

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Panel	Scrutiny & Audit
Date	21 January 2021
Title of Report	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)– Progress and update report
By	Liz Ridley, Assistant Director Planning & Improvement
Lead Officers	Sharon Milner, Planning & Intelligence Manager

Background Papers	Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19 - East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/frs-assessment-2018-19-east-sussex/
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Appendices	None
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Implications

CORPORATE RISK	✓	LEGAL	✓
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
FINANCIAL		POLITICAL	
HEALTH & SAFETY		OTHER (please specify)	
HUMAN RESOURCES		CORE BRIEF	

PURPOSE OF REPORT	To provide the Panel with an update on the Service's activity in relation to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services(HMICFRS) inspection process. The report includes a summary of progress taken to address the "areas for improvement" identified in the first inspection, the results of the COVID19 inspection undertaken in November 2020 and provides information regarding preparations for the next inspection in early 2022.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	The purpose of this report is to provide the Panel with an update on the Service's activity in relation to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection process.
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The report includes a summary of progress to address the seventeen "areas for improvement" identified in the first inspection. The areas are detailed within the report and a progress update is provided for each. Steady progress has

been made in the areas for improvement which are contained in the Service's business plans. This report draws together a summary of progress in those areas.

Secondly the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the postponement of the round two inspections and the Home Office commissioned HMICFRS to undertake mini COVID-19 inspections of all fire and rescue services. The feedback received from the mini inspection at East Sussex was favourable at the time. The HMICFRS are set to publish a letter with the outcome of the inspection late January.

Finally, round 2 of the HMICFRS inspections are scheduled to start from early 2021. All Fire and Rescue Services have been split into 3 tranches with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (ESFRS) remaining in tranche 3. This means that the inspection will take place Spring / Summer 2022. This report updates the Panel on progress with the Service's preparations for the next inspection.

RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to note the progress against the areas identified for improvement, the plans for the next inspection process and is asked to make any additional comments or observations.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in 2019. Steady progress has been made in the areas for improvement which are contained in the Service's business plans. This report draws together a summary of progress in those areas.
- 1.2 In March 2020 HMICFRS suspended all planned inspection work to enable Services to focus on the COVID-19 response. During the third quarter of 2020 Services were inspected as to how effectively they responded to COVID-19. A letter with the results of this inspection is expected week commencing 25 January.
- 1.3. Preparations are being made for the next Service wide inspection due spring to summer 2022 with the report being published in the winter of 2022. During March 2021 a mock inspection will be undertaken assessing progress and evidence against the service's areas for improvement. This process will start the next round of evidence gathering for the 2022 inspection.

2 MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The findings from the first inspection in June 2019 concluded that ESFRS was good at responding to fires and other emergencies and good at responding to national risks. The service was good at using its resources efficiently and had realistic and robust financial plans in place. Furthermore it was good at making its services affordable now and in the future. Areas for improvement included how the service understands the risk of fire and other emergencies; the way it prevents fires and other risks; and how it protects the public through fire regulation. Additionally, how ESFRS looks after its people required improvement.
- 2.1.1 The categories of graded judgment are: outstanding; good; requires improvement; and inadequate. The three pillar level judgements provide the public (and services) with a clear and succinct summary of findings and will help services to promote improvements where necessary.
- Good is based on policy, practice or performance that meets pre-defined grading criteria that are informed by any relevant national operational guidance or standards. If the policy, practice or performance exceeds what is expected for good, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of outstanding.
 - If there are shortcomings in the policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of requires improvement.
 - If there are serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of inadequate.
- 2.1.2 Throughout the inspections HMICFRS issued Areas for Improvement (AFI) or a Cause for Concern (CFC) in their final reports. If a cause for concern was identified this would trigger a follow up visit to that service to assess progress. ESFRS received areas for improvement but no areas for concern were identified.

2.1.2 The following table contains the overarching questions and inspection focus along with the judgment received and the area for improvement.

Effectiveness	Overall	Requires Improvement
How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?		
Inspection focus	Judgement	Areas for improvement
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	Requires improvement	The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.
		The service should ensure it shares risk information consistently across the service.
Preventing fires and other risks	Requires improvement	The service should ensure it carries out home safety visits in a timely manner.
		The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.
Protecting the public through fire regulation	Requires improvement	The service should ensure that its risk-based inspection programme targets its highest-risk premises.
		The service should ensure it addresses effectively the burden of fire false alarms (termed 'unwanted signals').
		The service should ensure it has effective arrangements for providing specialist protection advice out of hours.
Responding to fires and other emergencies	Good	The service should improve the availability of its on-call fire engines to respond to incidents.
		The service should ensure firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information
Responding to national risks	Good	The service should ensure firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information including cross-border risks.

		The service should ensure it is well-prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to a terrorist-related incident and that its procedures for responding are understood by all staff and are well tested.
Efficiency	Overall	Good
How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?		
Inspection focus	Judgement	Areas for improvement
Making best use of resources	Good	The service needs to ensure that it allocates its resources appropriately and prioritises activities that address the risks identified in its integrated risk management plan
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	Good	None
People	Overall	Requires Improvement
Inspection focus	Judgement	Areas for improvement
How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?		
Promoting the right values and culture	Requires improvement	The service should make sure its values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated by all staff.
		The service should have effective means to monitor the working hours of its staff.
Getting the right people with the right skills	Requires improvement	The service should develop a workforce plan that takes full account of the necessary skills and capabilities it needs to carry out its integrated risk management plan
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Requires improvement	The service should ensure it takes timely action in response to feedback or concerns from its staff.
Managing performance and developing leaders	Requires improvement	The service should ensure it has mechanisms in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation.

- 2.2 Each of the areas for improvement is detailed below with a commentary of progress from the responsible strategic lead.
- 2.3 **The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.**
- 2.3.1 There is a Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) replacement programme confirmed as part of Project 21. This programme ensures that the mobile data terminals are linked to the to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database to ensure that timely and accurate data is available to crews. Previously the information was paper based. An Action Learning Set has been established to review and amend the whole of the Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) process that will result in updated policy and procedures. The work that is being undertaken to transfer the site specific risk information onto the CRM database has generated interest from other fire and rescue services. The two Incident Command vehicles have received mobile data terminals with electronic site specific risk information on and all paper copies have now been removed from all workplaces.
- 2.4 **The service should ensure it shares risk information consistently across the service.**
- 2.4.1 To ensure the project is delivered across the service a dedicated member of the Operational Planning and Policy team has been given the task of delivering against the outcomes from the action learning set. This will ensure that the process for sharing risk information across the service is consistent. Two types of SSRIs will be implemented a full and a reduced one. The full SSRI will be available for all operational personnel and grey book business safety inspectors and a reduced SSRI will be available for safe and well advisors. There is a process whereby a reduced SSRI can be escalated to a full SSRI undertaken by the relevant trained staff at the appropriate level. All individuals regardless of role will have access to risk information if they are attending domestic or commercial premises.
- 2.5 **The service should ensure it carries out home safety visits in a timely manner.**
- 2.5.1 Since the inspection the Home Safety Visit (HSV) manual note has been revised and updated and provides the full detail on policy, procedure and activity descriptions. A hierarchy of risk is applied to every HSV that is undertaken (with the exception of a HSV immediately after an incident which is offered there and then). Whichever route the referral is submitted an administrator risk rates the visit and where appropriate ensures that it takes priority over other visits already booked in with staff. This ensures that the appropriate resource is allocated and the timescales are attached to the risk profile. Complex cases are undertaken by Safe & Well Advisers who have received a higher level of training and are not at risk of being called away to an operational incident.
- 2.5.2 A fact sheet has been developed that provides information on the hierarchy of risk, the risk rating and timelines that visits are to be undertaken within. We have also identified a process that ensures that where we are physically unable to undertake a visit (the individual is on holiday, in hospital etc.) the visits is rearranged to be undertaken at a later date.

2.5.3 A training programme for operational crews has been developed (paused due to COVID-19) and upon completion of training we will implement our Quality Assurance (QA) framework that will require Station Managers to quality assure a set minimum number of HSVs undertaken by operational staff. This QA framework is already in place for Safe & Well Advisers (support staff). A performance monitoring process, led by the Community Safety Manager and Safer Communities Management Team is being developed in order to monitor home safety visits against the times set.

2.6 **The service should evaluate its prevention work so it understands the benefits better.**

2.6.1 Every prevention strand is supported by an initiatives library resource available to staff which provides a rationale for the activity, an equality impact assessment, an evaluation tool and any physical resources that may be necessary. The evaluation is a mandatory element of the prevention activity and staff are being reminded of the availability of these resources and the importance of completing evaluations which is now included in the End of Month performance returns for Watches.

2.6.2 The content of the initiatives library is monitored and updated by the appropriate prevention strand coordinators within the Community Safety team. This is monitored by the Community Safety Manager and Safer Communities Management Team through the performance monitoring process. Further to this is the quality assurance process that in the revised manual note for home safety visits. Station managers will be expected to undertake a number of quality assurance processes, including shadowing crews to ensure compliance with policy. These visits will be monitored and form part of the monthly monitoring reports.

2.7 **The service should ensure that its risk-based inspection programme targets its highest-risk premises.**

2.7.1 The service has revised the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) and a new manual note has been agreed. Business Safety Inspectors conduct audits at those premises that the RBIP identify as being of higher risk to determine the appropriate level of enforcement required, so as to ensure that all relevant persons are safe from fire. Our operational crews also visit other low risk commercial premises to gather premises information that is fed back into the RBIP data base and to familiarise themselves with the risks to enhance firefighter safety. Additional information and data is also collected through other interactions, such as those arising from complaints, 'after-the-fire' inspections and collaborative working with our partners, including Sussex Police, Local Authorities and Immigration and Enforcement Agency.

2.7.2 Part of the Protection Team's work is to actively engage with the business community. It does this through its Primary Authority Partnership scheme, providing assured advice and through other statutory partners to deliver information and training on how business' can comply with legislation and improve fire safety, making them safer for their staff and the public. The Business Assurance Framework is in place and sets out how the service will review the delivery of the business safety function. All of the policies have been reviewed. In addition there has been a performance report created that covers all the High Risk inspection programme.

2.8 The service should ensure it addresses effectively the burden of fire false alarms (termed ‘unwanted signals’).

2.8.1 Proposals regarding our attendance at false alarms and demand reduction were contained in the latest Integrated Risk Management Plan. The outcome of which is that we will no longer automatically attend fire alarms operating in low risk commercial premises. There is an action learning set that has the reference of unwanted fire alarms and they are reviewing the policies. We are in the process of advertising a secondment of a demand reduction manager to support this work who will work with businesses to reduce the numbers of unwanted fire signals attended through a range of measures. The post holder will be will be involved in the delivery of a number of key work streams including;

- Undertaking assessments and inspections of buildings generating unwanted fire alarm activations
- Engagement with internal stakeholders and external partners
- Assist or lead in design and delivery of any required training
- Lead meetings and present to audiences as necessary and appropriate
- Modify, amend or create Service Policy and/or Manual notes as required
- Produce documentation and formal reports

In addition to this, we are seconding a senior officer from London Fire Brigade to undertake an independent review of our unwanted fire signal policies.

2.9 The service should ensure it has effective arrangements for providing specialist protection advice out of hours.

2.9.1 A revised structure and job descriptions were approved at the Senior Leadership Team in February 2020. The posts and terms of conditions were reviewed in order to include an additional out of hours cover provision on a rota basis. The introduction and delivery of a tiered approach to recruitment and development and associated pay scales, will support the retention of staff and improve the resilience and sustainability of the Business Safety department to meet the Fire Authorities’ statutory responsibilities. The new job descriptions, associated rates of pay and revised contract of employment, will provide a more flexible structure, ensuring at all times the Fire Authority is well provisioned to deliver its protection related statutory functions, including outside normal working hours. It’s is proposed in the revised job description to include a requirement to work a proportion of the contracted hours (up to maximum 100 hrs) during any 12 month period at evenings/nights and weekends, with these arrangements managed at local level with suitable prior notice being given. Recruitment of staff continues and to supplement this there have been additional level 2 officers trained to provide cover across the rota.

2.10 The service should ensure firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information including cross-border risks.

2.10.1 The policy and procedures have been reviewed by the action learning set. Changes have been made to the layout and information held within the Site Specific Risk Inspections (SSRI). Work is underway to instigate a process whereby all neighbouring services upload their risk premises SSRIs to resilience direct. This

information will then be downloaded into the mobile data terminals on appliances to ensure that all ESFRS appliances have the required information on over the border risks. The sharing of this information will be easier once there is a combined control room with our neighbouring services. Over the border risks with Kent will be shared manually and added onto the database. Resilience direct will be utilised going forward to share the information with Kent.

2.11 The service should ensure it is well-prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to a terrorist-related incident and that its procedures for responding are understood by all staff and are well tested.

2.11.1 The service is well prepared to respond to a terrorist incident with our Marauding Terrorist Attack responders with National Interagency Liaison Officer protocols and the MTA light team will be supported by West Sussex FRS. National leads for with this reference are holding conversation regarding the latest joint operational procedures and are having ongoing discussions with representative bodies. Training will be developed for non-specialist staff once agreement has been reached.

2.12 The service needs to ensure that it allocates its resources appropriately and prioritises activities that address the risks identified in its integrated risk management plan.

2.12.1 The proposals in the latest Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) will assist in increasing operational cover and fire engine availability in rural areas by enhancing contracts for our on-call crews and by ensuring that we are able to increase our core / minimum fire engine availability from 15 (under our current policy arrangements) to 18 through the Operational Resilience Plan (ORP). Implementation of the ORP fully meets the service risk profile, as well as meeting the service expected demand levels and will provide an improved response model in ESFRS. The ORP approach is designed to ensure our response provision not only meets risk and activity levels but also provides the optimum geographical spread. The plan will allow us to improve community safety, improve our resources (for example, through providing an additional fire appliance in Hastings), and free up capacity for staff to do more prevention and business safety work, all areas which the HMICFRS has identified as important.

2.12.2 The data behind the IRMP is based on a comprehensive risk profile called the strategic assessment of risk. This analysis was further disaggregated into 24 station profiles. Over 100 data sets were included and analysed, including indices of multiple deprivation, infrastructure data, emergency planning and benchmarking data, along with 9 years' worth of incident data which equated to 100,291 incident records. The station profiles are the most comprehensive local risk profile ever generated at the service and will be a valuable and essential document for stations in the future. The safer communities strategy contains the thematic plans and inform the full range of activities to mitigate the risk including home safety and safe and well checks, youth engagement programmes, arson reduction and road and water safety initiatives. Activities are developed at station level via our partnership work and engagement with public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Station Profiles are used by local teams to decide which initiatives to carry out, using a risk-based weighting as a guide to determine allocation of resource. Where community risk is high or our response

time is slower, we are more proactive in our community safety. This approach is set out in more detail within our Safer Communities Strategy.

2.13 The service should make sure its values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated by all staff.

2.13.1 A significant amount of work has been undertaken over the last year in preparation for the launch and delivery of the Leadership and Behaviour Framework (LBF). The framework is based on the national Fire Service's 'Inspiring Leadership Framework', and aims to inspire leadership in the service and support current and future leaders by giving guidance on the way all staff are expected to operate, both individually and as teams. It is being introduced to provide a consistent approach to leadership within the service, regardless of role or function, and to support a workplace culture that encourages individual and service-wide promotion of ESFRS values - accountability, integrity, pride, respect – through strong leadership. To accompany the launch of the LBF, there is a training and communications plan. From January, and throughout 2021, there will be workshops and training sessions. All colleagues will attend a training sessions that has been designed on the managerial level they are in the organisation. The sessions include team challenges that look at the impact of management behaviour. The sessions will provide the core skills required to help staff model the right behaviours and hold teams to the expected standards.

2.14 The service should have effective means to monitor the working hours of its staff.

2.14.1 Electronic input of all working hours is available through the services Fire watch system for all staff. The latest upgrade will have reports that will enable monitoring of time worked. With the second part of the project we will link overtime through fire watch to be able to monitor the number of hours undertaken by staff. This is not yet live on the system but will be progressed this year.

2.15 The service should develop a workforce plan that takes full account of the necessary skills and capabilities it needs to carry out its integrated risk management plan.

2.15.1 The Service has written and published its Strategic Workforce plan 2019-21. A number of themes for focus have been identified and all have a number of actions that sit under each area outlining the actions that will deliver the plan. The themes are as follows:

Theme 1 - Recruitment, Promotion & Succession Planning

Theme 2 - Learning & Skills Development

Theme 3 - Apprenticeship Plan

Theme 4 - Talent Pipelines

Theme 5 - Senior Leadership Succession Planning

Theme 6 - Leadership & Behavioural Framework and Leadership Forums

2.15.2 The plan considers available information for the period 2019 – 2025 and considers the workforce challenges ESFRS will face over the period of the plan, together with the profile of our workforce, recruitment and retention and succession planning and talent management. The objectives of the Workforce Plan are to ensure that we have

the right number of people with the right skills employed in the right place, at the right time to deliver the short and long term objectives of ESFRS. The plan is monitored at the Strategic HR Group chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the Workforce Planning sub group chaired by the Assistant Director People Services

2.16 The service should ensure it takes timely action in response to feedback or concerns from its staff.

2.16.1 A new manual note on Dignity in the Workplace is being developed. A Staff feedback Action Plan has been published on the Intranet and progress is monitored. An employee engagement framework is currently in development and this will ensure there are feedback mechanisms built in.

2.17 The service should ensure it has mechanisms in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation.

2.17.1 Talent pipelines is a theme in the workforce development plan. Work is ongoing to ensure that there is an explicit talent management process open to all staff which will focus on talent growth and development across the whole organisation. This moves ESFRS away from a career progression process in terms of only an upward, linear trajectory to one that includes lateral opportunities and developing transferable skills that support the creation of a more diverse workforce. Apprenticeships, secondments and transfers will be pivotal to achieving this to enable us to hone the skill sets required. The Assistant Director People Services sits on the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) talent management work stream. A number of areas have been identified that form part of the underpinning workforce development action plan as follows:

- There will be a 2-fold Talent Management Framework that is influenced by the NFCC Talent Benchmark Guidance. It will lay out the requirement and the process to identify critical roles within each directorate and across the organisation and identify the “next in line” for these roles to develop the necessary skills in accordance with the Learning Pathways document. This will ensure that when critical roles become vacant, appropriately qualified candidates will be able to apply for them.
- The Framework will also align to the revised appraisal process and lay out the need to identify leaders early on in their careers and develop their skills to succession plan into leadership roles.
- We will develop first class leaders, who are inspiring, confident and empowering by enhancing our leadership development alongside our fire service partners in 4F, educational establishments and thought leaders to provide an ethos of excellence, where leaders learn from each other. This will help develop leaders who are confident, inspiring and able to create a culture where staff are empowered, listened to and valued.
- We will continue to explore ways in which to develop our talent pipelines and create processes that enable us to do this transparently and consistently, such as rapid development and direct entry.

3 COVID- 19 INSPECTION

3.1 As the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the postponement of the round two inspection process the Home Office commissioned HMICFRS to undertake mini COVID-19 inspections of all FRS. This was ratified in August 2020. The commission was issued under section 28A (3) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The inspectorate was asked to consider the following for each service:

- what is working well and what is being learnt;
- how the fire sector is responding to the COVID-19 crisis;
- how fire services are dealing with the problems they face; and
- what changes are likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

3.2 The scope of the inspection included:

- The activities that were undertaken to protect communities and limit the spread of COVID-19, including a tripartite agreement
- The safety and wellbeing of staff during COVID-19
- The Maintenance of statutory functions during COVID-19
- The sharing and promoting best practice during COVID-19

3.3 The inspection consisted of a number of elements including surveys undertaken with the representative bodies and staff. A COVID-19 specific data set was provided and there was a small number of documents were requested together with a self-assessment return.

3.4 Interviews were undertaken with 10 staff over the first 2 weeks in November covering specific areas and departments. Colleagues from response, control, protection, prevention, human resources, training, health and safety, business continuity, the local resilience forum, the COVID-19 lead for the service, the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman were all interviewed. There were a number of key themes being addressed by the inspection team including:

- What are you most proud of?
- How will the service share and receive best practice work with other fire and rescue services?

3.5 Feedback received at the time was positive and the resulting letter with the results of the inspection is expected week commencing 25 January.

4 SERVICE PREPARATIONS FOR 2022 HMICFRS INSPECTION

4.1 Round 2 of the HMICFRS inspections are scheduled to start from early 2021. All fire and rescue services have been split into 3 tranches with ESFRS remaining in tranche 3. This means that the inspection will take place Spring/Summer 2022. The inspectorate are hoping that there will be a blend of on-line and face to face interviews and focus groups. However, this will obviously be dependent on any local restrictions that remain in place due to COVID-19. Whichever approach is agreed for the first inspections i.e. a mixture of face to face and/ or just virtual will remain for all three tranches to ensure consistency of approach.

- 4.2 The inspection focus for 2022 will concentrate on the same 11 diagnostic areas under the Efficiency, Effectiveness and People pillars as stated in Table 1 of this report. The diagnostics will again be underpinned by the 64 questions. These remain mainly unchanged, although there are a few minor changes to some and one additional question against the first round.
- 4.3 The inspectors will be in the service for a week and ESFRS round 2 report will be published in winter 2022.
- 4.4 Preparations for the next inspection have already begun. The HMICFRS action plan contains the 17 areas for improvement that are contained in this report. There are a further 70 comments that were made by the inspectors in the overall report that have been disaggregated to leads within the service. A mini mock inspection will take place in March 2021. Interviews will take place with the lead officers responsible for the diagnostics and the purpose of the mock inspection is to ensure that the answers to the 64 individual's questions are robust and that evidence is provided. This will enable the service to have a robust gap analysis once more against the areas and ensure that plans for improvement are in progress. Evidence can begin to be gathered to facilitate the inspection process for the following year. A HMICFRS task and finish group will be established as this worked well in the previous inspection process.
- 4.5 The inspection process requires that fire and rescue services provide the inspectorate with data throughout the year which the teams continue to support.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1.1 There are no equality and diversity implications expected as part of the preparation process. However, assessment of performance in this area is subject to inspectorate scrutiny.

5.2 Legal implications

- 5.2.1 Since April 2018, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has been awarded responsibility for inspecting fire and rescue Services (FRSs) in England, as detailed in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018. The chief fire and rescue inspector and inspectors of fire and rescue Authorities in England have powers of inspection given to them by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017. The inspection of FRSs will allow the public to see how well their local fire and rescue service is performing and improving.