



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Policy and Strategy Committee

# **SERVICE LEARNING FROM COVID-19**

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 02 July 2021

**Purpose of Report:**

To update Members with learning from the Service's response to Covid-19 to date.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the contents of the report.
- Endorse the approach to learning from the response to Covid-19.

### **CONTACT OFFICER**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In March 2020, the Service responded to the outbreak of Covid-19 and implemented business continuity measures to address local and national restrictions that were introduced by Government.
- 1.2 The Service's Business Continuity Management Group (BCMG) met weekly to assist in managing these impacts. As part of the work undertaken, a 'lessons learnt' log was kept to capture learning from the events and actions of the Service.
- 1.3 During August 2020, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was commissioned by the Home Secretary to undertake a thematic inspection of all fire and rescue services in England. This inspection was to review the fire and rescue service responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.4 The focus of the inspections was to consider:
  - What is working well and what is being learnt;
  - How the fire and rescue sector is responding to the COVID-19 crisis;
  - How fire and rescue services are dealing with the problems they face;
  - What changes are likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.5 The inspection of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) was completed remotely by HMICFRS between 9 and 15 October 2020.
- 1.6 On 22 January 2021, NFRS received the inspection outcome from HMICFRS in the form of a letter which sets out their assessment of the overall effectiveness of the organisation during the pandemic.

## 2. REPORT

- 2.1 At the February Fire Authority meeting, the Service reported the outcomes of the HMICFRS Thematic Inspection and captured two areas of recommendation from the report. The report identified two areas of focus for the Service, and wider sector, to consider:
  - It should determine how it will adopt for the longer-term, the new and innovative ways of working introduced during the pandemic, to secure lasting improvements.
  - It should update its plans, including business continuity plans, using the lessons it has learned from the pandemic to date.
- 2.2 This paper updates Members on the actions taken by the Service to address these two actions and takes a reflective look at the last 12 months of Service response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 2.3 To form the Service's review of performance, to date, during the Covid-19 response, three key documents were reviewed:
- The 'Strategic Debrief' undertaken by Controlled Events as part of their support of BCM during the Service's response to Covid-19;
  - The Staff Survey undertaken by HMICFRS during their Covid-19 thematic inspections;
  - The 'Lessons Leant Log' from the BCMG.
- 2.4 **The strategic debrief** was facilitated through a debrief survey feedback and debriefing session with the SLT and highlighted 22 recommendations for consideration.
- 2.5 The debrief highlighted that NFRS demonstrated a proven capability to react effectively, respond and recovery to events such as Covid-19.
- 2.6 The recommendations covered a range of areas including revising strategic, tactical and departmental Business Continuity Management (BCM) plans, utilising ICT transformation to enhance the BCM response of Teams, revisiting mental health assessments and support in the light of Covid-19 and embedding practices that were demonstrated to have worked well during the response.
- 2.7 Key areas of good practice highlighted by the report were communications, engagement with representative bodies and minority groups within the workforce, liaison between teams and departments and the use of Strategic Intent documents to focus Service direction.
- 2.8 The 22 recommendations from the debrief are being progressed, overseen by the BCM Manager, to influence future ways of working.
- 2.9 HMICFRS undertook a **Staff Survey** of fire service personnel across England as part of their thematic inspection in to the response to Covid-19. NFRS returned a response rate of 22%, the same as the national average.
- 2.10 Notable positives from the survey include 56% of staff being satisfied with the level of development available to them (16% above national average), 81% of staff feeling their line manager had useful conversations about learning and development with them (36% above the national average), 90% of staff reporting a useful conversation with their manager about mental health (38% above national average) and 77% of staff agreeing that they had been provided with appropriate resources to work in a different location due to Covid (18% more than the national average).
- 2.11 The survey also highlights that there were some areas for improvement. These are particularly that only 47% of staff agreed that they had an appropriate level of Covid-19 PPE to do their job safely, that 12% of staff felt discriminated against at work in the last 12 months and that only 36% of

responding operational staff felt they would be supported by the Service if they used operational discretion at an incident.

- 2.12 The full findings of the survey have been reviewed to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to address, assure and learn from the highlighted areas, in conjunction with the Service's current action plan to support the internal 2020 Staff Survey.
- 2.13 The Service's '**Lessons Learnt Log**' has been compiled since April 2020 with departmental and organisational learning. The log details learning from the BCM period and includes entries that have already been enacted (using table-top exercises to augment practical training), entries which will be used in future planned projects (several references to agile working which is now a Year Three Strategic Priority Area) and entries which require further exploration (the use of digital engagement to support SWVs).
- 2.14 Actions from the log are being reviewed and developed by the BCM manager and Heads of Departments to determine what is going to be implemented as standard practice, discontinued once 'Business as Usual' returns or noted for the future.
- 2.15 Departments and Teams continue to review their practices and capture 'lessons learnt' on the log which is periodically reviewed by the BCM Group.
- 2.16 The Service continues to proudly support partners in the community effort against Covid-19. Since March 2020, the Service has:
- Delivered over 12,500 food and medication parcels to vulnerable members of the community;
  - Administered over 54,000 vaccinations;
  - Built 20 community testing sites;
  - Trained 288 community volunteers;
  - Carried out over 1000 community tests.
- 2.17 The Service continues to work actively with partners in response to community needs and is balancing this with the Service's core service delivery which has seen the resumption of business and domestic related safety activities, in line with the easing of restrictions.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

## **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Service has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement under the Local Government Act, 1999.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The Service has utilised the learning from the response to Covid-19 to develop and enhance its business continuity plans and preparedness.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the contents of the report.
- 10.2 Endorse the approach to learning from the response to Covid-19.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

John Buckley  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**