



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

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority

# UPDATE ON THE 'AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT' FROM THE 2021 HMICFRS INSPECTION

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 22 September 2023

## **Purpose of Report:**

To present Members with an update on the Service's response to the 'areas for improvement' that were identified following the 2021 inspection of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.

## **Recommendations:**

That Members note the progress to address the improvements required and continue to support the approach of the Chief Fire Officer for addressing the 'areas for improvement.'

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 As part of the national reform agenda for the fire and rescue service, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) undertakes independent inspections of all 44 English fire and rescue services (FRSs). All FRSs have now been inspected twice. Round 1 was undertaken 2018/19 and Round 2 undertaken 2021/22.
- 1.2 At the meeting of the Fire Authority in September 2022, Members were presented the report from HMICFRS following the Round 2 inspection of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) in 2021.
- 1.3 Accompanying the report, Members were presented with a paper detailing four 'areas for improvement' (AFIs) that had been highlighted by HMICFRS. AFIs are reported where an inspection identifies an aspect of a FRS's practice, policy or performance that falls short of the expected standard.
- 1.4 It was agreed that scrutiny and monitoring of progress of these actions would be facilitated through the Fire Authority Committee structure, with progress reports being presented to Members.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 Each AFI has been allocated to a lead officer with clear milestones and expected outcomes. Within the Service, progress against these timelines is monitored and reported through the monthly Community Risk Management Plan Assurance Board (CRMP AB), chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.
- 2.2 Since the HMICFRS report was published in July 2022, the Service has undertaken a gap analysis against areas of work that were already being progressed under the current Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). This has assured that work to address the AFIs was either already planned or has now been included in the Service's annual delivery planning.
- 2.3 The four AFIs reported against NFRS are:
  - AFI 1 – the Service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.
  - AFI 2 – the Service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.
  - AFI 3 – the Service should assure itself that staff understand how to get well-being support.

- AFI 4 – the Service should ensure that, when responding to a 999 call, mobile data terminals (MDTs) are reliable to allow staff to access risk information.

## **AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 1**

- 2.4 NFRS has identified improvements in the Service's approach to evaluation. This has included a review of an evaluation framework to embed in Service activity, and engagement with the wider sector to identify best practice.
- 2.5 Evaluation criteria are incorporated into the Year Two Annual Delivery Plan, Service projects and future collaborations. Evaluation then forms part of internal governance as those programmes are reviewed. Further to this, a Community Safety Committee update in January 2023 outlined that a PhD student from Nottingham Trent University has been engaged to undertake an external evaluation of the Service, with reporting to identify improvements due at the end of 2023.
- 2.6 The Service has recruited a Programme Manager to set up and manage the programme office. This role will ensure the change programme and work initiatives are suitably scoped to ensure their benefits are realised and evaluated.
- 2.7 Following the implementation of the above areas, this AFI is anticipated to be closed early 2024.

## **AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 2**

- 2.8 The Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) is the method by which the Service ensures that its fire protection activities are targeted at the highest risk premises.
- 2.9 A Community Safety Committee update in January 2023 outlined that a PhD student from Nottingham Trent University has been engaged to undertake an external evaluation of the RBIP. The report is due at the end of 2023.
- 2.10 The RBIP is live, but with a technical fault impacting the data sources it draws from. This has led to a small number of discrepancies in calculating the risk rating of premises – those considered to be high and very high.
- 2.11 The RBIP is anticipated to be fully functional by November 2023. Further evaluation against the AFI will be completed after the external report is received, with anticipated closure in early 2024.

## **AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 3**

- 2.12 The Service provides information on well-being and employee support provisions on MyNet (the intranet) however, feedback from HMICFRS and the internal staff survey highlighted that some employees were unaware of the support available. The inspection from HMICFRS also highlighted concerns

raised by operational crews that there was a lack of consistency in post-incident support.

- 2.13 The Service has undertaken a review of the Well-being Strategy and Post Critical Incident Support (PCIS) procedure, to update and formalise support mechanisms. There has been subsequent training on PCIS processes to middle and supervisory managers.
- 2.14 MyNet well-being and support provision information has been made more prominent and referenced frequently on internal communications. These include personal health portals and employee benefits.
- 2.15 An independent survey commissioned via Derby University is assessing mental health provision. Briefings on mental health information have been undertaken, which included a call for employee mental health advocates and the creation of a new Mental Health Network. Subsequent training is plotted for Mental Health Advocates.
- 2.16 This AFI will be closed in January 2024, with the roll out of the revised Post-Incident Support Policy, reporting from Derby University and the implementation of the Well-being Communications Plan.

#### **AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 4**

- 2.17 The requirement for accurate risk information and reliability of MDTs was an AFI highlighted by HMICFRS in the 2019 inspection. That AFI was closed in June 2022. This new AFI seeks to ensure that the Service continues to assure and improve the reliability of MDTs and access to risk information.
- 2.18 The Service has rolled out new MDTs to the full fleet of fire appliances. The new devices offer greater resilience, functionality and useability for crews as well as improving the reliability issues experienced previously.
- 2.19 The MDT replacement programme is being carried out in conjunction with Leicestershire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services as part of the tri-service collaboration.
- 2.20 To enhance the resilience and availability of risk information for crews, the Service's ICT department has commenced user engagement as part of the scoping and procurement of a secondary mobile device. This AFI is anticipated to be closed early 2024.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The cost of the MDT replacement is funded from a £100k capital project.
- 3.2 Costs relating to the remaining AFIs have been contained within existing budgets.

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

- 4.1 Scoping is ongoing regarding the potential for a post to support organisational evaluation.
- 4.2 Training and development of staff was required to assure the embedding of well-being and post-incident procedures. This was contained within the current annual training cycle.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because the information contained in this report does not relate to a change in policy or procedure.

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

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

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a duty on NFRS in respect of the delivery of its services to communities.
- 7.2 The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory duty on NFRS to '*secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised*'. The reporting of Service Delivery's performance ensures that the Service is focusing on key objectives as set by the Fire Authority and continuous improvement. This ensures that Members can apply effective scrutiny to be satisfied that statutory obligations are being met.
- 7.3 The Police and Crime Act (2017) Chapter 4 Section 11, outlines that the English inspectors must inspect, and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of, fire and rescue authorities in England.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 It is incumbent on the Service to demonstrate continuous improvement and learning as a result of the outcome of HMICFRS inspections.
- 8.2 The MDT replacement programme will help to mitigate the risks associated with health, safety and welfare by ensuring operational risk information is available to crews at incidents.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Where possible, the Service is seeking to work with the well-being team from Nottinghamshire Police to share activities and messaging.
- 9.2 The MDT replacement is being delivered in conjunction with Leicestershire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services as part of tri-service collaboration arrangements.
- 9.3 Discussions with Nottinghamshire Police and regional FRSs continue in relation to their experience of HMICFRS inspections and how NFRS can learn from that preparation for future inspections.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the progress to address the improvements required and continue to support the approach of the Chief Fire Officer for addressing the 'areas for improvement'.

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

None.

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