



Open Report on behalf of Mark Baxter, Chief Fire Officer

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	31 January 2023
Subject:	HMICFRS update for Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue

Summary:

This report provides an update since the His Majesty’s Inspectorate for Constabularies and Fire Services (HMICFRS) inspection in 2021. Following receipt of the report in December 2021 an action plan was developed to address the seventeen areas for improvement that were identified and two dedicated action plans to respond to the cause of concerns. The report highlights progress of the action plans.

Actions Required:

Members of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider the contents of this report.

1. Background

His Majesty’s Inspectorate for Constabularies and Fire Services (HMICFRS) continue in their inspection regime of Fire and Rescue Services in England. We have been inspected in 2018 and our most recent inspection in 2021. The Inspection has previously reported their findings under three main pillars which are outlined as:

Effectiveness - How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?

Efficiency - How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?

People - How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

Within each pillar there are several criteria that makes up the pillar and each criteria have a judgment of either:

- Inadequate
- Requires Improvement
- Good
- Outstanding

The following judgements were concluded from the 2021 inspection for Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (LFR):

Question	This Inspection
Effectiveness	Requires improvement
Understanding fires and other risks	Requires improvement
Preventing fires and other risks	Requires improvement
Protecting the public through fire regulation	Requires improvement – Cause of Concern
Responding to fires and other emergencies	Good
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	Good
Efficiency	Requires improvement
Making best use resources	Requires improvement
Future affordability	Good
People	Requires improvement
Promoting the right values and culture	Good
Getting the right people with the right skills	Requires improvement
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Requires improvement – Cause of Concern
Managing performance and developing leaders	Requires improvement

Where His Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) finds an area that requires more immediate action that they would like to revisit the Service to see progress, then a cause of concern’ status was given with a bespoke letter that confirms the recommendations that need to be addressed.

As Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee, Members are aware Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (LFR) received two areas that were deemed cause of concern. These were in relation to:

- The service has not taken sufficient action since the last inspection to appropriately resource its protection function.
- The service has not done enough since the last inspection to improve Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in the service.

Action to address recommendations from HMI report:

Following receipt of the report in December 2021 an action plan was developed to address the seventeen areas for improvement that were identified and two dedicated action plans to respond to the cause of concerns.

To address the areas relating to EDI focused on the specific areas as follows:

Recommendation	Completed workstream
Give greater priority to how it increases awareness of EDI across the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created an EDI Steering Group that is Chaired by Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and has representation from all areas of the Service.

Recommendation	Completed workstream
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created a 3-year action plan with year 1 focused on outcomes of HMI report. • Enabled staff networks to be created and evolve that includes, LGBTQ+, careers, women in fire service. • Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) strategic lead supports LFR EDI Steering Group and LFR are represented on LCC Steering Group. • Report into culture and understanding of EDI commissioned through external EDI specialist to develop a training needs analysis to develop future training. • Peer support from representative of Derbyshire Fire and Rescue to provide advice and diverse representation into the group. • Calendar of events for the year developed and circulated service wide.
<p>Make sure that all staff receive appropriate EDI training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory online training for managers on unconscious bias delivered. • Face to face delivery of EDI foundation training delivered to all staff via an external EDI training specialist. • EDI training provided to all new recruits and new starters into LFR. • Maintenance training programme developed for all staff.
<p>Improve how it works with its staff and provides feedback in relation to EDI issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed employee networks as previously identified. • Develop EDI section on LFR intranet page and enable access to intranet to all staff. • Create dedicated email address and contact points to allow staff to feedback confidentially EDI issues and concerns. • Launch staff survey for staff to feedback on EDI related issues. • Create 'you said, we did' feedback report so staff can see outcome of their views and comments. • EDI discussions as part of SLT engagement sessions and station visits.
<p>Improve the understanding and use of equality impact assessments in all aspects of its work and consider if its policies and procedures are inclusive and support those</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Impact Assessment (EqIA) template as this is the sector standard. • Trained twenty-nine personnel in how to complete EqIA's effectively.

Recommendation	Completed workstream
with protected characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish register of all existing EqIA's on internal intranet. • As any policies is to be renewed it has an EqIA completed. • All existing and new projects have an EqIA. • All premises where LFR personnel work have an EqIA.
Make sure that there is a programme of positive action initiatives to support its recruitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Action Plan Statement created and placed on intranet. • Positive action days delivered for On-Call and Wholetime recruitment. • Analysis of recruitment process to evaluate impact of positive action. • Recruitment team receive positive action training.

To address the areas relating to protection focused on the specific areas as follows:

Recommendation	Completed workstream
Produce a clear plan for how it will ensure all premises it has identified as high-risk are audited in accordance with the timeframe set out in its risk-based inspection policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed previous Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) and adopt the NFCC methodology to identify levels of high, medium, and low risk. • Increase establishment within protection to increase capacity to deliver against the RBIP and all statutory duties aligned to protection • Provide training qualifications to all staff at the appropriate level with the required Continuous Development Plan (CPD) and mentoring for quality assurance.
Review its administration of the protection function to make sure it can record and review all activity in a clear and consistent manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the recording systems for audit to ensure quality assurance of the data is accurate and consistent. • Review workstreams alongside business support colleagues to support clearer ways of working • Explore improvements in the existing Flosuite system to ensure its functionality is fit for purpose. Upgrades to the system have been implemented.
Make sure it has an effective quality assurance process in place so the service can assure itself that staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audits carried out on the quality of the inspections to be completed. • Standing item on the monthly protection meeting to review quality assurance of staff and audits. • Implement a 'tagging' system on Flosuite to identify when an audit has been quality assured. • Review and monitor CPD training for all staff to ensure compliance.

The impact of these workstreams was evaluated during a re-visit by HMI in September 2021, with the outcomes being published in a public letter just after. The summary of the progress in these areas were:

Governance

The service has shown a strong commitment to carry out the action plan. You have put in place appropriate governance arrangements to monitor progress against the plan. You have provided evidence that you have reviewed and improved your EDI steering group, which is chaired by the chief fire officer who gives strategic oversight. The group meets quarterly to monitor and review progress against the action plan and to provide direction to the task and finish group. You have also created a protection delivery and action plan which is overseen by both the protection and prevention managers who meet monthly to monitor progress.

Action plan

The service has detailed action plans covering our causes of concern. The action plans have senior responsible owners, deadlines, and specific action owners. The service records completed actions and updates on those that are still to be addressed. You have also identified areas for improvement in recording information and have issued an information note to staff providing guidance for recording protection work.

Outcomes to date

We are pleased to see that the service has in place some resources and appropriate governance structures for the commitments in the action plan. Some of the actions had been completed. We note the service's commitment to analysing and monitoring its recruitment process to better understand how to target applicants from under-represented sections of the community to develop a more diverse workforce.

HMI concluded from the progress at this point that they no longer needed to have updates on the ongoing progress of EDI as they recognise this is a longer-term process to get embedded and that they would utilise the next round of full inspection, in 2023 to fully evaluate how EDI is delivered and recognised across the Service.

In terms of protection, the HMI team wished to complete a re-visit in March 2022 to monitor the progress of the protection action plan. The outcome of the re-visit, which has been previously shared confirmed that the new RBIP had been delivered 410 audits during the last financial year, with only 17 outstanding that had been booked in and completed within 2 weeks.

HMI were again positive around the improvements and progress within protection but recognised that the development of the team was still ongoing, and they wanted further assurance that the overall protection plan was sustainable and that there was capacity and capabilities to deliver all other areas of protection. HMI confirmed they would re-visit later in the year.

In December 2022 HMI completed the re-visit for protection. This re-visit was solely focused on the delivery of the protection function and was over 3 days within the Service with the protection team.

The HMI inspection team have concluded that from the evidence they have gathered and the feedback from the protection team that they are sufficiently confident in our protection delivery that they no longer deem the protection function of LFR to be a cause of concern.

This is confirmed in the public letter that was released on 20th January 2023 and is in Appendix A.

This is good recognition of the hard work and dedication that the protection team have displayed since the 2021 HMI inspection to take on the recommendations and implement significant improvements in all areas of protection.

To ensure that all areas of the HMI inspection report are being addressed a multi-tiered assurance structure has been put in place to monitor, challenge and assurance progress is being made against all recommendations. These include:

- Dedicated action plans for protection and EDI that is hosted on LFR performance management platform, InPhase.
- LFR performance management board monitors and challenges progress on all areas of improvement from HMI on a quarterly basis at strategic level.
- Service Delivery Board meet on a monthly basis and report on progress against tasks to address recommendations.
- Monthly assurance reports are presented to Cllr Cawrey to enable Cllr scrutiny and assurance of progress and to hold CFO to account against HMI recommendations.

Other external learning has been embedded into progress around continuous learning such as the recommendations from Grenfell Tower Inquiry and Manchester Arena Inquiry to ensure that LFR are best placed to be able to respond to the best of our abilities to multi agency incidents. LFR manages the learning from these inquiries through our dedicated Operational Learning Board that captures all learning from internal and external operational events.

Next round of inspection:

As mentioned, the HMI Inspection is a continuous inspection programme that is delivered approximately every 2 years. We have confirmation that we will be fully inspected in May 2023 as part of a 6-week inspection programme that will cover all areas of the Service. There are some changes that HMI have confirmed such as:

- There will no longer be just three judgements just on the main pillar that were Effectiveness, Efficiency and People, but will move to have all eleven judgements in all criteria. The criteria will broadly remain the same.

- There will be an additional judgement level of Adequate. Therefore, each criterion can attract a judgement of Inadequate, Requires Improvement, Adequate, Good, Outstanding.

LFR have been preparing for this round of inspection as part of business as usual in regard to continuous improvement and have a regular review of progress against all criteria of the HMI Inspection.

Scrutiny and assurance against our continuous improvement is embedded within LFR performance management board, along with fortnightly review by LFR Senior Leadership Team and fortnightly meetings with Cllrs Cawrey and Cllr Maughan.

2. Conclusion

Since the 2021 full inspection, LFR have developed and embedded strong plan of action to address the recommendations within the report. LFR acknowledged the findings within the report and took this as an opportunity to improve in many areas across the Service.

HMI have been consistently positive about how LFR respond to operational incidents and therefore giving confidence to the communities of Lincolnshire that when our fire appliances are needed for emergency response, then they receive well trained, competent, and confident fire fighters and officers with access to good equipment and information to do the best job they can.

The position that LFR in relation to the HMI inspection in 2021 has been evidenced that there is significant progress and improvements in all areas. The public recognition that HMI has stated that they no longer see protection as a cause of concern and that EDI is progressing well throughout the Service has been welcomed within LFR.

A recent assurance check against the existing criteria for the upcoming inspection indicates that there is a positive direction of travel in all areas. It is of course difficult to predict the findings that HMI will produce, but LFR is confident that improvements will be identified.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Public letter relating to protection re-visit for cause of concern

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 Mark Baxter, Chief Fire Officer, who can be contacted on 01522 555012 or by e-mail at Mark.Baxter@lincolnshire.gov.uk.