

## Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Summary of findings from Tranche 2 inspections

### Summary:

On the 20 June, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published the reports from their second tranche of inspections of 16 fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England. These second waves of reports build on the findings from the first tranche of 14 service inspections, reported on in December 2018. Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (LFR) were inspected during summer 2018 as part of tranche 1.

This update provides an overview of Tranche 2 of the HMICFRS inspection programme, published in June 2019.

### 1. Background

LFR was inspected during summer 2018 by HMICFRS as part of a new independent inspection process. The reports for the first tranche of inspections (of 14 FRS) were published on 20 December 2018<sup>1</sup>.

A copy of LFR's inspection report is available on the HMICFRS website<sup>2</sup>.

Since the last committee update in March 2019, HMICFRS has completed a second tranche of inspections and published an overview of its findings.

### 2. HMICFRS Fire and Rescue Service inspections 2018/19 – Summary of findings from Tranche 2

The report from the second tranche of inspections (16 FRS) published on the 20 June 2019<sup>3</sup> gave an overview of the findings. It builds on the outcomes of the previous tranche of inspections, which LFR were part of. In Tranche 2, the HMICFRS inspected very different FRSs, from large metropolitan to smaller services covering vast rural areas, similar to LFR. As with the tranche 1 inspections, the HMICFRS recognised the dedication and commitment of staff serving their communities in each and every service. It also highlighted the high regard that the public continue to hold the FRS in, supported during the latest public perception survey.

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<sup>1</sup> The remaining 31 fire and rescue services will be inspected over the next 12 months.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/frs-assessment/frs-2018/lincolnshire/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/fire-and-rescue-service-inspections-2018-19-tranche-2.pdf>

In this report, HMICFRS gave the 16 services the following overall grades:

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
Effectiveness		9	7	
Efficiency		9	7	
People		8	7	1

FRSs continue to respond effectively when the public need them, with staff who are highly skilled, well equipped and provide a number of services to their local communities.

However, the HMICFRS continues to be concerned with how services carry out their fire protection duties as teams are often under-resourced. This was identified as part of the LFR inspection and has been addressed with the appointment of two additional Fire Safety Inspectors, supported by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) through enhanced funding.

Within this summary report, HMICFRS comment on how a decade of localism has led to marked differences between fire services; for example how they determine response standards, and how they identify and mitigate risk. A concern still remains about how some services look after their staff.

Most services are operating with reducing budgets and fewer staff. Fire funding is complex and funding arrangements differ across services. Two FRS were identified as operating in testing financial environments. This is making it harder for them to carry out their core functions of prevention, protection and response. It will be difficult for these services to absorb further budget reductions without adverse implications for public safety.

The headline findings can be summarised below<sup>4</sup>:

- Responding to emergencies continues to be a strength for the sector
- Protection remains a concern; its application is inconsistent, and teams are often under-resourced
- Some services are well resourced; others are struggling to carry out their core functions
- Services are increasingly prioritising health, wellbeing and mental health support
- Not enough progress is being made to improve workforce diversity
- Considerable variation in definitions and how things are done across the services
- This continues to be a time of change for the fire sector
- Prevention activities aren't always targeted at those at most risk of fire
- Most fire and rescue services are ready for large-scale incidents but national capability needs to be reviewed further

<sup>4</sup> Further headline findings detail can be found in pages 5-8 of the tranche 2 report

- Services are not exploiting the benefits of technology
- Not all learning is gathered or used to improve services
- Services aren't effectively evaluating, reviewing and monitoring their collaboration activities

The HMICFRS have started tranche 3 of their inspection programme which should be completed by the end of 2019. This will then give the inspectorate a complete national picture of FRSs. At that point, HMICFRS will publish the first '*State of Fire and Rescue report*' which will include judgements and recommendations for the sector and the Home Office to consider.

However, in the meantime, the HMICFRS have made two recommendations following tranche 2 inspections which require immediate attention and action. The need for greater consistency in approach (in 4 priority areas), and the need for the sector to be supported to reform enhanced capacity and capability.

Recommendation 1 highlights areas of priority and the HMICFRS expect significant progress by December 2020 with a common set of definitions and standards for the following four areas:

1. identifying and determining risk as part of the IRMP process;
2. identifying and measuring emergency response standards and approaches;
3. defining what are high-risk premises for the purposes of fire protection; and
4. setting an expectation for how frequently high-risk premises, and parts of those premises, should be audited for compliance with fire safety legislation.

HMICFRS recognise the overlap between this and the work already underway, as part of the recommendations of Dame Judith Hackett's review of building regulations and fire safety. However, the Home Office, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA), in consultation with the Fire Standards Board, should establish a programme of work that will result in consistency in the four priority areas above, as soon as possible.

Recommendation 2 reflects the significant reform and transformation across the fire and rescue sector in England seen in the past few years. There have been many factors behind this, such as the Government's fire reform programme, austerity, the new inspectorate and the consequences of and response to the tragic events at Grenfell Tower. Further sector-wide change is likely to be needed following the conclusion of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (the first report is due this autumn).

The fire and rescue service nationally has very limited resources including access to the skills and expertise it needs to bring about change. Without access to this support, the Government's fire reform programme may well falter.

As part of the next 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.

Following the publication of this report, LFR will continue to review progress against its own action plan, future HMICFRS recommendations and update the Committee about progress on a periodic basis.