

## **Report of the Assistant Chief Officer: Director of Prevention**

### **Leading the Service Fire Standard – Update 2025**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To summarise progress against recommendations in the Leading the Service Fire Standard.
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#### **Recommendation**

***Having scrutinised progress against the Leading the Service Fire Standard, members are recommended to conclude that the Service meets the majority of the standard's requirements and has identified targeted actions to build upon existing strengths and drive continuous service improvement.***

#### **Introduction and Background**

2. The Leading the Service Fire Standard, introduced in 2023 (Appendix 1), differs from other Fire Standards in that it is not primarily compliance-driven. Instead, it is designed to assess progress and support continuous improvement. Its core purpose is to enhance service delivery and strengthen professionalism and leadership at all levels. The Standard clearly defines expectations for those in leadership roles, particularly in terms of behaviours, ethics and the actions required to lead effectively in a dynamic and evolving environment.

#### **Fire Standard Desired Outcome**

3. The outcomes set out in the Standard are intentionally broad and aspirational, encouraging Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) to continually strive for excellence. These outcomes envision a Service where:
  - Everyone works collaboratively to protect life, property and community safety.
  - The public has confidence and trust in the Service's ability to prepare for and respond to emergencies.
  - Senior leaders articulate a compelling vision, translate it into a clear delivery plan, and ensure it is understood across the organisation.
  - Leaders lead by example, fostering a diverse workforce and a culture that prioritises health and wellbeing.
4. They empower and inspire their teams to:
  - Place public safety at the heart of their work.
  - Understand and commit to the Service's vision.
  - Contribute to a positive, inclusive culture through ethical behaviour and active engagement.

- Respond with agility to learning, emerging risks and changing community needs.
  - Continuously improve through a culture of listening and learning.
  - Communicate openly to build trust and maintain strong relationships.
  - Uphold the reputation of the Service.
5. Leaders at all levels are expected to be skilled, capable and accountable. They act as positive role models, demonstrating ethical leadership and ensuring that everyone understands their role and responsibilities. Safeguarding is a key priority, with leaders working to reduce the risk of abuse, harm and neglect both within the Service and the wider community.
  6. Strong leadership is essential to resilience at local, regional, and national levels. Leaders foster collaboration with partners and agencies, ensuring the Service is prepared to meet its civil contingency responsibilities, including cross-border and national responses.
  7. Leaders ensure the Service is resilient, financially sustainable and environmentally responsible. They support a diverse and capable workforce, equipped with the necessary resources, information and technology. Data is used effectively to inform decisions and drive improvement.
  8. The Service aspires to be an employer of choice. Leaders promote diversity and inclusivity, ensuring equal access and opportunities for all. They actively listen to and act on feedback from communities, stakeholders and staff to enhance service delivery.
  9. Leaders are responsible for ensuring the Service meets all legislative and statutory requirements and adheres to professional and Fire Standards. Performance is proactively monitored and governance is strengthened through a trusted relationship between leaders and the governing body.

### Approach

10. In considering this Fire Standard, the focus is on identifying the key leadership themes the Service needs to address. These themes and the corresponding actions are summarised to support ongoing development and improvement.

### What Has Gone Well

Required Criteria - Theme	Examples
Vision and Strategic Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) has been through public consultation and is due to be considered by the FRA in October 2025.</li> <li>• Three Core Strategies (Prevention, Protection and Response) are being rewritten to reflect the CRMP 2025-30 priorities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Operating Model in place.</li> <li>• Business Planning in place to support delivery against core strategies.</li> <li>• Appraisal process links personal objectives to strategic aims.</li> </ul>
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource Review completed during 2024.</li> <li>• Change Portfolio Board to support strategic planning.</li> <li>• Culture Audit review being undertaken by external partner.</li> <li>• Service Improvement Board – focusing on His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) areas for improvement.</li> <li>• Annual Employment Monitoring and Gender Pay Gap Reporting.</li> <li>• Collaboration with partners maximising opportunities to learn.</li> <li>• Latest HMICFRS report, demonstrating improvement.</li> <li>• Annual Service Review.</li> <li>• Rebuilt Broadway and Redditch Fire Stations. Hereford station rebuild underway.</li> </ul>
Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People Excellence Framework being implemented to support people development.</li> <li>• Station Risk Profiles in place and new interactive dashboard being used.</li> <li>• Multi-agency work / planning in place led by Emergency Resilience and Preparedness Officer (ERPO).</li> <li>• Strategic Workforce Plan published.</li> <li>• Workforce Planning Meetings in place to forward plan.</li> <li>• Medium Term Financial Plan in place.</li> <li>• Annual Service Plan.</li> </ul>
Communication, Engagement and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing, Media and Corporate Communications Strategy 2023-25 in place.</li> <li>• Triple Play screens and content shared widely.</li> <li>• Digital and Data Strategy.</li> <li>• iPads for all operational staff.</li> <li>• Regular formal engagement with all staffing groups through Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).</li> <li>• Accessible website.</li> <li>• Move to a digital Comms Hub platform from the Service Bulletin.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity Framework being developed in conjunction with Simon Fanshawe and an internal focus group.</li> <li>• Staff survey scheduled for 2026</li> </ul>
Robust and Transparent Controls and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of Boards and Steering Groups in place to support monitoring.</li> <li>• Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks and Social Media Screening for new staff members.</li> <li>• Regular monitoring of case management via Professional Standards Board.</li> </ul>
Access to Legal and Specialist Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring Officer.</li> <li>• Solicitor in post.</li> <li>• Specialist HR Consultant on a retainer.</li> <li>• Use of external legal expertise to secure Fire Safety prosecution.</li> </ul>
Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders in place and accountable / aware and embody Core Code of Ethics (CCOE) / fire standards.</li> <li>• Fire Standards oversight in place and monitored.</li> <li>• Aspiring Strategic Leaders Programme</li> <li>• Supervisory Leadership Development Programme and Middle Leaders Programme commencing from October 2025.</li> <li>• CCOE Communicated to all leaders.</li> <li>• Leadership Framework used to direct development and recruitment activity.</li> <li>• Code of Conduct in place.</li> <li>• T2 PRINT profiles embedded and shared across all managers.</li> <li>• 360 feedback being rolled out.</li> <li>• Appraisals in place which incorporate upward feedback and career conversation.</li> </ul>
Organisational Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debriefs regularly undertaken and learning shared.</li> <li>• Quarterly performance reporting in place.</li> <li>• Quarterly operational assurance review in place.</li> <li>• Annual Service Review.</li> <li>• Quarterly H&amp;S meetings and reports, involving lead FRA Member and Representative Bodies.</li> <li>• Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme (JESIP) and Joint Organisational Learning embedded in the Service.</li> </ul>

Data Driven Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P&amp;I Team in place and use data sets to inform reports.</li> <li>• Quarterly Performance Report to Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) and Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.</li> <li>• Core strategies each have Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).</li> <li>• Attendance Performance Measure (APM) analysed quarterly.</li> </ul>
<b>Desirable Criteria - Theme</b>	
Robust feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from community regularly gathered e.g. APM, Resource Review, Home Fire Safety Visit's (HFSV).</li> <li>• Post Fire and Business Fire Safety Inspections.</li> <li>• Staff survey.</li> <li>• Cultural audit undertaken in 2023, review being undertaken in 2025.</li> <li>• JCC meets regularly.</li> <li>• Staff network groups, each with a Principal Officer sponsor.</li> <li>• Exit Interviews.</li> <li>• Culture and Ethics Steering Group, evolving to Culture Board.</li> </ul>
Access to Networks, National Guidance and Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) tools / guidance used.</li> <li>• Peer reviews in place as and when required.</li> <li>• National Operational Guidance (NOG).</li> </ul>
Sharing Learning via NFCC Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NFCC working groups and resources used.</li> <li>• Networks in place linked to Executive Leadership Programme (ELP) cohorts.</li> <li>• NOG learning.</li> </ul>
Engaging Regionally and Nationally with Peers, Partners and Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration in place e.g. New Fire Control System.</li> <li>• Fire Safety collaboration with Shropshire.</li> </ul>

### What to Focus on in the Future

12. Considering what we have achieved so far, there are other areas to focus on as we progress into the next CRMP period:

Required Criteria - Theme	Areas of Focus
Vision and Strategic Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication of the CRMP, vision and objectives following the October FRA meeting.</li> </ul>
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for HMICFRS inspection commencing February 2026.</li> <li>• Encourage innovative thinking and action to inform strategic planning.</li> </ul>
Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People Excellence Framework to be promoted and communicated across the Service.</li> </ul>
Communication, Engagement and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for Staff Survey 2026.</li> </ul>
Robust and Transparent Controls and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review what controls and processes may be needed to further monitor and manage performance e.g. Performance Board.</li> </ul>
Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 360 feedback roll out.</li> <li>• Development offer for managers being updated and embedded linked to People Excellence Framework.</li> <li>• Embed Supervisory, Middle Manager and Aspiring Strategic Leader development programmes.</li> </ul>
Organisational Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further embed feedback mechanisms with members of the public.</li> </ul>
Data Driven Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop use of Power BI.</li> <li>• Website and social media analytics.</li> </ul>
Desirable Criteria - Theme	
Robust feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider what additional employee feedback mechanisms may be needed.</li> </ul>
Access to Networks, National Guidance and Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make further use of partners from the NFCC and HMICFRS for support and guidance and sharing of best practice.</li> </ul>
Sharing Learning via NFCC Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to collaborate and share learning with the NFCC.</li> </ul>
Engaging Regionally and Nationally with Peers, Partners and Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to collaborate regionally and nationally.</li> </ul>

## Expected Benefits of Achieving the Fire Standard

14. The Service is reassured by its alignment with the majority of the recommended elements within the Fire Standard. These standards promote best practice, strategic foresight, and the governance necessary to ensure an effective, efficient, and legally compliant organisation with a positive and inclusive working culture.
15. This exercise has provided valuable clarity on key areas of corporate activity, reinforcing the accountability and responsibility of leadership across the Service.
16. It is proposed that areas identified for further development be integrated into the Service's business planning processes. These will be embedded within relevant core and enabling strategies throughout 2025 and aligned with the implementation of the new CRMP for 2025–30. This approach will be further supported by a suite of enabling strategies to ensure coherence and sustained improvement.

## Conclusion

17. HWFRS has undertaken a comprehensive mapping of its processes against the *Leading the Service Fire Standard*. The Service meets the majority of the standard's requirements and has identified targeted actions to build upon existing strengths and drive continuous service improvement.

## Corporate Considerations

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	No major resource implications. Any initiatives or projects linked to the fire standard will be budgeted for via departmental planning.
<b>Strategic Policy Links &amp; Core Code of Ethics</b> (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)	This links very closely to delivering the CRMP which is supported by the Core and Enabling Strategies. Working to meet the Fire Standard aligns with all five elements of the CCOE.
<b>Productivity &amp; Efficiency</b> (Identify how proposal improves productivity or efficiency)	None
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	None
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	The Fire Standards was consulted on by the NFCC. Separate consultation will be undertaken as required for individual projects or initiatives.

<b>Equalities</b> (has an <b>Equalities</b> Impact <b>Assessment</b> been completed? If not, why not?)	EIA's will be undertaken as required for individual projects or initiatives.
<b>Data Protection Impact</b> <b>Assessment</b> (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	DPIA's will be undertaken as required for individual projects or initiatives.

**Supporting Information**

[Appendix 1 – Leading the Service Fire Standard](#)

# LEADING THE SERVICE

## DESIRED OUTCOME

A fire and rescue service where everyone works together to keep people safe, protecting life and property and delivering excellence to its community. Its community has confidence and trust in the service to prepare for and respond to emergencies. Its senior leaders set a compelling vision for their service and translate that vision into a comprehensive delivery plan, understood by all. They lead by example and create a diverse workforce with a culture which supports the health and wellbeing of their people. They empower, enable and inspire them to:

- put public safety at the core of their work;
- understand and commit to delivering the vision;
- contribute to an inclusive and positive culture because they behave ethically and are motivated and engaged;
- operate with agility and foresight so that they can act on learning, new challenges, emerging risks and changing community needs;
- continually improve the service it provides both locally and nationally because of the listening and learning culture;
- communicate openly and engage effectively to build trust and to form and maintain positive relationships; and
- uphold the reputation of the service.

Leaders at all levels of the service are skilled, capable and understand their responsibilities and accountabilities. They are supportive and role model positive and ethical behaviours. They make sure everyone who works for and on behalf of the service, understands their role and what is expected of them. Leaders prioritise safeguarding to reduce the risk of abuse, harm and neglect in their community and service.

Effective leadership of the service is integral to local, regional and national resilience. Leaders create an environment where their people collaborate with partners and agencies, enabling the service to prepare and respond in line with its civil contingencies duties, both cross-border and nationally.

Leaders ensure the service is resilient and financially viable, is environmentally aware, and delivers excellence and value for money. The service has a sustainable and diverse workforce with the capacity



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to respond to the risks faced by its community. Leaders and their people have the resources, information and technology they need to fulfil their roles. They use accurate and appropriate data to inform thinking and decision making.

The service is considered an employer of choice, where leaders encourage and embrace diversity. It actively demonstrates its approach to inclusivity because leaders ensure the service provides equal access and opportunities for all. Leaders and their people listen to, act on, and learn from feedback, positive or negative, whether it comes from their community, stakeholders or from within the service.

Leaders ensure that their service undertakes assurance so that it is compliant with legislative and statutory requirements and achieves industry, professional and Fire Standards. The service proactively monitors its performance, and it is well governed because of the trusted interface between its leaders and its governing body.

## **BUSINESS AREAS**

Strategic, Cultural

## **CAPABILITIES**

Leadership

## **WHAT IS REQUIRED TO MEET THE FIRE STANDARD**

A fire and rescue service **must**:

1. make clear the vision and strategic objectives for the service, which are available to and understood by all.
2. evaluate and continually improve what they do and how they do it for the benefit of the public and the service by:
  1. looking forward, enabling it to identify emerging opportunities, challenges, risks and developments;
  2. exploring opportunities to evolve and improve ways of working through innovative thinking and action;
  3. coordinating their organisational development through integrating their functional improvement and change action plans to inform strategic planning; and
  4. maximising opportunities to learn and innovate either from within or through collaboration with others.
3. carry out strategic planning activities so that it:
  1. understands its local risk profile and considers and puts in place appropriate mitigations to be able to respond to: i. the risks faced by, and incidents in, its local community; and ii. local, regional and national scale emergencies, working as a single service or collaboratively with partners or as part of a multi-agency response

2. undertakes robust workforce planning to: i. understand its capabilities so that it can deploy its resources effectively; ii. identify and manage potential and talent; and iii. attract and maintain a competent and diverse workforce
  3. remains financially viable, sustainable and delivers value for money for its community;
  4. identifies, understands and manages its corporate risks
  5. can understand its environmental impacts and put actions in place to reduce or mitigate them, or both;
  6. has appropriate business continuity plans in place so that it is resilient and able to function during times of disruption;
  7. maintains adequate technology to support the service;
  8. identifies and collects the right data to support effective and informed decision making, in a timely manner; and
  9. supports good governance, assigning clear responsibilities, roles and accountabilities and provides assurance about its organisational performance.
4. have a strategic approach to communication, engagement and consultation which includes clear principles about how the organisation will communicate with its audiences, linked to the values of the service and the Code of Ethics Fire Standard.
  5. put robust and transparent controls and processes in place so that it can effectively monitor and manage:
    1. finances;
    2. commercial activities and procurement
    3. corporate risks;
    4. resources and capability;
    5. organisational performance;
    6. compliance with legislation and statutory responsibilities;
    7. communication, engagement and consultation;
    8. talent management, organisational development, and change; and
    9. disciplinaries, grievances, complaints, staff disclosures and whistle blowing;
  6. have provision for accessing legal and other specialist advice to inform the day-to-day operation of the service.
  7. have leaders at all levels that:
    1. are accountable for the success of their service in: i. delivering its vision and strategic objectives; ii. complying with legislation, statutory requirements and industry standards; iii. aligning their service to the Fire Standards and any other relevant professional standards; and iv. upholding and enhancing the high reputation of the service in all they do.
    2. are politically aware, open to scrutiny and understand both the national and local challenges facing their service and others;
    3. are open-minded, open to learning and actively monitor the environment they operate in to enable them to work with agility and foresight;
    4. embody, role model and actively promote: i. an environment that creates and maintains trust throughout the service; ii. the leadership behaviours set out in the NFCC Leadership Framework; and iii. the ethical behaviours set out in the Core Code of Ethics.
    5. relate to others effectively and constructively because of their emotional intelligence;
    6. demonstrate and encourage in others excellent communication skills, welcoming feedback from all;
    7. use their effective influencing skills to develop and maintain positive and constructive relationships with: i. staff representative bodies to develop and foster a positive industrial relations climate that builds trust and facilitates change; and ii. partners and stakeholders

to deliver excellence to the community.

8. are technologically and data literate, who understand the importance of data and how to interpret it to support their planning and decision making.
8. have a defined approach to organisational learning so that the service continually evaluates its own performance to improve its internal ways of working and the service it provides to the public.
9. provide comprehensive, accurate and data driven reporting.

A fire and rescue service **should**:

10. consider its approach to organisational learning by:
  1. continuously evaluating its performance to ensure it remains efficient, effective and compliant with legislation and standards;
  2. identifying, capturing, evaluating and sharing learning which could benefit itself and others, engaging with national learning arrangements, where they exist;
  3. have in place or access to mechanisms which enable feedback from the community to be captured and responded to;
  4. have in place or access to mechanisms which enable feedback from employees to be captured and responded to; and
  5. using identified learning to tailor and improve what it delivers to the community.
11. recognise when it may need support and draw on the appropriate networks, national guidance and tools to support its own organisational development.
12. maximise opportunities gained from supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) network by sharing learning and experiences, collaborating with others and contributing to the continual improvement of the service.
13. engage regionally and nationally with peers, partners and stakeholders, collaborating where appropriate.

## **EXPECTED BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING THE FIRE STANDARD**

1. improved safety and wellbeing of the public, employees and volunteers
2. continuously improves the quality of service provided to the public
3. improved governance and leadership of the service and reduction of organisational risk
4. leaders that are open to innovation and different ways of working
  1. positive working culture that is inclusive, has the trust and confidence of its people and community
5. more successful recruitment campaigns because it is an employer of choice
  1. sustainable and diverse workforce that is engaged, motivated, well trained and competent
6. improved efficiencies, effectiveness, productivity and organisational adaptability
7. successful collaborations with partners, stakeholders and representative bodies

## **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS OR MANDATORY DUTIES**

This Fire Standard reflects only the most appropriate legislation to this topic. We recognise that fire and rescue services must comply with a broader list of legislation to undertake their duties, which would be applicable to all standards. [View the legislation which applies to all Fire Standards.](#)

For legislation specific to this Fire Standard, please see below:

- [Employment Rights Act](#)

- [The Equality Act](#)
- [The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 \(Exceptions\) \(Amendment\) \(England and Wales\) Order 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

## **LINKED QUALIFICATIONS, ACCREDITATIONS OR FIRE STANDARDS**

Fire Standards:

- [Code of Ethics](#)
- [Community Risk Management Planning](#)
- [Data Management](#)
- [Emergency Preparedness and Resilience](#)
- [Emergency Response Driving](#)
- [Fire Investigation](#)
- [Leading and Developing People](#)
- [Operational Learning](#)
- [Operational Competence](#)
- [Operational Preparedness](#)
- [Prevention](#)
- [Protection](#)
- [Safeguarding](#)

Leadership programmes:

- [NFCC Supervisory Leadership Development Programme](#)
- [NFCC Executive Leadership Programme](#)

The Fire Standards Board are aware there are multiple pathways and qualifications appropriate for these standards. Those should be referred to in line with Core Learning Pathways.

## **GUIDANCE AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- [NFCC Leadership Framework](#)
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)
- [Core Code of Ethics](#)
- [NFCC Talent Management Toolkit](#)
- [NFCC Coaching and Mentoring Toolkit](#)
- [Chartered Management Institute Professional Standards](#)
- [NFCC Core Learning Pathways](#)
- [NFCC Recruitment Hub](#)
- [NFCC EDI](#)
- [JESIP](#)
- [Managing Allegations Guidance](#)
- [NFCC Positive Disclosure Risk Assessment Guidance](#)
- [Joint DBS Eligibility Checks for Fire and Rescue Authority Roles](#)