed research into FRS compliance with the Cyber Assessment Framework, which has determined a set of recommendations for the sector.
- 6.9 The DDaT team has collaborated with cyber subject matter experts, the Home Office, and the National Cyber Security Centre to turn these recommendations into a prioritised action plan which will be published shortly. Home Office will allocate funding from their cyber resilience programme to support NFCC delivery of this work.
- 6.10 The DDaT team and Fire Standards Board have commenced production of the Digital, Technology, and Cyber Fire Standard. The estimated publication date is Summer 2024. Supporting guidance and tools will be identified as the standard develops.

CPD

- 6.11 The DDaT team is identifying a series of CPD opportunities for staff from across the sector, focusing on digital and data literacy and upskilling.
- 6.12 'Learning Bytes' is a series of online workshops hosted by NFCC's DDaT Hub and led by cross-sector experts that will enhance sector knowledge and skills in the ever-evolving world of digital, data, technology, and cyber. The Learning Bytes series is not exclusive to digital and data professionals. All FRS staff are invited to participate and broaden their understanding of the crucial role DDaT plays in the fire sector.

- 6.13 The Learning Bytes series began in February 2024 with renowned location data experts Ordnance Survey (OS), who presented a comprehensive overview of the data, tools, and technical support that they can provide to all UK FRSs.
- 6.14 Work to weave data and digital leadership into other PCL development programmes has started. Digital leadership courses for senior leaders have been appraised, and work has started to commence pilot cohorts in Q1 24/25, and a pilot cohort for an Office for National Statistics Data Masterclass will also commence in Q1.