



Open Report on behalf of Mark Baxter, Chief Fire Officer – Fire and Rescue Service

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| Report to: | Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee |
| Date: | 19 July 2022 |
| Subject: | National Flood Rescue Assurance Inspection |

Summary:

On 28th January 2022 Lincolnshire fire and rescue were visited by a capability officer from the National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) to assure our flood rescue response against two national standards documents:

- (1) Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Flood Rescue Concept of Operations (DEFRA FRCO); and,
- (2) the National Fire Chiefs Council Rescue Boat Code (NFCC RBC).

The assurance process is a three-year cycle in which a range of methods are used to assess and validate organisations against the recognised standards. Following the inspection NRAT published their findings in their assurance visit report, which came into service in February 2022

This report describes and informs the committee the outcomes of the assurance visit, and the action plan the service has in place to ensure we are able to achieve their recommendations.

Actions Required:

That the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee:-

- (1) reviews the report and the action plan that has been developed; and,
- (2) provides feedback and notes receipt of the Inspection Report.

1. Background

- 1.1** The National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT), on behalf of Home Office, is responsible for conducting assurance with each of the organisations who host National Resilience (NR) assets.

The process gathers evidence against Key Areas of Assessment (KAA) from the organisations. The resultant findings then form the basis of the assurance report. The content within the report will assist the organisation and the NR capabilities in identifying areas of good practice that can be shared and therefore enhance and develop NR more broadly. Similarly, the process can also identify areas where organisations require additional support and assistance. As such, the assurance process as a whole is viewed as a collaborative and collegiate means of fostering positive engagement between NRAT and the organisation.

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue currently host National Flood Rescue Assets at 4 of its stations (Boston, Gainsborough, Lincoln North, and Spalding). Due to the timeframes involved in upskilling personnel in these capabilities are only crewed by the whole-time cadre, which is a total of 40 staff.

The service has previously been assured in 2015 and 2018, however, it must be noted that this is the first inspection where the NFCC RBC has been used as a standard.

1.2 How we performed

The key areas of assessment are broken down into 53 assessment statements in which LFR achieved the following grading

- 1) 2 instances (4%) of inadequate (Grade 1).
- 2) 8 instances (15%) of requires improvement (Grade 2).
- 3) 39 instances (74%) of Good (Grade 3).
- 4) 4 instances (7%) of Outstanding (grade 4).

Lincolnshire aim to be able to declare 2 x type B teams*

Following this assessment, it was identified that LFR would be able to declare 2 x type C teams**

| Team Type | | Capability |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|--|
| B* | Water & Flood Rescue Boat Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical water rescue • Search operations within the water environment • Powerboat rescue operations • In-water operations • Flood response |
| C** | Water & Flood Rescue Technician Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical water rescue • Search operations within the water environment • In-water operations • Non-powered boat operations • Flood response |

1.3 Areas of good practise

The 4 instances of outstanding were attributed to our ability and capability to mobilise and the scheduling of our maintenance training to maintain continuous personal development to a high standard.

Of the 39 good instances identified, our training and investment in the capability was noted, recognising that we live in an area that does not have fast flowing water the assurance team recognised the cost and commitment involved in sending personnel to other parts of the country and be tested in challenging and realistic environments. It also identified that the service had a good succession plan for Instructors and recognised the business continuity work that had been undertaken to maintain our high standards of learning and developing. Our record keeping such as risk assessments, briefing documents and operational risk notes were also praised for being thorough and well understood. Finally, our equipment (with a couple of exceptions) was assessed to be of a good standard and our methods testing, inspecting, and recording demonstrated our staff recognised the importance of managing health and safety.

1.4 Areas for improvement

There were 2 instances of inadequate, both relating to the same issue of appropriately qualified instructors. All our instructors are recognised throughout the country as highly competent and are part the United Kingdom Rescue Organisation assessor's cadre for national competitions. However due to Covid restrictions our powerboat instructors did not recertify within the required time (three yearly). This has been compounded with two of the three instructors being on long term sick. This is clearly a cause of concern and is now being addressed in several ways.

- 1) New instructors being trained to increase cadre.
- 2) Instructor who left county to work for National Resilience has now returned and will be available.
- 3) Instructors who were sick are returning soon and will be recertified on return.
- 4) New instructor pathway has been created ensuring recertification and CPD is consistent to required standards.

There were 8 instances of require improvement. Most of these were centred on deployment procedures and were not reflective of the capability of the team. It was recognised some documentation and recording systems could be improved. To improve in this area a new regional water response group has been created and we are working together to effectively improve the identified areas. Also, the helmets our power boat operators wear are not seen as adequate under the new RBC. Originally there was little knowledge of the standards required amongst helmet suppliers, but new helmets have been identified that comply with the new standards and the process has begun to purchase these.

Whilst the Service was disappointed not to achieve the Type B grading, it does accept the findings of the report and has implemented an action plan (Table 1) to ensure the relevant areas are addressed. However, some of the issues were a direct result of the conditions in place due to the pandemic, this includes our ability to train in the relevant locations to meet the water flow criteria, and the changes in some of the equipment are a direct result of an incident involving another Fire service in which a fatal injury occurred. This change did require some work to secure funding for the change in standard of equipment.

| Statement | Action Plan details | Action taken | Resolve by |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1.1.1 Staff receive initial Mod 4 training through qualified instructor | Lincolnshire FRS must ensure that training and assessment of staff is delivered with qualified Instructors. Recertify the Instructor cadre, to ensure effective assessment of operators. | Instructors will undergo recertification with recognised organisation. New instructor being trained to required standard | Will be resolved by end of July 22 |
| 1.1.16 Staff receive recertification Mod 4 training through qualified instructor | Lincolnshire FRS must ensure that training and assessment of staff is delivered with qualified Instructors. Recertify the Instructor cadre, to ensure effective assessment of operators. | Instructors will undergo recertification with recognised organisation. New instructor being trained to required standard | Will be resolved by end of July 22 |
| 1.1.20 Staff receive initial team commander training of 13 hours over 2 days | NRAT recommends that the Team commander course is cross mapped against ICL training within Lincs FRS | Cross mapping has reduced training requirement to 4 hours. E learning package being developed in region to identify training gaps | Completed |
| 1.1.22 All training detailed previously is effectively recorded and available for scrutiny | Adjust PDRPRO to allow staff to record annual CPD sessions in class 2 water | PDRPRO adjusted | Completed. |
| 1.2.1 Full list of Rescue equipment and PPE detailed within FRCO for team type is available | -Helmets do not conform to Pas028 -no children's life jackets No GPS mapping facility | Helmets have been sourced, order to be placed. Children's life jackets purchased GPS purchased | Helmets will be delivered and in service by July 22. Other equipment completed |
| 1.4.2 Organisation holds insurance policy detailing minimum employers' liability of 5 million pounds and public liability of ten million. | Provide current certificate. | Certificate provided | Completed. |
| 2.2.1 Is there a National Deployment guidance document | Add flood annex where team specification is detailed or signposted | Annex completed. | Completed. |

| Statement | Action Plan details | Action taken | Resolve by |
|--|---|---|------------|
| 2.3.2 Is there a procedure for effective reviewing of CPD compliance prior to mobilisation to a national incident. | Update PDRPRO dashboard to include annual CPD course across Mod 3 and Mod 4. | PDR updated | Completed. |
| 3.2.1 Organisation understands how to book in and book out at a MASHA | Continue plan to deliver training to officers | Officers have received NR training including SHA training. Information note being distributed to stations and officers to consolidate understanding. | Completed |
| 3.3.1 Organisation understands role of asset team manager | Continue plan to develop knowledge within officer group undertaking a welfare role nationally | Most officers aware of welfare role and have performed this role at some point. Information note being distributed to stations and officers to consolidate understanding. | Completed |

Table 1: Action Plan

2. Conclusion

The service recognises the standards set by the NRAT team and will achieve them through the detailed action plan. In relation to the long-term aspirations of the service in providing National Resilience assets we will continue to monitor the requirement and measure against the relevant risks and demand. Once the outstanding actions have been completed, we will be able to confirm our status as Type B compliant with NRAT. NRAT have identified they will not need to re-inspect once we have declared our action plan is complete.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

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| These are listed below and attached at the back of the report | |
| Appendix A | NRAT Flood Rescue report – Assurance visit |

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Spencer Creek, (T) Area Manager Response, who can be contacted on 077 8551 6664 or spencer.creek@lincolnfire-uk.org.

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