



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

HIS MAJESTY’S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES – AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT CLOSURE REPORT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 23 February 2024

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on the progress of the four areas for improvement identified in His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services’ (HMICFRS) 2021/22 report for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the progress made by the Service in the areas for improvement identified by HMICFRS from the previous inspection.
- Authorise the closure of the three outstanding areas for improvement.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is the inspectorate body for fire service inspections in England. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) was inspected during September 2021. On 27 July 2022, HMICFRS published its findings from the NFRS inspection. NFRS's inspection report identified four 'areas for improvement' (AFI) for the Service.
- 1.2 A report was submitted to the Fire Authority on 3 September 2022, with the recommendations that Members noted the outcome of the HMICFRS inspection report and approved monitoring of progress against the four areas for improvement via the Fire Authority Committee structure.
- 1.3 To date, the AFI relating to understanding of well-being provision by staff was closed by the Policy and Strategy Committee at its meeting on 2 February 2024
- 1.4 This report seeks approval from the Authority to close the remaining three open AFIs, which due to Committee cycle timings, the Authority will otherwise not have the opportunity to consider prior to the Service's round three inspection which commences in March 2024.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 To address the AFIs, the Service undertook a gap analysis against areas of work that were already being progressed under the current Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). This assured that work to address the AFIs was either already planned or was included in the Service's Annual Delivery Planning (ADP) schedules.
- 2.2 Given the timing of the HMICFRS inspection and in consultation with Group Leaders, it was agreed to report the outstanding AFIs to full Fire Authority and not individual Committees, with recommendation for their closure.
- 2.3 There are three AFIs the Service is seeking approval to close. These are as follows:
 1. The Service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme (RBIP) prioritises the highest risks and included proportionate activity to reduce risk.
 2. The Service should ensure that when responding to a 999 call, mobile data terminals (MDT) are reliable to allow staff to access risk information.
 3. The Service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews, and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.

RISK-BASED INSPECTION PROGRAMME

- 2.4 The RBIP is used by the Service's Fire Protection Department to ensure that fire safety inspections undertaken as part of the Service's statutory duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order are targeted at the highest risk non-residential buildings.
- 2.5 Work has been ongoing throughout 2023 to rectify issues with technology and data systems which support the generation of the risk based inspection programme. This work has now been successfully completed and the improved RBIP has been in use by the Protection Team throughout Quarter 4 of 2023/24.
- 2.6 An internal feedback process is in place to provide assurance around the quality of records being generated by the RBIP and this will be subject to routine performance monitoring by the department going forward.
- 2.7 The Service is assured that the RBIP technology is now supporting the allocation of inspection resources to those premises of higher risk, and that internal monitoring and assurance processes are embedded into business as usual to monitor this going forward.
- 2.8 The Service is also incorporating the recently issued National Fire Chiefs Council guidance, ensuring that the RBIP follows national good practice to discharge its statutory role as a regulator.

ACCESSING RISK INFORMATION ON THE MOBILE DATA TERMINALS

- 2.9 MDT are the technological solution which enables operational crews to access a variety of risk information during operational incidents. A primary MDT is available on all fire appliances, hosting risk information including mapping, operational guidance documents, premise information and plans and hydrant location data.
- 2.10 For additional resilience, the Service has implemented a 'back-up' secondary MDT for the Officer-in-Charge (OiC), or other crew members to access, as required. This takes the form of a handheld tablet which has the benefit of being demountable from the cab and can be carried on the incident ground.
- 2.11 Since the time of the previous inspection, both Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services have upgraded the primary MDTs in appliances as part of a hardware and software upgrades from the mobilising system provider Systel.
- 2.12 The Service has been working closely with Systel to ensure that software issues associated with the original rollout of the MDT operating system have been resolved. The MDTs are now operating on Version 15 of the software and have seen significantly improved performance and stability as a result.

- 2.13 Due to the safety critical role MDTs play for operational response colleagues, close monitoring of system stability and fault reporting remains in place to ensure any issues are identified and addressed as a priority.
- 2.14 The Service is satisfied the work undertaken with Systel, coupled with the secondary device, means that there remains a resilient model for the provision of risk information to frontline firefighters and is therefore recommending that this AFI be closed and will continue to be subject to ongoing assurance.

EVALUATION OF COLLABORATION ACTIVITIES.

- 2.15 The inspection identified that the Service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity. The AFI was delegated to Policy and Strategy Committee for monitoring.
- 2.16 In the report, the Inspectorate noted that *'We are satisfied that the Service monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. But its reviews and evaluation are limited in scope and aren't used to learn or change decisions. We have seen evidence of evaluation of the control room merger with DFRS. However, this is largely focused on financial results and hasn't considered other benefits or risks that have occurred as a result of the merger.'*
- 2.17 As a consequence of the AFI, the Service has resourced a Corporate Programme Office which has reviewed the Service's evaluation framework and developed a two-fold evaluation strategy for future projects. This will ensure that formal evaluation and benefit realisation are included within the initial scope for all projects and programmes governed through the Programme Office with reporting through established internal governance structures.
- 2.18 In addition, the Service is continuing to work with Nottingham Trent University to review a range of projects and workstreams as part of an ongoing PhD student placement. This work will continue into 2024/25.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because it is not required for this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental and sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory duty on the Service to 'secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised'.
- 7.2 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

Successful completion of the improvement work associated with the AFIs mitigates a number of risks to the Authority. In addition, the acknowledgement and addressing of the AFIs demonstrates the Authority and Service's ongoing commitment to the HMICFRS inspection process and ambitions for continuous improvement.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the progress made by the Service in the AFIs identified by HMICFRS from the previous inspection.
- 10.2 Authorise the closure of the three outstanding AFIs.

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

None.

Craig Parkin
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