

Report of the Assistant Chief Officer: Director of Prevention

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan – Q1 Update 2025-26

Purpose of report

1. To provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the HMICFRS Improvement Plan and the progress made on actions during Quarter 1 2025-26, following the inspection report dated 29 November 2023.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the Fire Authority note:

- *The progress made on the actions to deliver the HMICFRS Improvement Plan and that further progress has been made up to the end of June 2025 (Q1).*
- *That the next HMICFRS inspection will commence in February 2026 and that preparations are underway.*

Introduction and Background

2. At the Fire Authority Meeting on 13 February 2024, Members received a paper advising that the Service had developed an Improvement Plan to address the findings of [His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\) inspection report dated 29 November 2023](#).
3. The Improvement Plan has now been updated to outline the progress made up to the end of Q1 2025-26. The report covers the 11 Areas for Improvement (AFI) highlighted in the HMICFRS inspection report and the 32 actions set out by the Service that will address the AFIs.

HMICFRS Improvement Plan – Progress Update

4. The delivery of the Improvement Plan is overseen by the Service Improvement Manager, who meets regularly with senior managers responsible for each AFI to prepare updates on actions proposed and completed. The Performance and Improvement (P&I) team also ensure that any actions carried out are fully evidenced and available for evaluation and audit. The latest update, covering up to the end of June 2025, is attached to this report (see Appendix 1).

5. The Improvement Plan now includes 32 separate actions across the 11 AFIs highlighted by the Inspectorate. Following the Strategic Leadership Board's (SLB) review, two additional actions were included in Q2 2024-25 to more comprehensively address their corresponding AFIs.
6. The Service Improvement Manager has met with each responsible manager to explain the HMICFRS requirements and work with them to populate individual improvement templates with updates on actions that have been proposed and completed.
7. The individual templates ask four basic questions about each area for improvement:
 - i. Where are we now?
 - ii. Where do we want to get to?
 - iii. What do we need to do to get there?
 - iv. How will we know we have achieved what we set out to do?
8. Updates have been received for all of the 11 specific AFIs identified by HMICFRS following the 2023 inspection. The Service Improvement Manager is currently working with each responsible manager to ensure that all evidence of progress and change is robust for evaluation and scrutiny by the Inspectorate.
9. Action plans are progressing to directly address the AFIs identified within the 11 assessment areas covered in the HMICFRS report:

Ref	Area for Improvement	Assessment Area
AFI 1	The Service should make sure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.	Understanding the risk of fire and other risks.
AFI 2 AFI 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service should make sure staff carry out home fire safety visits competently. • The Service should evaluate its prevention activity, so it understands what is most effective. 	Preventing fires and other risks.
AFI 4	The Service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of unwanted fire signals.	Protecting the public through fire regulation.
AFI 5	The Service should make sure it has an effective system to learn from operational incidents.	Responding to fires and other emergencies
AFI 6 AFI 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service should make sure it has an effective method to share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place. • The Service should make sure it has an overarching cross-border exercise strategy. The strategy should assure the FRA that exercise objectives are in line with Community Risk Management Plan 	Responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

	(CRMP) risks and that learning is recorded, shared and actioned.	
AFI 8	The Service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.	Making best use of resources.
AFI 9	The Service needs to make sure it has adequate plans in place to close its identified budget gaps.	Making the FRS affordable now and in the future.
AFI 10	The Service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure staff don't work excessive hours.	Promoting the right values and culture.
AFI 11	The Service should make sure it has processes in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation.	Managing performance and developing leaders.

10. Further progress was made against plans in Q1. As of Q1 2025-26, the Service has now completed 75% of the actions in the Improvement Plan. This includes completion of all actions under AFIs 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Meanwhile, the remaining 25% of the actions are in progress.
11. Progress against the actions set out in the Improvement Plan is currently as expected, with no areas being raised as a particular concern by managers. Further progress is expected during Q2 2025-26 which should see more actions and AFIs progressed to completion.
12. Work is currently underway to prepare for the next inspection which includes further analysis of the AFIs, including those which have been marked as complete to provide assurance that there has been continued progress.
13. The HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead continues to meet with responsible department heads in the lead up to the inspection to discuss the progress made with their AFIs. The Service Improvement Manager will continue to facilitate regular discussion and updates regarding these.
14. The next HMICFRS Inspection will commence in February 2026. The document request and staff survey will be given to HWFRS in the week commencing 5 January 2026. Work is ongoing to ensure that we are prepared for the inspection.
15. The Service Improvement Manager is also working on preparations to ensure that staff are aware of the HMICFRS 'Characteristics of Good', which the inspectorate use to demonstrate what level of performance Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) need to achieve to be graded as 'good' in their inspections.
16. Currently, all target dates being met will mean that the service will achieve completion against all actions in Q4 2025-26.
17. SLB reviewed the actions in the Improvement Plan in October 2024, January 2025 and September 2025 and advised on any changes or inclusions deemed necessary to effectively meet the requirements of the AFIs. Subsequent

reviews have taken place with the Assistant Chief Officer and the HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead.

18. Quarterly updates will continue to be provided to the SLB and to the Fire Authority.

Conclusion/Summary

19. The Q1 update of the HMICFRS Improvement Plan 2023-25 shows that further progress has been made up to the end of June 2025 (Q1).
20. The next HMICFRS Inspection will commence in February 2026. The document request and staff survey will be given to HWFRS in the week commencing 5 January 2026. Work is ongoing to ensure that we are prepared for the inspection.
21. The Authority are recommended to note the progress made in delivering the HMICFRS Improvement Plan. Updates will continue to be reported each quarter.

Corporate Considerations

<p>Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)</p>	<p>The Improvement Plan highlights areas for improvement relating to effectiveness, efficiency and people. Actions to address these areas are likely to have resource implications, which will be considered in the Improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)</p>	<p>Actions proposed and developed through the Improvement Plan are directly linked to the CRMP, and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The actions contained in the plan will all have a positive impact on delivery against the three Core Strategies and associated enabling strategies. All proposals will be assessed to ensure they meet the Service’s overall Core Purpose and Vision.</p>
<p>Productivity & Efficiency (Identify how proposal improves productivity or efficiency)</p>	<p>The Improvement Plan contains actions that have been formulated in response to the inspection report. These actions may have implications on productivity and efficiency and will continue to be considered in the Improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores)</p>	<p>Any risks associated with proposals will be assessed through the Improvement Plan.</p>

<p>Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>Proposals to deliver the Improvement Plan have the full participation of Senior Managers in relevant Service departments. The Improvement Plan, when published, will be publicly available on the Service website.</p>
<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>An EIA is not required for this report. EIAs will be completed as appropriate when preparing proposals through the Improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personnel data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)</p>	<p>Impact assessments will be completed as required for specific actions related to the Improvement Plan.</p>

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – HMICFRS Improvement Plan 2023-25 – Q1 Update

[Link to HMICFRS Inspection report](#)