



Home Office

A profession we can all be proud of - Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service

Government consultation response to the Fire Reform White Paper

December 2023

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- Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service

Government consultation response to the
Fire Reform White Paper

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for the Home Department
by Command of His Majesty

December 2023



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Introduction and contact details

This document is the post-consultation report for the consultation paper, Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service.

It will cover:

- Introduction
- The background to the consultation
- A summary of the consultation responses
- A detailed response to the specific questions raised in the report
- The next steps following this consultation.

Further copies of this report and the consultation paper can be obtained by contacting the Fire Strategy & Reform Unit at the address below:

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This report is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-our-fire-and-rescue-service>

Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process, you should contact the Home Office at the above address.

Ministerial Foreword



As the Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire, I have the privilege of overseeing one of the most important duties of government – keeping people safe. I have witnessed first-hand the hard work and dedication of our emergency services as they protect their communities. Fire and rescue professionals play a crucial role in keeping the public safe - whether they are firefighters or fire staff and whether working as first responders, in corporate functions or in vital prevention and protection

roles - and they deserve to be supported to be their best.

There is no doubt that our fire and rescue services are made up of brave, dedicated people. However, there is more to be done to ensure everyone is supported, respected and valued in the workplace. We need look no further than London's Independent Culture Review, shocking media reporting and the independent fire inspectorate's findings on culture and values to see the scale of the challenge. And whilst Government investment following the Grenfell Tower Tragedy has allowed us to invest in improving vital protection services and has driven real change through the Fire Standards Board and the National Fire Chiefs Council, there is more to do to ensure fire professionals have the training and support they need to respond to the evolving challenges we face. Reform is necessary to ensure that this becomes reality.

The Fire Reform White Paper set out the government's vision for fire and rescue service reform. Launched last summer, the White Paper asked for views on a range of proposals. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation – your input has helped shape the next steps on reforming a vital public service.

Although our plan was already strongly focussed on making sure that fire and rescue is a great profession which values its people, we have refined our approach to take recent changes and reports into account. We have focussed our efforts on the reform steps that will have the most impact for the public and for fire professionals: supporting dedicated fire staff to develop a profession to be proud of and ensuring that fire services do more to put the public first.

This means setting up a professional body to continue to raise standards. It means putting integrity and leadership front and centre with great training, consistent and more open recruitment practices and a statutory code of ethics. It means helping fire professionals to keep their community safe by giving chiefs operational control of their service. It means helping sector leaders to manage pay fairly without getting caught up in bureaucracy. It means playing a full role in protecting the community, working with health, police, and other partners. It means enabling more directly elected leaders to bring public focus and economic rigour to fire and rescue services.

But publishing this reform strategy is just the start. To deliver this ambitious plan we will need joint effort between operational and political leaders and a commitment to change at the front line. The Home Office worked closely with stakeholders from fire and rescue

services during the development of the White Paper, and we will continue to do so as we move forward to develop policy detail and deliver solutions.

Our fire and rescue service professionals put themselves on the line for their communities. We need to ensure that they are supported as professionals in a changing world - it is the least they deserve. The strategy set out in this consultation response is a major step in delivering reform, and I look forward to working together to make it happen.

Background

The case for reform

The consultation paper “Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service” was published on 18 May 2022 to seek views on Government’s ideas for reform, building on lessons from independent inspection, concerning national reports and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. It laid out a vision for fire reform and was built on our ambition to strengthen fire and rescue services. However, the fire reform challenge has become clearer since the launch of the White Paper. Evidence gathered during the consultation stage and a number of key reports and events have provided further insight into the issues set out in the White Paper which have informed our strategy for reform.

In addition to the consultation itself, the Home Office has conducted a significant programme of engagement with fire professionals across the country, at all levels and ranks. Our discussions on the future of fire professionalism involved interviews, service visits and online workshops with over 220 people from 32 fire and rescue services in England and other linked organisations.

As a result, we have focussed our efforts and our thinking on the reform steps that will have the biggest impact for the public and for fire professionals: supporting employers and employees to develop a profession to be proud of and ensuring that fire services do more to put the public first. We will continue to use all tools available to us to drive improvements, including legislation where appropriate, through revisions to the National Framework and building on wider sector plans, such as Fit for the Future. This report summarises the consultation responses and sets out the Government’s strategy for reform. It is right that we address the integrity and industrial action issues that have since been brought to attention.

Integrity Matters

Autumn 2022 saw the publication of the Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade, finding widespread and disturbing bullying, harassment and discrimination. Whilst the findings were troubling, it is right that senior leaders gripped the issue at hand. It quickly became apparent that these issues were not confined to London, far from it.

In response to this review, and other allegations in multiple services, the Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire commissioned His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to produce a “Spotlight” report on values and culture. The Report was published in March 2023 and highlighted widespread unacceptable behaviour. HMICFRS also raised serious concerns around the misconduct process, background checks, and leadership across services.

The Home Secretary therefore commissioned HMICFRS to conduct a thematic inspection of the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services. This will examine the effectiveness and consistency of the misconduct processes.

The Home Office will prioritise the actions needed to ensure fire and rescue services are welcoming, respectful workplaces that enable all individuals who work in them to thrive and will expect all partners and sector leaders to play their part.

Keeping communities safe during strikes

This year has also seen services in a period of uncertainty and the public potentially placed at undue risk due to strike threats. Although a high pay offer from fire employers ended the current pay dispute without industrial action, this has highlighted the need for more robust business continuity planning and a more modern, transparent pay mechanism. Employees should have the right to strike, but it is essential that the public remain protected, and business critical services can continue to be delivered.

With fire and other public services in mind, this Government took steps to protect the public with the introduction of minimum service levels legislation into Parliament. In the event of industrial action, these measures would ensure a sufficient level of staffing to keep the public safe.

A public consultation concluded on 11 May 2023 and on 20 July 2023 the Strikes (Minimum Service Level) Act 2023 received Royal Assent in Parliament, ensuring workers maintain the ability to strike whilst giving the public access to the essential services they need. We are continuing to work through what the policy design for fire and rescue minimum service levels could look like.

A profession we can all be proud of – our strategy for reform

Setting the course for reform

The Fire Reform White Paper consulted on the government's vision for fire reform, centred around three main themes:

People – improving systems, flexibility and culture.

Professionalism – helping fire professionals to best serve their communities.

Governance – strengthening oversight and leadership.

Although our proposals focussed strongly on making sure that fire and rescue is a great modern profession, recent reports have illustrated how central these issues should be in our strategy for reform. The changes we outline here will support both the public and fire and rescue professionals: building a profession we can all be proud of.

People

The White Paper outlined plans to help fire professionals to further develop their skills and ensure that everyone could thrive in their work. This included clarifying the role of fire and rescue services, unlocking talent and improving representation within services.

The Home Office is already taking significant steps: with grant funding to support new standards, leadership programmes at all levels and embedding the Code of Ethics. The Home Office has also worked with the Ministry of Justice, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Disclosure and Barring Service to introduce legislation, supported by new guidance, expanding eligibility for background checks on Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) employees in the interests of both staff and public safety.

Talent and inclusion

The White Paper set out our intention to build on existing progress to provide effective leadership of the sector and building capability, embedding values and nurturing talent within services.

There are a great many skilled and talented people working in fire and rescue services, but it cannot be that all talent can only come from within services. The White Paper sought to support the development of established staff and to widen the talent pool from which services hire, ensuring that our workplaces are open and inclusive.

Direct entry was a divisive issue for some consultation respondents; however, fire already has a strong track record in this area with several fire and rescue services being successfully run by non-operational leaders. The Home Office is funding the development and piloting of wider direct entry schemes through the NFCC, bringing new perspectives into services alongside the many talented professionals already serving. The Home Office will continue to work with the NFCC and others to develop talent management schemes for both new recruits and those already working in fire and rescue.

The Home Office will also work with service leaders to consider consistent entry requirements, including barriers in current entry requirements.

Pay and role

The consultation laid out the Government's fundamental position that the role of the fire and rescue service in England is clear – laid out comprehensively in legislation across three key acts of Parliament that address fire, community safety and civil contingencies. While the law may be clear, its implementation is hampered by cumbersome pay and conditions machinery and a lack of clear accountability for fire operations and resources. The system needs to be flexible to enable chiefs to make local level decisions about staffing, whilst working productively with unions. We need fire and rescue services to be able to play a full role in protecting the community, working with health, police and other partners without getting tied up in red tape. We saw how this could work during the later stages of the pandemic, when chiefs could protect their staff and support the community without getting caught up in bureaucracy.

We want to work with the full range of both fire employers and unions to address the call for change that has come through in the consultation responses in relation to the operation of the National Joint Council (NJC). In the first instance, we will support the fire and rescue authorities and unions to critically review the NJC's own mechanisms, operations and transparency. This should be an inclusive process and should be completed by early 2024. It is clear from this consultation that the right answer cannot simply be a defence of the status quo. We will want the review to actively consider the changes that it is clear consultation respondents want to see and to explore whether there needs to be more scope for variation and self-determination including by types of services and by location. If this does not result in meaningful change, we will need to explore other routes to ensure a modern, fair pay system that constructively enables role reform in England.

Professionalism

Proposals in the Professionalism section of the White Paper centred around the creation of an independent body for fire professionals. These proposals will build on the important and ongoing work of both the Fire Standards Board (FSB) which has developed a strong suite of Fire Standards ranging from operational matters to culture and ethics, and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), who will have an enduring and important role in future.

Creating a College of Fire and Rescue

A College of Fire and Rescue was proposed to strengthen the development of individuals and the overall professionalism of fire and rescue services, setting the direction on data, research, leadership, ethics and professional standards. It was also proposed that a College could be given powers mirroring those of the College of Policing, to help it drive change. The consultation showed an overwhelmingly positive response to the creation of a College, which could develop practice across the prevention, protection and response functions that fire professionals undertake.

The Home Office will continue to work openly with sector leaders, the frontline and existing comparable organisations such as the College of Policing, as we develop the most appropriate delivery model.

Raising standards

The White Paper proposed creation of a statutory code of ethics, the case for which is bolstered by inspection findings of HMICFRS and serious lapses of integrity in parts of our fire and rescue services. The majority of respondents were supportive of this course of action. In matters of integrity and elsewhere, the Home Office wants to see professional standards which drive consistency and drive-up performance and professionalism.

The Home Office will place future responsibility for professional standards with the College of Fire and Rescue and will create powers to place elements of professional standards such as a code of ethics on a statutory basis when parliamentary time allows.

Governance

The White Paper opened debate on strengthening or simplifying fire governance. It indicated that single point accountability allows for better link up between services, more efficient use of resources and clearer accountability to the public. The current process of submitting business cases for governance transfers can be complex, costly and time-consuming. The White Paper also confirmed our intention to deliver on the independent inspectorate's recommendation that chief officers should be afforded operational independence, similar to their policing counterparts.

Governance change

The White Paper outlined the value of single point accountability in fire and the Home Office is committed to supporting moves towards this. We will not, however, take forward the mandatory transfer of FRA functions to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Mayors or single elected individuals at this stage.

The Home Office will encourage PCCs and Mayors who want to take on fire governance functions, where the areas are co-terminous, to step forward, in order to enable the Home

Office to assess readiness and support change. The Home Office will also work proactively with PCCs and the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners to explore ways to simplify processes and incentivise voluntary transfers. This could be done by radically streamlining the business case process or exploring legislative means to remove them altogether. The Home Office will also, as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda, continue to support locally led devolution deals and any fire governance transfers that result from these deals.

Operational Independence

The proposals in the White Paper set out plans to clarify the responsibilities of fire authorities and chief officers. The aim is to create a framework that complements existing structures while providing greater clarity and transparency in the division of responsibilities. At all times, the fire and rescue authority will be responsible for their fire service. The chief officer is effectively responsible for operationalising the authority's strategic directions. Operational independence would provide chief officers with the ability to make decisions on practical and management issues.

The Government will seek to legislate, at the earliest opportunity, to give chief officers operational independence. The Home Office will also take action to make the responsibilities of the fire and rescue authority and the chief officer clearer, with regard to a clearer separation of strategic and operational planning requirements and the governance of services.

Detailed Question Analysis

A total of 290 responses to the consultation paper were received. The online survey did not collect any personal data. 77% (86 out of 111) of survey responses sent by letter or email were provided by the fire and rescue service or their governing authority.

The Impact Assessment accompanying the fire reform consultation has been updated to take account of evidence provided by stakeholders during the consultation period and individual impact assessments will be completed for each proposal.

This section provides a statistical breakdown of the responses received and outlines our proposed next steps for each consultation question. As these figures are rounded to the nearest whole number, the rounding may result in a 1% disparity between the individual percentages shown in the tables and where responses are aggregated.

People

Q1: To what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue services should have the flexibility to deploy resources to help address current and future threats faced by the public beyond core fire and rescue duties?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
133	53	76	30	15	6	11	4	18	7

1. This question sought views on our proposal to expand the role of fire and rescue services in relation to the range of incidents faced by the public. The current role of fire and rescue services is to keep the public safe through prevention, protection and response work with a duty to collaborate with other Blue Light services where this will improve public safety outcomes, and the legislative framework is clear and coherent. However, some working practices have been found to be highly inflexible when faced with emerging threats or new opportunities. HMICFRS have also highlighted the need for clarity and flexibility.
2. With 83% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the proposal, and 11% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, it is evident that the sector is in favour of clarifying the extent of the role of the fire and rescue services.
3. The most recurring themes from the qualitative responses were that the sector needs to be more flexible to protect the public more efficiently. Some respondents mentioned that bureaucracy often gets in the way of change and is holding the sector back. The conflation of issues of role and pay through the NJC was felt to add to bureaucratic hurdles.

Next Steps:

4. The Government believes the law is clear – but its implementation is hampered by cumbersome pay and conditions machinery and a lack of clear accountability for fire operations and the tasking of fire professionals. We will continue to work with the sector to address this as well as to identify and explore opportunities and action which will benefit public safety.

Q2: To what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue services should play an active role in supporting the wider health and public safety agenda?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
110	43	77	30	19	8	22	9	25	10

5. This question was aiming to establish whether our proposal of expanding the role of fire and rescue services should involve having a more active role in the wider health and public safety agenda.
6. Again, a large proportion of respondents (74%) either strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal and 19% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.
7. It is clear that the sector acknowledges that greater interactions with other emergency services facilitates an even more valuable and efficient fire and rescue service.

Next Steps:

8. We will work together with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and other partners to explore options further. We will also work alongside fire and rescue services across the UK, DHSC, NHS England, NHS Wales and regional Ambulance trusts to support the work of the ambulance services in a way that increases public safety. Operational independence for CFOs will also help facilitate fire and rescue services playing a wider role in the health and public safety agenda, as they will have the powers to deploy resources in their local areas.

Q3: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the business continuity requirements set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 provide sufficient oversight to keep the public safe in the event of strike action?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
30	12	52	22	64	27	74	31	21	9

9. This question sought to understand whether the sector felt that it was well prepared to keep the public safe in the event of industrial action. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities, as Category 1 responders, to assess the risk of and respond to emergencies. They have a duty to maintain business continuity plans and emergency plans to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs, they are able to continue to perform its functions. The freedom to take part in industrial action is important but we believe that public safety needs to be ensured regardless. Assessing the robustness of Business Continuity

Plans – owned by fire and rescue services and authorities, is currently undertaken by the National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT), a team of seconded fire professionals led by Merseyside FRS, with support from the NFCC and Home Office.

10. For this proposal, 34% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the sector’s plans were robust enough, while 39% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The stark divide in responses indicate a need for each service’s business continuity plans to be reviewed to ensure that they are comprehensive and instil confidence in both the public and fire and rescue professionals.

Next Steps:

11. The government is taking action to introduce minimum service levels for fire and rescue services which are intended to provide a specified level of cover on strike days. In the meantime, the Home Office will continue to work closely with key partners to ensure business continuity plans enable services to keep the public safe in the event of industrial action.

Q4&5: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the current pay negotiation arrangements are appropriate?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
32	13	32	13	49	20	59	24	74	30

12. This question sought to establish the extent to which the sector considered the current pay negotiation arrangements appropriate.

13. The breakdown of the quantitative responses shows that 26% either strongly agreed or agreed and 54% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The responses clearly show an appetite for a reform of current pay negotiation arrangements.

14. Qualitative responses provided context with some respondents saying that the current process is outdated, slow and opaque. Other responses suggested that pay should be negotiated nationally and that negotiations for uniformed and non-uniformed fire and rescue employees should be carried out in tandem in the interest of fairness. The introduction of pay scales and of an annual review of the negotiation process are other recurring suggestions.

15. Those that supported the current pay negotiation arrangements were keen to underline their belief that any changes to the current set-up could negatively impact on national collective bargaining and questioned the effectiveness of other forms of pay negotiation bodies such as the existing Pay Review Bodies in certain public sectors are for their respective workforces.

Next Steps:

16. We want to work with fire employers and unions to address the call for change that has come through in the consultation responses in relation to the operation of the National Joint Council. In the first instance, we will support the National Joint Council secretariat to rapidly review its mechanisms, operations and transparency whilst considering the changes that it is clear consultation respondents want to see. This includes but is not limited to how to better reflect the specific needs of England in pay negotiations and decisions and to account for different FRA circumstances.

Q6&7: To what extent do you agree/disagree that minimum entry requirements should be set for fire and rescue service roles?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
77	30	112	44	31	12	25	10	12	5

17. This question sought to understand whether respondents agreed with the proposal that minimum entry requirements should be set for fire and rescue service roles.

18. Quantitative responses showed that 74% either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal, while 14% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The apparent lack of consistency, the importance of striking the right balance between operational and academic experience and the need for more inclusive standards were recurring themes in the qualitative responses. Respondents who were against the proposal were primarily concerned that minimum entry requirements could have an adverse impact on recruiting from diverse backgrounds or those without academia.

Next Steps:

19. The sector would benefit greatly from having consistent and flexible standards to attract and promote talent from a more diverse pool. The Home Office will continue to explore options and engage with key stakeholders to determine how best to implement this proposal with a focus on consistency.

Q8: To what extent do you agree/disagree that other roles, in addition to station and area managers, would benefit from a direct entry and talent management scheme?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
32	13	70	28	38	15	49	20	57	23

20. This question sought to establish the extent at which respondents agreed or disagreed with the notion that other roles, in addition to station and area managers would benefit from a direct entry and talent management.

21. Quantitative responses showed that 41% either strongly agreed or agreed, while 43% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. With responses almost evenly split, it was important to understand the rationale behind them.

22. Respondents were mostly supportive of direct entry and talent management schemes, but some were also uncomfortable about the scheme being introduced at a senior level.

Next Steps:

23. Direct entry and talent management schemes would achieve a more diverse workforce to the sector at all levels, if carefully developed and implemented. The Home Office will explore options and engage with key stakeholders to determine how best to implement this proposal, taking into account lessons and experiences from the pilot that is being run by NFCC.

Other themes arising from the consultation

24. In addition to the questions posed in the White Paper, many respondents commented on other issues affecting how they could improve or enhance their services and public safety. We will continue to work with the sector to explore these issues further and identify any additional action necessary.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

25. Inclusion is essential within a modern fire and rescue service. The sector would benefit from better representation across the workforce; there is much work to be done to have a fire service that reflects the community it serves and that everyone is treated with fairness and respect, in an environment where they can thrive. We will continue to work with key partners in the sector to ensure this remains at the forefront of any recruitment and development schemes.

On-Call

26. Respondents highlighted concerns regarding on-call firefighter recruitment and retention as a major issue affecting the sector. We will work with key partners, including the NFCC which is considering this issue through its People programme to explore potential solutions.

Professionalism

In addition to the consultation responses captured on these questions, we have continued engagement with frontline partners over the last six months through our work to strengthen professionalism in the fire and rescue sector.

Our debate on the future of fire professionalism has involved interviews, service visits and online workshops with over 220 people in a range of roles from 32 fire and rescue services and other linked organisations. Where appropriate and linked to the questions, we have highlighted these insights as additional reflections from the sector.

Q9&10: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposed introduction of a 21st century leadership programme?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
74	30	110	44	31	12	16	6	18	7

27. This question sought views on our proposal to introduce a standardised leadership programme for assistant chief fire officers and chief fire officers. A leadership programme aims to provide a standardised approach to how services identify and prepare the next generation of leaders. Completion of a course could make it easier to move between leadership roles in fire and rescue services

28. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, with a combined total of 74% in support. 12% neither agreed nor disagreed, while a combined total of 14% were unsupportive of this proposal.

29. Some of the prominent themes that emerged included the need for talent spotting and progression and the benefits of standardised leadership training. Some respondents highlighted that this could boost consistency. A response from one FRS suggested that standardised leadership training could make it easier to transfer between services and would offer a structured route for high potential employees to progress. However, some respondents felt that leadership training should be open to a wider range of staff.

Next Steps:

30. It is clear that there is support for a refreshed leadership programme. The qualitative responses have provided us with a range of suggestions which we will take into consideration as we develop this proposal further with the NFCC, which has already commenced work to enhance the leadership learning offer.

Q11: To what extent do you agree/disagree that completion of the proposed 21st century leadership programme should be mandatory before becoming an assistant chief fire officer or above?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
69	28	61	25	49	20	39	16	29	12

31. This question sought to build on the previous question and asked respondents whether completion of a leadership programme should be mandatory before becoming an assistant chief fire officer or above.

32. 53% of respondents agreed that a leadership programme should be mandatory. 20% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 28% did not support the proposal.

Next Steps:

33. The Government will work with partners to ensure chief officers are equipped with the necessary skills to lead their Service effectively and protect the public.

Q12: To what extent do you agree/disagree that each of the activities outlined above are high priorities for helping improve the use and quality of fire and rescue service data?¹

Pre-Fix (18 – 27 May)²

Answer Choice	A national data analytics capability	Data-focused training	Consistent approaches to structuring data	Clear expectations for data governance	Securing data-sharing agreements	Response Total
Strongly agree	20	3	6	2	10	41
Agree	10	6	6	9	4	35
Neither agree nor disagree	5	7	9	8	5	34
Disagree	3	7	1	6	7	24
Strongly disagree	5	2	4	4	7	22

¹ This question is as written in the consultation; each of the activities mentioned are outlined in the tables

² When the online survey first launched it only allowed respondents to allocate one unique response for each activity (i.e., if “A National Data Analytics Capability” was given a Strongly Agree, the highest response “Data-Focused Training” could receive would be Agree). As a substantial number of Qualitative responses (Q15) was dedicated to allowing users to submit Strongly Agree for all areas, we decided it would be best to allow users to respond as freely as they liked and therefore provide more relevant answers to the qualitative question. This issue and change also affected Questions 14 and 25.

Post Fix (28 May – 26 July)

Answer Choice	A national data analytics capability	Data-focused training	Consistent approaches to structuring data	Clear expectations for data governance	Securing data-sharing agreements	Response Total	Pre & Post fix combined
Strongly agree	100	98	112	99	103	512	553
Agree	60	63	60	69	58	310	345
Neither agree nor disagree	23	19	20	16	19	97	131
Disagree	6	7	2	4	6	25	49
Strongly disagree	5	5	7	7	5	29	51

Q13: What other activities, beyond those listed above, would help improve the use and quality of fire and rescue service data? Please give the reasons for your response.

34. Sir Thomas Winsor's 2019 *State of Fire* Report highlighted how the fire sector was lacking an effective national strategy for utilising data, which was therefore proving to be a missed opportunity. The quantitative responses to both data tables show that there is significant support for all five proposed activities with very little to separate them.

Next Steps:

35. It is evident that there is a significant appetite and need to modernise and offer national support for gathering and sharing data to ensure it can be consistent across the country and accessible to not only fire and rescue services but potentially to other blue light services as well. For this reason, the Home Office has already begun work with the NFCC and is developing plans for data to become a key pillar of a College of Fire and Rescue.

FRONTLINE INSIGHTS

In our interviews we heard that people wanted to understand how to use data to make better decisions, to have faith in the quality of shared data, and to have an agreed way of measuring data. Further, people also wanted help identifying national trends and accessing useful datasets to help inform their work.

The workshops conducted in services identified data training and common data sharing agreements as the most valuable solutions. People hoped they could work to common standards, share data more easily and help everyone understand the value of data.

Q14: To what extent do you agree/disagree that each of the activities outlined above are high priorities for improving the use and quality of fire evidence and research?

Pre-Fix (18 – 27 May)

Answer Choice	Collaborating	Commissioning	Conducting	Collating	Response Total
Strongly agree	30	3	4	3	40
Agree	6	11	10	5	32
Neither agree nor disagree	0	6	9	6	21
Disagree	2	2	6	8	18
Strongly disagree	4	1	1	1	7

Post Fix (28 May – 26 July)

Answer Choice	Collaborating	Commissioning	Conducting	Collating	Response Total	Pre & Post Fix Combined
Strongly agree	95	87	92	91	365	405
Agree	63	65	61	64	253	285
Neither agree nor disagree	23	27	26	24	100	121
Disagree	4	7	6	5	22	40
Strongly disagree	6	6	5	5	22	29

Q15: What other activities, beyond those listed above, would help improve the use and quality of evidence and research on fire and other hazards?

36. Responses highlighted there are several organisations who aim to provide up to date research and relevant evidence to fire services. However, there is the concern that we are lacking a suitable method to collate all of this information and ensure that the work being undertaken is suitably joined up.

37. Similar to the quantitative tables seen with our *Data* questions, the public's response suggests that all four activities proposed to improve the quality of evidence and research of fire and other hazards are high priority.

38. The two most prevalent themes emerging from the qualitative responses were also fairly well aligned. The most popular theme (32) outlined several ways in which both data and research could be taken forward in a consistent way. The second most popular theme (31 total responses) called for links with other research groups, both domestically (particularly the NFCC’s Academic Collaboration, Evaluation and Research Group) and internationally.

FRONTLINE INSIGHTS

Based on the research interviews conducted by the Home Office, it is clear there is a strong case to form an entity that can conduct and commission research, gather data and build an evidence base that will be helpful for the sector to forward plan. There is a desire to have research areas prioritised for the sector, providing access to high quality and reliable data that can be shared across the sector to support research.

Next Steps:

39. It is little surprise that Research has proven to be a topic with high public investment, and it will therefore be a key pillar of our work within the College of Fire and Rescue and building on the recent establishment of the Academic Collaboration Evaluation and Research Group.

Q16: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of a statutory code of ethics for services in England?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
76	32	67	28	46	19	25	10	25	10

40. This question sought views on the creation of a statutory code of ethics that all fire and rescue services should embed in their work. The current code, created in response to an inspectorate recommendation, is non statutory.

41. 60% of respondents agreed with the creation of placing the code on a statutory basis. 19% neither agreed nor disagreed, while 21% disagreed.

FRONTLINE INSIGHTS:

Introducing a statutory code of ethics was a popular idea in our workshops with services. In interviews and workshops, people said that they hoped they could change the culture of the fire and rescue service to create a more open and supportive environment. Participants also wanted to ensure their services had the capacity and training in place to meet expectations and told us they also needed to trust the development process and that it needs to be easy to understand whether you are meeting the Code.

42. Respondents identified the importance of any intervention leading to meaningful change and of engaging with the sector in the creation of a Statutory Code of Ethics.

Next Steps:

43. As a result of this feedback, the Home Office will make the delivery of a statutory code of ethics a key early priority for the College of Fire and Rescue. This will be pursued in close collaboration with partners in the fire and rescue sector. We will seek to establish the appropriate powers and to place a code on a statutory basis when parliamentary time allows.

Q17: To what extent do you agree/disagree that placing a code of ethics on a statutory basis would better embed ethical principles in services than the present core code of ethics?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
58	24	57	24	47	20	46	19	32	13

44. This question builds on the previous proposal. 48% of respondents were in agreement that a statutory code of ethics would ensure ethical principles were better embedded in fire and rescue services, while 20% neither agreed nor disagreed and 33% did not agree. The data suggests that although a substantial majority of respondents agreed the code of ethics should be placed on a statutory footing, some were unsure that it would help embed the principles of the code within services.

Q18: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the duty to ensure services act in accordance with the proposed statutory code should be placed on operationally independent chief fire officers?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
52	22	87	36	49	20	19	8	33	14

Q19: To what extent do you agree/disagree with making enforcement of the proposed statutory code an employment matter for chief fire officers to determine within their services?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
43	18	97	41	39	16	24	10	35	15

45. If the code was placed on a statutory basis, the duty to have regard to it would be most effectively placed on identified individuals. The two questions above sought views on whether that duty should be placed on operationally independent chief fire officers who it was proposed could also be responsible for the enforcement of the code.

46. There was support for placing the duty to have regard to the code and responsibility for enforcement of the code with the chief fire officer; 58% and 59% of respondents were supportive of these questions respectively. Only 22% were unsupportive of giving CFOs the duty to ensure their services follow the code and 25% were against giving CFOs responsibility to determine enforcement.

Next Steps:

47. As indicated in the Governance chapter of this response, we are committing to providing chief fire officers with the operational independence they need to lead their services. For this reason, it would seem appropriate that the duty to have regard to a statutory code of ethics is placed on operationally independent chief fire officers who would also take on responsibility for applying it in their services.

Q20&21: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of a fire and rescue service oath for services in England?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
40	17	38	16	55	23	49	20	58	24

Q22: To what extent do you agree/disagree that an Oath would embed the principles of the Code of Ethics amongst fire and rescue authority employees?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
31	13	53	22	45	19	50	21	59	25

Q23: To what extent do you agree/disagree with an Oath being mandatory for all employees?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
33	14	45	19	38	16	51	21	71	30

Q24: To what extent do you agree/disagree that breach of the fire and rescue service oath should be dealt with as an employment matter?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
30	13	88	37	42	18	30	13	48	20

48. This proposal sought views on introducing a fire and rescue service oath in England. The oath would be a promise undertaken by fire and rescue authority employees to uphold the principles in the statutory code while undertaking tasks on behalf of fire and rescue authorities, to help address the cultural challenges identified above and provide a positive commitment to the role services can play in their communities.

49. This proposal was not supported by respondents, with only 33% of respondents in agreement that this would help. Similarly, during our frontline engagement sessions, a common comment was that people could take the oath, but it was not clear what it would achieve. A larger proportion of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the creation of the oath with a combined total of 45%. This trend continues with the following two quantitative questions; 46% believed that the oath would not embed the principles of the Code of Ethics and 51% did not think the oath, if introduced, should be mandatory.

50. On the qualitative responses, respondents felt that whilst the intended outcome of improved integrity in services is right, the delivery mechanism of the oath was not. The second complements this by suggesting that wider cultural change within fire and rescue services would be needed alongside introducing the oath to ensure consistently high levels of integrity.

Next Steps:

51. After considering the findings of the consultation, it is clear that respondents have concerns regarding the oath and that it may not address the challenges within the sector as desired. The Home Office will therefore not be taking this proposal forward at this time.

Q25: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the five areas listed above are priorities for professionalising fire and rescue services?

Pre-Fix (18 – 27 May)

Answer Choice	Leadership	Data	Research	Ethics	Clear Expectations	Response Total
Strongly agree	25	3	1	3	6	38
Agree	6	2	3	7	9	27
Neither agree nor disagree	3	4	5	7	6	25
Disagree	0	9	6	3	3	21
Strongly disagree	0	5	9	4	1	19

Post-Fix (28 May – 26 July)

Answer Choice	Leadership	Data	Research	Ethics	Clear Expectations	Response Total	Pre & Post Fix Combined
Strongly agree	89	59	58	63	77	346	384
Agree	76	90	97	83	83	429	456
Neither agree nor disagree	10	22	19	22	18	91	116
Disagree	7	9	6	11	6	39	60
Strongly disagree	12	14	13	17	13	69	88

Q26: What other activities, beyond the five listed above, could help to professionalise fire and rescue services?

52. Throughout this chapter we explored a series of proposals dedicated to facilitating the further professionalisation of fire and rescue services. These proposals can ultimately be captured under the five distinct themes of: Leadership, Data, Research, Ethics and Clear Expectations. While the Home Office considers all these areas important, we wanted to know whether one should take precedence, and if another vital area of work had been overlooked.

53. When the Pre-Fix data is incorporated, we can further see the importance placed on Leadership; the Strongly Agree responses hugely outnumber the combined total for the other four activities. Whilst the qualitative responses did not reinforce these

statistics further, they raised a number of equally popular themes. The need for better training facilities and learning opportunities was raised as frequently as the need for better pay (17).

FRONTLINE INSIGHTS

People working in services told us that they want:

1. Support for services to meet national standards
2. Focussed efforts on services struggling to meet the standards
3. To seek ways to enforce standards, for example, legislation
4. Engagement with the sector on what the priorities are for reviewing and developing standards
5. To ensure standards are developed using robust research data and evidence
6. Measures to evaluate the impact of new standards

Next Steps:

54. The qualitative findings clearly demonstrate that the proposed five strands of work are widely considered to be valuable to fire and rescue services. The Home Office will therefore continue to progress these areas of work with our partner organisations, including the NFCC, and within our development of a College of Fire and Rescue. Consideration will also be given to how the proposed work could link more effectively to learning and training approaches for professionals.

Q27&28: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of an independent College of Fire and Rescue to lead the professionalisation of fire and rescue services?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
73	31	105	44	30	13	9	4	20	8

51. The qualitative responses to these questions demonstrated high levels of support for the proposal to create a College of Fire and Rescue to be the independent, dedicated body to lead the fire and rescue profession, with 75% of respondents in favour or strongly in favour.

52. In the qualitative responses, key themes included: the importance of clear lines of accountability, learning from other public services who have their own professional bodies, and retaining a public service ethos.

Next Steps:

53. The Home Office will be proceeding with the creation of a College of Fire and Rescue to provide fire services and professionals with the support they need. We are working closely with our partner organisations and comparator bodies, such as the College of Policing, to consider the most appropriate delivery option for a College.
54. Government will explore legislation, when parliamentary time allows, to provide the College of Fire and Rescue with the statutory powers to enable it to lead the profession, including to create a statutory code of ethics and to set standards on leadership. We also consider these powers could be valuable to set professional standards.
55. As part of the ongoing work on the future of fire professionalism, the Home Office has been working with hundreds of people across the fire and rescue sector to consider what a College of Fire and Rescue could do to best support fire and rescue services and professionals. This has ensured our proposals are well founded on both consultation responses from organisations and lived experiences from the frontline. The Home Office will continue to take an open approach to developing policy and keep engaging the sector on these important issues, including the matters raised in qualitative responses.
56. We also recognise there will be an enduring and important role for the NFCC within the sector and will ensure that a future College builds on important work of both the NFCC and the FSB.

Governance

Q29: To what extent do you agree/disagree that Government should transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services in England to a single elected individual?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
48	19	29	11	53	20	34	13	95	37

Q30: What factors should be considered when transferring fire governance to a directly elected individual? Please provide the reasons for your response.

57. The White Paper proposed to transfer responsibility of fire and rescue services from committee style governance seen in many fire and rescue authorities (FRAs), including in county council, combined and unitary FRAs, to a single, (directly) elected, individual. The rationale for this proposal was to improve accountability and transparency in the governance arrangements of fire and rescue services and to simplify the governance landscape by reducing the number of models in operation.
58. The White Paper outlined three potential governance models: Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) or an Executive Councillor model. The last model allowed for county council and unitary FRAs to retain responsibility for fire within their council structures but these FRAs would be required to nominate a single councillor who would hold responsibility for fire. We also asked respondents to provide suggestions on alternative models of governance which are not outlined in the White Paper.
59. Half of respondents, a total of 50% of all responses, either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to transfer responsibility of fire to a single, (directly) elected, individual with respondents' views on factors we should consider when pursuing this proposal highlighted a number of concerns.
60. When compared against the existing committee style governance model, many respondents felt that there were problems inherent in the single, (directly) elected, model. Respondents raised concerns around competence in fire matters, relative priorities, political interference and the potential for local relationships to be disrupted. Respondents also challenged the evidence base and costs.
61. For the minority of respondents agreed with this proposal, a total of 30% of responses, noted a number of factors to consider to ensure successful delivery. This included ensuring a clear division between political oversight and operational decision making, ensuring sector competence and effective scrutiny.

Next steps:

62. After considering the findings from the consultation, the Home Office does not intend to mandate governance transfer to a single, (directly) elected, individual at this time.
63. However, the Home Office will proactively support any PCC or Mayor who is interested in effecting a voluntary transfer and where the areas are co-terminous and will explore options to simplify the process and incentivise transfers. Further, as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda, we will continue to support locally led Mayoral devolution deals and any fire governance transfer that result from these deals, or from other Local Government reform.

Q31: Where Mayoral Combined Authorities already exist, to what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue functions should be transferred directly to these MCAs for exercise by the Mayor?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
14	6	40	16	80	33	35	14	75	31

64. As outlined previously, we consulted on the potential to transfer responsibility of fire to one of the three potential governance models that fitted our criteria of a single, (directly) elected individual. This was the Combined Authority Mayor (MCAs) model for those areas where MCAs already exist.
65. The majority of respondents, a total of 45% of all responses, either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposal as opposed to 22% of all respondents who agreed or strongly agreed.
66. For those respondents who opposed this proposal, the previous qualitative question (Q.30) highlighted several concerns respondents had with the MCA model, namely concern of political interference and lower priority for the service, given the breadth of a Mayor's mandate over local issues.

Next steps:

67. As previously stated, the Home Office will not be mandating governance transfer to a single, (directly) elected, individual but will proactively support locally led Mayoral devolution deals as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda.
68. Furthermore, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, currently going through Parliament will introduce a new category of Mayor, combined county Mayors, who

will also have the ability to assume FRA functions for their area with Home Office support where appropriate.

Q32: To what extent do you agree/disagree that Government should transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services in England to police and crime commissioners?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
49	19	18	7	41	16	30	12	119	46

69. The majority of respondents, a total of 58% of all responses, either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposal, compared to 26% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed. Concerns were similar to those expressed above.

70. Supportive respondents felt that if fire transferred under a PCC model it would increase accountability and transparency, lead to clearer strategic direction for the service and increase focus on delivering for the public.

Next steps:

71. As well as supporting locally led Mayoral devolution deals and PCC transfers the Home Office will explore ways to simplify the current business case process for PCCs to take on local oversight of their fire and rescue service.

Q33: Apart from combined authority mayors and police and crime commissioners, is there anyone else who we could transfer fire governance that aligns with the principles set out above?

Yes		No	
#	%	#	%
80	35	150	65

Q34: If yes, please explain other options and your reasons for proposing them.

72. The consultation invited respondents to provide suggestions on alternative models of governance which met our need for a clear executive – rather than committee – leadership.

73. The majority of respondents, a total of 65% of responses, provided no alternative options as opposed to 35% of respondents who did. These ranged from creating

broad regional fire services with an elected regional lead or a regional board to creating directly elected Fire Commissioners.

74. It should be noted that in the same qualitative question, a number of respondents highlighted strong support to retain the existing mix of governance structures.

Next steps:

75. Whilst it is illuminating to consider the alternative governance models proposed by respondents, particularly independent Fire Commissioners, we will not be mandating governance transfers to models aligning to our criteria of a single, (directly) elected individual at this stage.

Q35&36: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the legal basis for fire and rescue authorities could be strengthened and clarified?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
51	21	110	45	54	22	13	5	17	7

76. The White Paper outlined the opportunity to better clarify the legal basis against which fire and rescue authorities operate. We proposed to clarify in statute the role of the authority, the service and the chief fire officer, and to clarify the relationship between political oversight and operational decision making.

77. The majority of respondents, a total of 66% of all responses, either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, as opposed to 12% of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

78. For those respondents who supported this proposal, it was outlined it would remove ambiguity, clarify understanding on legal responsibilities and improve accountability and transparency.

79. For the minority of respondents who disagreed with this proposal, the primary view was that for some county council FRs, the Fire and Rescue Services Act (FRSA) 2004 laid down the basic duties and functions of FRAs and through local county council constitutions, they have already laid out the role and responsibilities between the FRA and CFO.

Next steps:

80. The Home Office will seek to better clarify the legal role of fire and rescue authorities in the oversight of their local service. This will be achieved through a proposed demarcation of responsibility when seeking to grant operational independence to chief fire officers.

Q37: To what extent do you agree/disagree that boundary changes should be made so that fire and rescue service areas and police force/combined authorities (where present) areas are coterminous?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
50	20	64	25	72	29	17	7	48	19

81. The White Paper considered the boundary implications of mandating governance change which would require boundaries to be coterminous. The majority of respondents, a total of 45% of all responses, either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, as opposed to 26% of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Next steps:

82. Although the proposal is supported by 45% of respondents, the government position not to pursue mandatory governance transfers limits the value of this proposal. As we will not be mandating changes to governance models there will be no need to enforce boundary changes which would prove disruptive and controversial. Whilst we will be proactively supporting voluntary transfers of FRA functions to PCCs or Mayors in those areas which are co-terminous with FRAs, those areas which are not co-terminous will remain under their current governance arrangements and we will work with them to explore options to improve transparency and accountability within current structures.

Q38&39: To what extent do you agree/disagree with ring-fencing the operational fire budget within fire and rescue services run by county councils and unitary authorities?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
114	46	64	26	40	16	23	9	8	3

83. The majority of respondents (71%) either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the idea of ring-fencing operational fire budgets in county councils and unitary authorities. However, responses from fire & rescue services and councils directly impacted by the proposal were not supportive of the change as it was seen to reduce budget flexibility.

84. In preference to budget ring-fencing, some of those directly impacted by the proposal said that they would welcome greater transparency around the reporting of fire budgets in county councils and unitary authorities.

Next Steps:

85. The Government will not pursue ring-fencing of operational budgets within fire and rescue services run by county councils and unitary councils. Instead, taking into account what those directly impacted by this proposal have said, we will focus on improving transparency of reporting around how fire and rescue services are funded at local level. We will do this by amending the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England to the effect that FRAs with ‘parent authorities’ are asked to publish their allocated budgets on their website prior to the start of each financial year, and then again if the budget is changed mid-year.

86. The Government will review the effectiveness of this new practice in due course and may consider the introduction of further measures to increase the transparency of funding arrangements, if necessary.

Q40: To what extent do you agree with this proposed approach (as outlined in the table)?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
41	17	100	41	45	18	20	8	40	16

<u>Task</u>	<u>Responsible</u>
<u>Setting priorities</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Budget setting</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Setting precept</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Setting response standards</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Opening and closing fire stations</u>	<u>Executive leader*</u>
<u>Appointment and dismissal of chief fire officer</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Appointment and dismissal of other fire service staff</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Allocation of staff to meet strategic priorities</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Configuration and organisation of resources</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Deployment of resources to meet operational requirements</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Balancing of competing operational needs</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Expenditure up to certain (delegated) levels</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>

*Opening and closing of fire stations could be a joint decision; operationally fire chiefs could be responsible for decisions on moving teams, whilst ultimate political and executive responsibility lies with the executive leader.

Q41: Do you have any other comments to further support your answer?

Q42: Are there any factors we should consider when implementing these proposals?

Q43: What factors should we consider when giving chief fire officers (CFOs) operational independence? Please provide the reasons for your opinions.

87. The White Paper proposed a leadership model which balanced political and operational accountability. It was proposed this demarcation of responsibility would be outlined in statute.
88. The majority of respondents, a total of 57% of responses, either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal as opposed to 24% of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
89. For those respondents who agreed it was felt that demarcation in statute would provide clarity on roles and responsibilities. However, in the view of some respondents, certain responsibilities need further clarification and should either be reallocated or jointly held between the FRA or CFO.
90. The minority of respondents who disagreed with the proposal noted that for some county council led services, a demarcation of responsibility already exist in their local constitutions in the form of 'schemes of delegation'.
91. A summary question invited respondents to provide any additional views on the proposals outlined so far in the Governance chapter of the White Paper. To improve accountability and transparency, some respondents suggested that a monitoring mechanism should be in place, potentially overseen by HMICFRS, to assess the working relationship between the fire authority and operationally independent chief fire officer in order to determine whether it is providing the intended benefits.
92. A sizeable number of respondents emphasised the need to ensure clarity, by way of providing guidance, on roles and responsibilities. It was highlighted that appropriate checks and balances need to be in place to ensure an operationally independent chief officer is held to and that effective scrutiny arrangements are needed. Equally, respondents felt that chief officers would need training and support.

Next steps:

93. The Government will legislate at the earliest opportunity to give CFOs operational independence. This will include a new statutory definition of a Chief Fire Officer and a Fire and Rescue Service. Currently, the requirement for the provision of all fire and rescue functions is attributed to FRA in the FRSA 2004.
94. Through our provisions on Operational Independence, we will outline clear demarcations of responsibility. We will facilitate the introduction of a standardised

scheme of delegation, supported by regulations and guidance setting out the detail of this demarcation. The intention for this is to create clear lines of responsibility where they do not already in exist and to strengthen existing schemes of delegation already in place.

Q44: What factors should we consider should we make chief fire officers corporations sole?

95. In delivering operational independence for CFOs, the White Paper outlined an additional proposal to complement this, that is to make the role of CFO a corporation sole.

96. The intention behind this proposal was to create a model of operational independence, which mirrored the existing structure in policing, that is that the chief constable of a police force is operationally independent from their PCC and has corporation sole status, making them the employer of their police force with staff under their direct control. A significant portion of respondents noted the complications this would add to existing governance arrangements for fire services. In addition, a number of respondents stated there was no evidence to suggest the policing model would be effective for fire governance arrangements. For those respondents who were either supportive or had a more nuanced approach to this proposal, it was highlighted that the legal duties needed clarity and that training would be needed.

Next steps:

97. Whilst the Home Office will pursue operational independence and a clear demarcation of in legislation, it would not be possible to uniformly apply corporation sole status in all governance models and as such we will not pursue this proposal.

Q45: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the responsibility for strategic and operational planning should be better distinguished?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
64	26	93	38	40	16	26	11	21	9

Q46: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the strategic plan should be the responsibility of the fire and rescue authority?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
83	34	84	34	44	18	18	7	15	6

Q47&48: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the operational plan should be the responsibility of the chief fire officer?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
107	44	87	36	24	10	9	4	16	7

98. The White Paper proposed a clearer separation of strategic and operational planning responsibilities. It was proposed that all authorities be required to produce a strategic plan outlining the priorities for the service and that the chief fire officer would be responsible for the operational plan, to deliver those strategic priorities. It was also proposed that the operational plan, currently called an 'Integrated Risk Management Plan' would be changed by legislation to a 'Community Risk Management Plan'.

99. On better distinguishing the responsibility for strategic and operational planning (Q45), a majority of respondents, a total of 64% of responses, either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, as opposed to 19% of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The trend of support for this proposal continues into the following questions, especially on the need for clear operational planning accountability.

100. However, whilst there was strong amount of support, a concern raised by respondents was that chief officers should be held accountable for how they are operationalising the strategic plan.

Next steps:

101. The Government will explore legislation, when parliamentary times allows, to amend and clarify responsibilities with regards to the production of strategic and operational plans. The current legal requirement for a separate strategic plan is already set out in statute for Combined Authority Mayors (MCAs) and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners (PFCCs). The Home Office wish to legislate so that

this requirement applies to all categories of FRA listed in the FRSA 2004 and to clarify the name and responsibility for the operational plan, whereby the 'Integrated Risk Management Plan' (IRMP) will become the 'Community Risk Management Plan' (CRMP). The change in will be reflected in legislation at the earliest opportunity and updated in the National Framework. These next steps will only apply to England, as fire and rescue is a devolved issue in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

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