



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Overview and Audit Committee, 15 March 2023

Report title: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update: March 2023

Lead Member: Councillor David Hopkins

Report sponsor: Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mick Osborne

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Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the Committee note the updated HMICFRS - BFRS Improvement Plan: March 2023

Executive summary:

BFRS's second round inspection took place between 24 May 2021 and 9 July 2021.

The latest report for this Service, was published on 15 December 2021, identified 22 areas for improvement, and two causes of concern – Effectiveness: Prevention and People: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) accompanied by eight recommendations.

An improvement plan (Appendix 1) is in place to specifically progress the report recommendations and areas for improvement.

Following an inspection that has led to causes of concerns, HMICFRS complete a revisit to check progress. Our revisit took place week commencing 03 January 2023. The revisit focused on the 2 causes of concern and involved interviews, desktop reviews and stations visits.

The revisit debrief took place on 19 January 2023 and the Cause of concern revisit letter (Appendix 2) was received on 24 February 2023. Progress highlighted included:

- We were pleased to see that the service had put in place some resources and appropriate governance structures for the commitments in the prevention action plan.
- We found staff in specialist teams understood the service's priorities set by the revised strategy.
- Staff described a positive change in the way the service was raising awareness of and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

HMICFRS have now confirmed Round 3 inspections details. There are a number of changes to this round that can be found in Appendix 3 – FRS Sector Update letter Nov 2022. Our Round 3 inspection will be starting on 17 April 2023 and work is underway to prepare for this.

On the 20 January 2023, HMICFRS published the State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022. His assessment includes:

- Services and their staff are dedicated to serving the public.
- Reform is still urgently needed.
- Our inspections have helped services to better serve their communities.

The full report can be located via the Background papers.

Financial implications: The prioritisation of improvements to address the specific recommendations raised within the causes of concern may introduce additional financial implications, either through reprioritisation of other projects, or through new workstreams.

Consideration will be given to ensure associated costs, both direct and indirect, are fully understood and managed effectively.

FRSs are not funded for the preparation for, HMICFRS inspections, nor is the Service charged. The inspections are funded directly by the Home Office. The Police are top sliced from their government grants to fund the HMICFRS inspections of Police Forces. There has been no indication yet that this might be a future funding model for the inspection of FRSs.

Risk management: There remain reputational corporate risks to the organisation should we be judged as inadequate. The Service had already taken steps to mitigate this through having extensive internal and external audits of a number of areas of the Service, in addition to the HMICFRS inspections. The external audit plan for 22/23 can be found here: [Overview and Audit Committee - 16 March 2022 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service \(bucksfire.gov.uk\)](#)

Legal implications: The current Fire and Rescue Service National Framework issued under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to which the Authority must have regard when carrying out its functions, states as follows at paragraph 7.5:

‘Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and – if recommendations are made – prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned. If the fire and rescue authority does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a recommendation, reasons for this should be given.’

It continues: ‘When forming an action plan, the fire and rescue authority could seek advice and support from other organisations, for example, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association’.

Privacy and security implications:

No privacy or security implications have been identified that are directly associated with this report or its appendices. The respective strands of the improvement plan have undergone Data Protection Impact Screening and full impact assessments have been completed and reviewed where appropriate.

The report and its appendices are not protectively marked.

Duty to collaborate:

Each fire and rescue service is inspected individually. However, the latest report includes findings relating to the Service's ability to collaborate effectively with partners.

Health and safety implications:

There are no Health, Safety or Wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Environmental implications:

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

Progress against our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives are included within the updated improvement plan.

The Service has been judged as 'requires improvement' in the people pillar, along with a cause of concern and five recommendations relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. All the findings from the HMICFRS round two inspection report will be fully considered and prioritised to ensure continual improvement is established and maintained.

The Authority's equality, diversity, and inclusion objectives 2020-2025 – year 2 progress was presented to the Fire Authority on 15 June 2022.

Consultation and communication:

Specific areas identified for Service improvement are being captured in relevant plans and will be reported on in the usual way, ultimately to the Overview and Audit Committee.

Next steps -

- Report published on BFRS website

Background papers:

HMICFRS Home Page: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/>

10 November 2021 - Overview and Audit Committee: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/10/oa-item-18-10-11-21.pdf/>

10 November 2021 - Overview and Audit Committee: Prevention Evaluation - Phase one report 2021 <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/10/oa-item-17-17-10-21.pdf/>

16 February 2022 – Fire Authority: Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Report 2021

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/02/fa-item-10-16022022.pdf/>

16 March 2022 – Overview and Audit Committee: Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/03/oa-item-14-160322.pdf/>

15 June 2022 – Fire Authority – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives 2020-2025 – Year two update

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/05/fa-item-16.pdf/>

20 July 2022 – Overview and Audit Committee: Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update – May 2022

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/07/oa-item-13-2.pdf/>

12 October 2022 – Fire Authority: Prevention Strategy 2022-2025, Safety Centre Funding Agreement, People Strategy 2020-2025 Year Two Update

[Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority, 12/10/2022](#)

9 November 2022 – Overview and Audit Committee: His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update – November 2022

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/10/oa-091122-item-14.pdf/>

9 November 2022 – Overview and Audit Committee: Prevention Improvement Plan – Update Two

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/10/oa-091122-item-15.pdf/>

20 January 2023 - State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022



[State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022 - His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\) – Home \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	2021 Inspection report action plan - March 2023	N/A
2	Cause of concern revisit letter - Feb'23	N/A
3	FRS Sector Update letter Nov 2022	N/A

HMICFRS 2021 Inspection Report Action Plan - Dashboard

Last Update:

Jan-23

Recommendations	Total	Complete	On track	On hold/delayed	Not started	Overall RAG status
Effectiveness	3	1	1	1	0	
People	5	0	5	0	0	

Areas For Improvement	Total	Complete	On track	On hold/delayed	Not started	RAG status
Effectiveness	11	1	7	0	3	
Efficiency	5	2	2	1	0	
People	6	0	6	0	0	

Grand Totals					
30	4	21	2	3	

HMICFRS 2021 Inspection Report Action Plan - Effectiveness



Last Update: Jan-23

Sub-category	HMICFRS inspection report finding	Finding type	Overall RAG Status	PMO Project link	Delivery Lead	SMT Sponsor	Delivery Date	Jan 2023 Update	Project Status	Evidence to support completion
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	The service, through regular engagement with its local community, needs to build a more comprehensive profile of risk in its service area.	Area for improvement	On track	Corporate Plan SO3.10 Prepare 2025 – 2030 Public Safety Plan (PSP)	Corporate planning	COO	24/25	The Service has recently started participating in local Community Boards, sharing the work that is ongoing in the Service and asking these Communities what they would like to see.	On-Track	
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	The service should make sure its integrated risk management plan is informed by a comprehensive understanding of current and future risk. It should use a wide range of data to build the risk profile and use operational data to test that the risk profile is up-to-date.	Area for improvement	On track	Corporate Plan SO3.10 Prepare 2025 – 2030 Public Safety Plan (PSP)	Corporate planning	COO	24/25	Gap analysis against CRMP Fire Standard undertaken.	On-Track	
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	The service should make sure that the aims and objectives of prevention, protection and response activity are clearly outlined in its integrated risk management plan.	Area for improvement	Not started	Corporate Plan SO3.10 Prepare 2025 – 2030 Public Safety Plan (PSP)	Corporate planning	COO	24/25	This will be addressed in the 2025-30 CRMP.	Not started	
Preventing fires and other risks	The service should have plans in place for an effective system to define the levels of risk in the community.	Recommendation	On-Track	Prevention Improvement Plan	GC Prevention & Resilience and Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager	Prevention, Response and Resilience	01/11/2024	The Prevention improvement plan is now reporting as of 19.01.2023: Total recommendations- 60, Completed -21, On -track - 25, On hold/delayed - 12, Not started - 2. The Prevention strategy has been launched and communicated through the service utilising i:drive, Prevention meetings and station engagement sessions. Auditing process commencing in February through the Preparedness & Improvement process to evaluate current understanding of Prevention delivery in Response	On-Track	
				Corporate plan SO1.3 - Develop partner agencies understanding of the risks from fire and other emergencies. Implement a collaborative community risk methodology and targeting approach, to achieve a reduction on risk and impact of fire.	GC Prevention & Resilience and Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager	Prevention, Response and Resilience	01/04/2023	Guidance for community risk delivery is being developed and on track for target date	On-Track	
				Service Delivery Plans	GC Prevention & Resilience and Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager	Prevention, Response and Resilience	Annual	Auditing process commencing in February through the Preparedness & Improvement process to evaluate current understanding of Prevention delivery in Response.Prevention objectives and actions now being aligned to the Prevention strategy. Evaluation to commence of all actions logged against objectives set, identifying areas of strengths, weaknesses and procedural changes to be made.	On-Track	
				Safety Centre evaluation	GC Prevention & Resilience and Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager	Prevention, Response and Resilience	30/09/2022	Data request will go to the Safety Centre in Feb, prior to next funding payment release date(end of March 2023)	Complete	https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/09/fa-item-13-121022.pdf/
Preventing fires and other risks	A revision of its prevention strategy that clearly prioritises the people most at risk of fire and other emergencies, giving focus and direction to specialist teams.	Recommendation	Complete	Prevention Improvement Plan	GC Prevention & Resilience and Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager	Prevention, Response and Resilience	Q3 22/23	The Prevention strategy has been launched and communicated through the service utilising i:drive, Prevention bulletin, Prevention meetings and station physical engagement sessions.	Complete	https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/09/fa-item-12-121022.pdf/
Preventing fires and other risks	The review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies. This is to make sure they are managed effectively and those referrals with highest identified risk are prioritised.	Recommendation	Delayed	Prevention Improvement Plan	GC Prevention & Resilience and Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager	Prevention, Response and Resilience	01/11/2024	18.01.2023 Action plan developed following meeting with Response, Prevention and Admin managers.	Delayed	
Preventing fires and other risks	The service should understand the reasons for its decreasing number of prevention visits and consider how it can better target those who are most at risk of fire.	Area for improvement	On-Track	Prevention Improvement Plan	GC Prevention & Resilience and Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager	Prevention, Response and Resilience	01/11/2024	A review of the referral process and queues in PRMS has taken place with a 14 point action plan on next steps has been developed and agreed by Prevention and admin leads. Guidance documents have also been developed to support the admin team and PRMS users.	On-Track	Performance Measures can be found on page 55 & 56 of this pack: https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/09/special-meeting-of-the-executive-committee-7-october-2022.pdf/
Preventing fires and other risks	The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.	Area for improvement	Complete	Prevention Improvement Plan	GC Prevention & Resilience and Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager	Prevention, Response and Resilience	01/11/2024	Action completed - Phase 1 evaluation report presented to Overview and Audit Committee 10/11/21	Complete	10 November 2021 - Prevention Evaluation - Phase one report 2021 https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/10/oa-item-17-17-10-21.pdf/

HMICFRS 2021 Inspection Report Action Plan - Effectiveness



Last Update:		Jan-23								
Protecting the public through fire regulation	The service should make sure it aligns its increased resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.	Area for improvement	On-Track	Protection Uplift Programme	Group Commander Community & Business Safety Policy	Protection, Assurance and Development	01/03/2023	The risk based inspection programme started last year and prioritised initially high risk residential buildings. This was paused for a period of a couple of months at the end of last year due to PRMS changeover and will continue this year incorporating other sleeping risk commercial premises such as hotels and care homes. The training to operational staff has now largely been completed and there is some final work being undertaken to compile a training package to maintain cpd in Fire Safety to allow additional resources to undertake lower risk visits. Thematic reviews of domestic living areas above restaurants and take aways is beginning following on from a number of prohibitions of the living areas last year.	On-Track	
Protecting the public through fire regulation	The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process, so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.	Area for improvement	On-Track	BAU	Group Commander Community & Business Safety Policy	Protection, Assurance and Development	TBC - Subject to NFCC programme	All inspecting officers as part of their role are expected to undertake Fire Safety Training to level 4 diploma. This is the level nationally identified as the desired level for inspecting officers. As part of ongoing development and to maintain currency and skills, each inspecting officer is undertaking additional responsibilities and/or training throughout this year using the Protection Uplift funding. BFRS were not asked to supply anyone for the Building Safety multi-disciplinary teams but maintains the desire for all staff to get to that level which requires CPD evidence following on from level 4. This is the level for Third Party Accreditation but due to no requirement for the multi-disciplinary team this is not a priority for BFRS at present.	On-Track	
Protecting the public through fire regulation	The service should review its response to false alarms (called 'unwanted fire signals') to ensure operational resources are used effectively.	Area for improvement	On-Track	UwFS Review	Group Commander Community & Business Safety Policy	Protection, Assurance and Development	01/03/2023	The Protection team continue to engage with premises that have a high UwFS production and this continues to be an efficient use of time as it often identifies other Fire Safety issues. Following on from the change to PRMS it is hoped that all inspecting officers will encapsulate UwFS in the normal activity of their role requiring no particular dedication for the area.	On-Track	
				AFA review	TBC	Prevention, Response and Resilience	TBC	Scheduled to start in Q4 22/23. Added to the Thames Valley Collaboration plan to ensure a joined up approach.	Not started	
Protecting the public through fire regulation	The service should make sure it plans its work with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on how they can comply with fire safety regulations.	Area for improvement	On-Track	Protection Uplift Programme	Group Commander Community & Business Safety Policy	Protection, Assurance and Development	01/03/2023	Protection has recently added a dedicated page to the website specifically concerning the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and is engaging with responsible persons to ensure they comply with the new regulations, further pages and the consideration of leaflets (eg Fire Door checks) is being considered using the Protection Uplift funding.	On-Track	
Responding to fires and other emergencies	The service should assure itself that it understands what resources it reasonably requires to meet its foreseeable risk; it should make sure that all of its fire engines can be sufficiently resourced, if required.	Area for improvement	Not started	Not a current project	TBC	TBC			Not started	
Responding to fires and other emergencies	The service should make sure it consistently gives relevant information to the public to help keep them safe during and after all incidents.	Area for improvement	Not started	Not a current project	Communication, Marketing and Engagement Manager	Technology, transformation and PMO	Q3-Q4 22/23		Not started	

HMICFRS 2021 Inspection Report Action Plan - Efficiency



Last Update: Jan-23

Sub-category	HMICFRS inspection report finding	Finding type	Overall RAG Status	PMO Project link	Delivery Lead	SMT Sponsor	Delivery Date	Jan 2023 Update	Project Status	Evidence to support completion
Making best use of resources	The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive, that their time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible and in a more joined up way to meet the priorities in the IRMP.	Area for Improvement	On Track	Portfolio Management Office Project	Head of Technology, Transformation, and PMO	Finance and Assets	Q4 22/23	The PMO is now part of BAU.	Complete	
				Performance Management framework	Data Intelligence Team Manager	Technology, transformation and PMO	Q3 22/23	The BFRS Performance measures are presented quarterly to the Performance Monitoring Board, Executive Committee and Fire Authority. Further work is ongoing to build a framework that sits around the measures and look at how we drill down to the next level to support individual teams	On-Track	
Making best use of resources	The service should actively seek further collaboration opportunities with other Thames Valley fire services, to achieve value for money and better outcomes for the public.	Area for Improvement	Complete	Thames Valley Breathing Apparatus procurement	GC Technical	Protection, Assurance and Development	01/04/2023	This project is monitored and reviewed by the BFRS PMO and the Thames Valley collaboration boards	BAU	
				Emergency Service Mobile Communications Programme	Programme Manager	Technology, transformation and PMO	2025/26	Local and Regional aspects of this Programme have strong governance arrangements in place to ensure that the South Central region remains engaged with the national ESMCP whilst it undergoes a period of adjustment. Work remains active regarding the ESN coverage element of the project.	BAU	
				Thames Valley National Operational Guidance	GC Technical	Protection, Assurance and Development	Mar'22:Phase 1 Sept '22: gap analysis - implemented NOG	This project is monitored and reviewed by the BFRS PMO and the Thames Valley collaboration boards	BAU	
				Thames Valley Fire Investigation	GC Protection	Protection, Assurance and Development	01/10/2023	This project is monitored and reviewed by the BFRS PMO and the Thames Valley collaboration boards	BAU	
				2022/23 reset of the collaboration framework for Thames Valley	pan-directorate	Technology, Transformation and PMO		This action is complete	Complete	
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	The service needs to assure itself that it is maximising opportunities to improve workforce productivity and develop future capacity through use of innovation, including the use of appropriate and up-to-date technology.	Area for Improvement	On-Track	Various	pan-directorate	Technology, Transformation and PMO	Ongoing	Work continues to deliver the ICT strategy and ensure all staff have the correct technology - Microsoft licenses have been updated - New PC's trialled on station - Prevention tablets launched on station	On-Track	
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	The service should have a clear and sustainable strategic plan for the use of its reserves which promotes new ways of working.	Area for Improvement	Complete	BAU	Director of Finance and Assets	Finance and Assets	18/11/2020	This action is complete	Complete	https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/11/item-7-executive-committee-financial-strategy.pdf/ https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/reserves_strategy_2018-19_web.pdf/
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	The service needs to make sure that its fleet and estate strategies are regularly reviewed and evaluated to maximise potential efficiencies.	Area for Improvement	Delayed	BAU	Property Manager/Fleet Manager	Finance and Assets	23/24	The Property strategy is current and in date. A review is scheduled to ensure it remains in date after 2023	Complete	https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/property_strategy_2018_-_2023.pdf/
				BAU	Fleet Manager	Finance and Assets	01/04/2022	The Fleet Strategy update has been delayed to allow the Service Delivery team to review and forecast the service's future operational requirement	Delayed	

HMICFRS 2021 Inspection Report Action Plan - People



Last Update: Jan-23

Sub-category	HMICFRS inspection report finding	Finding type	Overall RAG status	PMO Project link	Delivery lead	SMT Sponsor	Delivery Date	Jan 2023 Update	Project Status	Evidence to support completion
Promoting the right values and culture	The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.	Area for Improvement	On Track	BAU improvement	SMT	CFO	Ongoing		On Track	Diary invites and SMT station visit timetable.
Promoting the right values and culture	The service should make sure that it effectively communicates its absence/attendance procedures for consistent application.	Area for Improvement	On Track	BAU improvement	Head of Human Resources	Human Resources	Monitoring	Covid report presented to December Business Transformation Board (BTB), further work has taken place - namely Pandemic group met on 10 January, to discuss recommendations and draft an implementation plan. Report to be re-presented to March BTB with amended recommendations. Covid reports are run on a weekly basis and anomalies with Fire Service Rota. Absence reports run on a monthly basis by the Data Intelligence team and shared with the Employee Relations team for follow up with managers and supporting employees back to work. Case management meetings held with managers. Absence statistics shared at Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee in December 2022.	On Track	Reports run by HR team with anomalies, monthly reports run by Data team and for HSWC
Getting the right people with the right skills	The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public.	Area for Improvement	On Track	Internal Governance review	Corporate planning Manager	Legal and Governance	Phase 1 January 2021 Phase 2 October 2021 - May 2022	This action is complete	Complete	SMB approval of Phase 2 recommendations on 17 May 2022. WPG and PMB dashboard, minutes and actions
				Workforce Planning Group	Head of Human Resources	COO	Ongoing	WPG meet monthly to discuss recruitment activity to achieve 300 operational employees. 18 Apprentices start on 1 March, plans in place to recruit for Apprentices and Transferees. Reports on progress given to Strategic Management Board and Executive Committee. Members workshop took place on 20 January, focusing on SMT succession planning - namely DCFO and CFO roles, which are due to end in November 2024.	On Track	Dashboard, minutes and actions. Promotion/Development Centre information. SMT succession and SMT remuneration and employee bonus reports - Pink papers
Getting the right people with the right skills	The service should assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained for their role.	Area for Improvement	On Track	Active Monitoring System project	GC Training and Assurance	Protection, Assurance and Development	05/03/2022	This action is complete	Complete	
				Operational Training Provider	GC Training and Assurance	Protection, Assurance and Development	01/05/2022	This action is complete	Complete	
				TNA	Organisational Development Manager	Protection, Assurance and Development	BAU	The TSG meets quarterly and receives updates on the current position of training procured by Dept Managers, against what was approved by the TSG at the beginning of the financial year from the submitted TNAs. It is at these meetings any in year requests for funding or any re-prioritised training bids are reviewed and considered against the available budget. In Q3 it was identified that we were reporting £80k of approved training, not yet having been procured. The OD team worked with dept manager to review their TNAs and what they realistically would be able to procure and deliver by the end of the financial year. This allowed some funding to be re-allocated to other priorities (Media Training & x6 ICS Level 1 places) and we are now forecasting to have fully spent the training budget within this financial year.	Complete	
				Internal Governance review / BTB	Organisational Development Manager / GC Training and Assurance	Protection, Assurance and Development	22/04/2022	Terms of reference in place for Training Strategy Group and Strategic & Tactical Appointments Board. Monthly newsletters published on outcomes from the appointments board to provide transparency, clarity and improve communication across the organisation.	Complete	
				Quality Assurance training records	Organisational Development Manager / GC Training and Assurance	Protection, Assurance and Development	On-going	The Maintenance of Operational Competencies (MOC) is under review with a paper being brought to SMT Feb/March 2023. This paper will outline the proposed actions moving forward reference improvements in this area.	On Track	

HMICFRS 2021 Inspection Report Action Plan - People



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Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Give greater priority to how it increases awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation	Recommendation	On Track	EDI objectives	Head of Human Resources EDI group	COO	01/04/2025	EDI data project in progress, to encourage employees to update their EDI data and the reasons why it is so important. EDI Group share message of the month with the organisation, current message is the EDI objectives, HMICFRS slideshow and EDI progress spreadsheet and actions/progress towards them. EDI articles shared and group member names to raise awareness.	On Track	
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	The service should make sure it has appropriate ways to engage with and seek feedback from all staff, including those from underrepresented groups	Recommendation	On Track	People Strategy	Head of Human Resources EDI group	COO	01/04/2025	People Strategy update to be prepared for October Fire Authority, work continues on raising awareness of the five strands of the People Strategy.	On Track	
				Culture Survey	Head of technology, Transformation and PMO	COO	Ongoing	Feedback from the listening workshops has been summarised and shared with the Service. The top 3 areas regarding 1) Number of staff, Uniform and training have been shared with the relevant teams. Whilst the Culture Survey group is normally the link between what staff said and the relevant group they have taken ownership of Reward and Recognition. A budget Challenge for 23/24 has been approved to support future work on Staff Engagement inc Staff feedback, People Networks and Employee Recognition	On Track	
				Senior Management Team	Head of Human Resources EDI group	COO		As per last update	On Track	
				People Networks	Head of technology, Transformation and PMO	Head of technology, Transformation and PMO	Q4 22/23	A budget challenge has been approved for 23/24 allowing work to kick off on setting up people network. The 1st network to be set up will be a Women's network.	On Track	
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	The service should make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographics and needs	Recommendation	On Track	EDI objectives	Head of Human Resources EDI group	COO	01/04/2025	Data categories refreshed and now entered into iTrent system. Stakeholders have agreed data categories and UAT being carried out across the systems that report on this data. FAQs drafted and sent for review/approval. Support from Comms Team has been requested for branding advice. Launch of new data planned for February 2023	On Track	
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	The service should ensure it has robust processes in place to undertake equality impact assessments, implement and review any actions required	Recommendation	On Track	EDI objectives	Head of Human Resources EDI group	COO	01/04/2025	Case Study to be written up, project complete	Complete	
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	The service should be more ambitious in its efforts to attract a more diverse workforce which better reflects the community it serves	Recommendation	On Track	Engagement, Attraction, Recruitment and Selection Framework (EARSF) -Delayed	HR Operations Manager	COO	01/04/2025		Delayed	
				Recruitment	HR Operations Manager	COO	Ongoing	Wholetime (WT) Apprentices - 5 Apprentice FF's commenced on 3 January 2023 on an Open FFDP. A further 16 Apprentice FF's and 1 Competent FF to start 1 March. FF Apprenticeship recruitment for October intake to open 20 February and close on 26 March 2023, with a view of taking 18 through to FSC and with a view of being able to create a pool for additional places that may become available Transferees - On Call & WT Crew Commander & Watch Commander (internal & External) Transferee recruitment expression of interest advert to open on 17 February. Recruitment Fairs, Skills Shows, National Apprenticeship Show and Have a go days planned in the diary throughout 2023. Updates given to SMB and Executive Committee. Officer and Councillor meeting 2 February. Change 100 - 2 internships planned for 2023, expressions of interest by 31 January. Role related testing report being prepared for March BTB	On Track	
				Development Centres	Organisational Development Manager	Protection, Assurance and Development	Ongoing	An in-year review was undertaken on the Operational Promotional Procedure to recognise temporary amendments to the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) requirements to enable a wider pool of applicants through the promotional process, this had a positive impact and we received an increase in the number of applications for the CC/WC/SC Development Centre in December 2022. GC Development Centre in planned for March and CC/WC in May 2023. Work continues to identify and understand further, the barriers to people going for development. These along with recommendations will be presented to BTB in March 2023.	On Track	

HMICFRS 2021 Inspection Report Action Plan - People



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				External	Head of Human Resources EDI group	COO	Ongoing		On Track	
				EDI objectives	Head of Human Resources EDI group	COO	01/04/2025	Meeting on 27 January to discuss EDI objectives for the following year	On Track	https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/09/fa-item-14-121022.pdf/
Managing performance and developing leaders	The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders	Area for Improvement	On Track	BAU improvement - Talent management	Organisational Development Manager	Protection, Assurance and Development	01/04/2023	An in-year review was undertaken on the Operational Promotional Procedure to recognise temporary amendments to the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) requirements to enable a wider pool of applicants through the promotional process, this had a positive impact and we received an increase in the number of applications for the CC/WC/SC Development Centre in December 2022. Work continues to identify and understand further, the barriers to people going for development. These along with recommendations will be presented to BTB in March 2023. The Development review, core learning pathways, supervisory leadership programme and coaching and mentoring are all on the plan for 2023/24	on Track	
				Leadership and Management framework	Organisational Development Manager	Protection, Assurance and Development	01/03/2023	Delivery of a leadership and management development programme (LMDP) to improve the effectiveness of existing managers as well as provide development opportunities and pathways for future managers and leaders of the organization has been completed in 2022/23. The programme has initially been delivered by an external provider and the content built upon the foundations contained within the NFCC Leadership Framework, the priority areas identified via the HMICFRS inspection. The next steps are for it to become acquisition training for all new managers/leaders and development for any potential future managers/leaders. The format for the delivery of this is forming part of the wider development review, alongside the introduction of the core learning pathways. It may be that this can be designed into a e-learning module, alongside the other managerial acquisition training and new manager needs as well as enrolment onto the NFCC supervisory leadership programme. Three senior managers within the service have been successful in securing places on to the sector's national Executive Leadership Programme. The Development review, core learning pathways, supervisory leadership programme and coaching and mentoring are all on the plan for 2023/24	On Track	
				Apprenticeship programme	Organisational Development Manager	Protection, Assurance and Development	Complete	The Authority continues to look for ways to effectively utilise and improve its apprenticeship programme. Whether that be through different delivery models, collaboration with other emergency services or local businesses, or options to increase the funding available to invest in apprenticeships for staff. Year on year the Authority has continued to exceed the public sector target, introduced as part of the Government's apprenticeships Reform agenda, whereby organisations in England must meet a minimum of 2.3% apprenticeship new starts each year, based on employee headcount. With current and previous apprentices now embedded across the Service, the Authority is proud of its progress in employing new apprentices and upskilling existing employees.	Complete	https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/07/oa-item-15-210721.pdf/
Managing performance and developing leaders	The service should put in place a system to actively manage staff careers, with the aim of diversifying the pool of future and current leaders	Area for Improvement	On track	Appraisal Process	Organisational Development Manager	Protection, Assurance and Development	Complete	Improved reporting to managers on their department's appraisal returns has been undertaken and this has resulted in action being taken to complete them. However overall returns rates are not at the required level therefore with the launch of the 23/24 appraisal cycle/year, the OD team are going to offer additional training sessions, including lunchtime drop in sessions to be held at HQ.	Complete	Internal file - Performance Monitoring Board meeting 30/09/21, item 11(ii) update on appraisal returns (official sensitive personal)
				Direct Entry	Organisational Development Manager	Protection, Assurance and Development	TBC	Awaiting NFCC project completion and White paper consultation	Not started	

HMI Matt Parr CB

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Jason Thelwell
Chief Fire Officer
Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

Councillor Simon Rouse
Chair of Fire Authority

24 February 2023

Dear Jason,

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service revisit

During May and June 2021, we inspected Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. During the inspection we identified areas of concern with respect to prevention and promoting fairness and diversity. We shared these causes of concern with you and made the following recommendations:

Recommendation

By 30 September 2021, the service should have the following in place:

- an effective system to define the levels of risk in the community;
- a revised prevention strategy that clearly prioritises the people most at risk giving focus and direction to specialist teams; and
- a review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals making sure that those with highest identified risk are prioritised.

Recommendation

By 31 January 2022, the service should:

- give greater priority to how it increases awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion;
- make sure it has appropriate ways to engage with and seek feedback from all staff;
- make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographics and needs;
- ensure it has robust processes in place to undertake equality impact assessments; and
- be more ambitious in its efforts to attract a more diverse workforce which better reflects the community it serves.

In March 2022, you submitted an action plan setting out how you intended to address the areas of concern and the recommendations.

During November 2022, we received further updates from you on the action plan. We didn't expect to see all the remedial work completed but were looking for evidence of progress.

Governance

The service has clearly shown a commitment and willingness to address these causes of concern. You have put in place appropriate governance arrangements to monitor progress against the plan. You have provided evidence of progress within your action plan and the minutes of the internal strategic meeting and fire authority meeting.

Action plan

The service has detailed action plans covering our causes of concern. The action plans are the responsibility of a designated person, with deadlines and assigned tasks. The service records completed actions and updates on tasks still to be addressed. You have also allocated additional resources to the prevention team to support the implementation of your plans.

Progress against the causes of concern

We were pleased to see that the service had put in place some resources and appropriate governance structures for the commitments in the prevention action plan. Some of the actions had been completed, including the review and development of the prevention strategy. During our revisit, we found staff in specialist teams understood the service's priorities set by the revised strategy. Some station-based staff also showed an understanding of them.

We were also pleased to see that the service had put in place additional resources and governance structures for the commitments in the equality, diversity and inclusion action plan. During our revisit, staff described a positive change in the way the service was raising awareness of and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. Staff surveys are conducted annually, and staff were positive about the actions being taken as a result. The service provided evidence of a revised equality impact assessment process and the equality, diversity and inclusion working group described its involvement in it.

However, we would like to see the service continue its progress implementing the action plans and communicate outcomes effectively to all its staff and the public. It still needs to improve its systems and processes to ensure those identified as being most at risk are prioritised and visited quickly.

We will continue to monitor the progress made and revisit the service in spring 2023 as part of our scheduled inspection programme. We will assess further evidence that the causes of concern have been addressed and the service provided to the public of Buckinghamshire has improved.

This letter will be published on our website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MP', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

HMI Matt Parr CB

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

HMI Roy Wilsher

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and
Rescue Services

Chief Fire Officers
Chairs of Fire Authorities
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners
Police and Crime Commissioners
Lead Fire Authority Members
Locally elected Mayors
Other FRS interested parties

28 November 2022

Dear colleague,

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (FRS) INSPECTION 2023-2025

I am writing as the SRO for FRS inspections to confirm our inspection programme for 2023-2025 and to update you on progress on our second round of fire and rescue (FRS) inspections.

Round 3

The inspection programme is reviewed at the end of each cycle to consider changes in the fire and rescue landscape and findings from our inspections. We also embedded evaluation into the approach. Thank you for sharing your views and supporting the development of the programme.

Our next round of inspection will report on the progress a service has made since the second round. Round 3 will also involve several changes from the previous round. These include:

a) Grading system

Activity will be focused on the evidence needed to demonstrate the 'characteristics of good' and we will move to a 5-tier grading system, with an additional grade of 'adequate'. This will provide a greater degree of information on where service improvements are needed, better reflect the performance of each service, and provide a common grading approach throughout our FRS and policing inspections.

The characteristics of good reflect those contained within our existing judgement criteria and can be found at Annex A. HMIs will use these characteristics when making their assessment. The categories of graded judgement in Round 3 will be:

- Outstanding – The FRS has substantially exceeded the characteristics of good performance.
- Good – The FRS has substantially demonstrated all the characteristics of good performance.
- Adequate – The FRS has demonstrated some of the characteristics of good performance, but we have identified areas where the FRS should make improvements.
- Requires improvement – The FRS has demonstrated few, if any, of the characteristics of good performance, and we have identified a substantial number of areas where the FRS needs to make improvements; and
- Inadequate – We have causes for concern and have made recommendations to the FRS to address them.

b) Pillar judgements

We will remove our graded judgements at pillar level for effectiveness, efficiency and how a service looks after its people, to better focus service improvements on the 11 principal areas of inspection. The 11 questions within the pillars will still be graded.

c) Report publication

To report in a timelier fashion, we will report our inspection findings in smaller batches, rather than the larger tranches used for previous rounds of our inspections.

Notification process

This letter is the initial notification to all FRSs of the preliminary inspection schedule, subject to confirmation of the Programme and Framework by the Home Secretary. Annex B provides you with this indicative schedule. This running order may be subject to change, which could be due to several reasons, including changes in performance or risk. Services affected by this will be informed of any planned changes at the earliest opportunity.

If industrial action is taken, then the inspectorate will need to consider the extent to which it is appropriate or feasible to continue with inspection activity as currently planned. I will write to you separately to outline any changes in our arrangements in more detail should this happen. Should any amendment or delay become necessary, it will be kept under review, and we will let you know in good time.

Document Request and Self-assessment

Our document request and self-assessment template, along with full instructions and guidance will be issued to your service liaison officer (SLO) 6-weeks before inspection fieldwork is due to start. Whilst we recognise that a service may feel it necessary to send additional documents within this period and throughout the inspection window, we ask that you:

- keep this to a minimum.
- make clear why the document is being sent e.g., why the document is necessary.
- and
- highlight the section(s) you wish to be reviewed.

Staff Survey

As with previous inspections, we will be conducting a staff survey for all staff currently working for English fire and rescue services. We rely on your help to promote this survey and I would be very grateful for anything you can do to encourage your staff to complete it and ensure we have a good representation of their views.

We will coordinate the launch of the staff survey with each inspection and will send all SLOs a separate email with further details, including wording that you may use on your intranet to advertise both the staff survey and our reporting line. I would be grateful if you could promote the survey within your service.

Independent Reporting Line

Our independent reporting line remains open. The purpose of this line is to provide all fire and rescue service staff with a mechanism to inform us of any issues or areas of good practice which they feel should be taken into consideration as part of a service's inspection. Please note that this is not a whistleblowing service, nor a route for complaints. It is simply a way in which we can gather additional evidence outside of fieldwork which, can be accessed through the HMICFRS website via this link: [Independent reporting line - HMICFRS \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/independent-reporting-line/).

Round 2 revisits

We are currently carrying out revisit activity for some services who were given a cause – or causes – of concern in round 2 to consider what progress is being made. We also intend to publish several reports early in 2023:

- Inspection reports for those services in Tranche 3
- State of Fire 2023

inspections to take place.

In the meantime, if you need any further information, please contact either me or Alex Hill, FRS Portfolio Director via alex.hill@hmicfrs.gov.uk

Thank you for your continued support of our inspection programme.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'RW', is positioned above the printed name.

HMI Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services