



Home Office

**Report by the Home Secretary on Fire
and Rescue Authorities' compliance
with the Fire and Rescue National
Framework for England**

July 2020

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Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

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Report by the Home Secretary on Fire and Rescue Authorities' Compliance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

Report presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

Compliance

Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament every two years on:

- a) the extent to which fire and rescue authorities are acting in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (“the National Framework”); and
- b) any steps taken by her for the purpose of securing that fire and rescue authorities act in accordance with the National Framework.

The last section 25 report to Parliament by the Secretary of State was on 10 July 2018, covering the years 2015/16 and 2016/17. This report covers the years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Each fire and rescue authority (FRA) in England has provided sufficient assurance that they are acting in accordance with the National Framework and that material has been provided to demonstrate this. This includes assurance statements and, where appropriate, other documentation such as Integrated Risk Management Plans, Governance Statements and other operational and financial information prepared by the authority for that period. Each FRA has also provided assurance to their community on financial, governance and operational matters.

In addition, the Home Office also carried out an examination of a sample of fire and rescue authority assurance statements to seek evidence that authorities have complied with the framework and to see what they say on Integrated Risk Management Plans and financial plans. This has now been completed.

Having assessed this information, the Secretary of State is satisfied that every fire and rescue authority in England has acted in accordance with the requirements of the National Framework, and no formal steps have been taken by the Secretary of State since the last assurance statement in 2018 to secure compliance.

Inspection of Fire and Rescue Services

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) completed the first full cycle of inspections for all 45 fire and rescue services in December 2019. It also produced its first 'State of Fire' report, an annual assessment on the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities, which it laid before Parliament on 15 January 2020.

Overall, the 'State of Fire' report highlighted strengths in fire services which were found to be strong on responding to emergencies, with numerous life savings initiatives, and a prominent health and safety culture. But the inspectorate's findings also raised concerns that some services need to do more on ensuring compliance with fire safety regulations, that there is a notable lack of diversity, and stressed the need for improved leadership.

16 services were graded good across all three pillars for effectiveness, efficiency and people and six services were judged to be outstanding for at least one of the inspection sub-categories.

Three services were graded as inadequate at pillar level. These were Avon (on people), Surrey (on efficiency) and West Sussex (on people). These services have all provided an action plan to address any concerns raised and HMICFRS has been revisiting these services to assess progress. Each of these services have been showing signs of improvement and HMICFRS will continue to monitor progress.

Following the introduction and completion of the first cycle of inspections for the fire and rescue service, the Home Office will keep under review the need for section 25 assurance reports in addition to those reports now produced by HMICFRS.

Grenfell Tower

Following the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017 in which 72 people tragically lost their lives, there has been intensive work across Government to ensure that lessons are learned, to prevent such a devastating tragedy ever occurring again. To that end the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, established a public inquiry to look forensically into the events that allowed such an unprecedented fire to take hold. On 30 October 2019, the Inquiry Chair Sir Martin Moore-Bick, published his Phase 1 report covering the events on the night of the fire, including the role of the emergency services. Sir Martin made a number of recommendations for central government, which were all accepted in principle and to London Fire Brigade and fire and rescue services more generally. While there is still more to do, progress has been made in a number of areas including:

- The introduction of a Fire Safety Bill to Parliament clarifying the scope of the Fire Safety Order as also applying to the external walls (including cladding and balconies) and individual flat entrance doors between domestic premises and the non-domestic parts of multi occupied domestic premises;
- A new Fire Protection Board was created, chaired by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and supported by £10m of funding for protection work. A key objective is to ensure that all high-rise residential buildings of 18m or above are inspected or reviewed by the end of 2021;
- Working with London Fire Brigade and NFCC on implementation of the recommended operational changes, supported by regular progress updates;
- Fire and rescue authorities and the NFCC have received an additional £20m to enable services to increase fire inspection and enforcement capability and to build capacity to respond to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's findings.

In light of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations, we will continue to reflect and review the need for further revisions to the National Framework.

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