

Item Number	Item 3 – Paper 1
Title of Paper	Impact Assessment
Decision or Information	For information
Date of Meeting	9 th September 2022
Presented by	Fire Standards Team
Attachments	Appendix A – Impact Assessment Feedback Summary Report as shared with HMICFRS, Home Office and NFCC

Summary

In response to action FSB-A116 relating to the impact of Fire Standards, this paper provides the Board with some initial feedback from the pilot impact assessment engagement event held in July 2022. It also sets out proposals for next steps in relation to further engagement activity on this subject and the impact assessment tool.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to note the contents of this paper.

Background

First Engagement Event

As discussed at the last Board meeting, the Fire Standards Team is focussed on beginning the assessment of the initial impact the Fire Standards published to date are having on services, and how they have been received. The team is doing this in liaison with the NFCC Implementation Team and NFCC programme teams.

In July, the FSB Chairs supported by the Fire Standards Team, held an engagement event in London to discuss the impact of the published Fire Standards. This event gave those services attending the opportunity to share their experiences and views with other services, as well as the FSB Chairs.

The day was well attended with over 20 services represented, (a list of those services represented is included in the summary report at *Appendix A* on page 7).

Due to the pandemic, this was the first opportunity for the Chairs to engage with services in person since a substantial number of Fire Standards have been published. It was also an opportunity to hear how services are utilising the implementation tools and their various approaches to implementation.

Because several services that had expressed a wish to attend the event could not make the date or location, plans are being made to arrange two further engagement events in the southwest and north during October and November.

A summary of the feedback from the services attending the pilot engagement event is captured in the feedback summary report at *Appendix A* on page 6. The feedback from all the events will be collated and analysed to provide a more complete picture for the Board at its December meeting.

Early indications from the pilot event feedback show that the Fire Standards are seen as a positive step for the sector, but that they would have more validity if they were clearly referenced through inspection.

However, what also became apparent were some perceptions held by many attendees which highlighted issues that the Chairs and the Fire Standards Team intend to explore further, both at the future engagement events and through service visits. These perceptions are summarised below:

- services not seeing a link between the Fire Standards and inspection judgement criteria leading to interpreting them as two separate measurement mechanisms;
- services not seeing the connections between their own local organisational development or change work in supporting achievement of the Fire Standards outcomes and improved inspection gradings;
- services not understanding that any national guidance which underpins a Fire Standard is there to help services achieve the standard and in doing so services are likely to see service improvements and better inspection outcomes; and
- services were concerned about what appeared to be differing levels of interpretation of Fire Standards by the cohort of HMICFRS inspectors.

It is proposed that further targeted communication may help clarify some misunderstandings and misconceptions the services have. This will form part of the communications planning for the year ahead. It is proposed such communication could be done via contact by the Implementation Team, website news articles, trade press article (Fire Magazine as a potential) and direct email to Fire Standards' SPOCs in services.

There is also the potential for the Fire Standards Board Chairs and team communicating jointly with HMICFRS and the NFCC respectively and this is being explored with the respective parties.

Service Visits

The Chairs have also undertaken two service visits with an emphasis on understanding the impact the Fire Standards have had on individual services. These visits complement the engagement events.

From these visits it was evident that these services had embraced the Fire Standards published to date, both following a similar path of activity when a Fire Standard is published which included:

- assessing which function or department the Fire Standard may apply to;
- working collectively to assess the current alignment of the service to that standard with the respective functions or departments, often facilitated by a Fire Standards Single Point of Contact (SPOC);
- using the implementation tools to evaluate any areas where improvement or change may be required and making sure an action plan is in place to address those areas;
- having reporting and governance mechanisms in place to monitor progress of standards implementation and continued achievement;

Significantly, both services recognised the importance of not just checking to see levels of achievement when the standard was first published but also having processes in place and governance to ensure the service continues to maintain those standards. This includes ensuring strategic level support by having Fire Standards as a standing agenda item at Senior Leadership Team meetings.

However, it should be noted that both of these services are well funded and have the resources required to be able to facilitate this approach. This is not likely to be the case for all services.

Stakeholder Meetings

Following the engagement event, the feedback summary report at *Appendix A* was shared with HMICFRS, and the Chairs met with Roy Wilsher and Alex Hill to discuss this initial feedback.

Commitment was given to consider providing clearer messaging about the relationship between Fire Standards and inspections. In addition, discussions about the potential of a Fire Standards workshop for the next round of inspectors was agreed.

HMICFRS also suggested that it might be useful for members of their team to attend our future impact assessment events and details of these events will be shared with HMICFRS to support this.

Discussions with colleagues within the Home Office and the NFCC Chair have also been arranged to discuss the feedback and the potential implications for their respective organisations.

Implementation Support

The Implementation Team has progressed with a series of online implementation workshops aimed at bringing together services to discuss and share their experiences of implementing Fire Standards, topic by topic.

These events have been incredibly popular and those held already were well attended. Further workshops are planned and an update will be provided to the Board at its meeting in December.

Proposed Approach using the Impact Assessment Tool

A draft of the impact assessment tool has been developed, but, following the engagement event in July, further amendments to some of the questions included in it are being refined to ensure the feedback gained through the tool is more meaningful.

The intention will be to release the tool during the autumn to complement the further engagement sessions planned.

The tool will be available to be used either to facilitate discussions in person or distributed to services for them to complete in their own time. This tool will be built in liaison with the NFCC Implementation Team so that they can use it both at the planned engagement events and when working with services. It will also be made available for services to use independently.

Conclusions

The success of the initial engagement event confirmed the benefit of holding the two further events planned.

Feedback from these events and that received via service visits or the impact assessment tool will enable the Fire Standards Team to gather a more complete picture of how services are reacting to the Fire Standards and the impact and benefit they are having.

We will update the Board further at its meeting in December 2022.

Impact Assessment Feedback Summary

Originally Produced: 23 August 2022

Overview

This document contains a summary of services feedback from a pilot FSB Impact Assessment workshop held in London on 26th July 2022 on behalf of the Fire Standards Board (Board). The workshop was attended by 26 participants from 20 services, those services represented are listed on page 7.

The programme used on the day is attached on page 8.

Purpose of Event

Following the development and publishing of the initial 12 Fire Standards, the Board is seeking to understand whether the benefits intended from introducing them are being achieved, and what impact the published Fire Standards have had on fire and rescue services so far.

Each Fire Standard contains a list of proposed benefits if the outcome of that standard is achieved. They all centre around improvement of service delivery and in summary they include to:

- improve safety, health and wellbeing of communities
- maintain trust in, and uphold, the reputation of the service
- continuously improve the quality of service provided to the public
- enhance professionalism and improve competence through more consistent approaches - decreasing organisational risk
- enable services to collaborate effectively with others, across borders or nationally
- generate more positive working cultures

It is acknowledged by the Board, that it will take some time for most services to achieve the Fire Standards. Whilst HMICFRS are providing an assessment of service performance through their inspection arrangements and reports, there is limited national data from which conclusions about benefits realisation of Fire Standards overall can be drawn.

However, it is hoped by working with HMICFRS, a measure of improvement and benefits achievement can be drawn in time. In the meantime, any form of true benefits measurement and realisation at this early stage is unrealistic.

However, the Board has commissioned work to consider the initial impact the published Fire Standards are having on services, how well they have been received, and what efforts to implement them have been undertaken.

The first part of this work was to invite services to an engagement event with the intention of gathering feedback about the impact of the Fire Standards. This was a proof-of-concept event and based on its success, further events around the country are being planned to allow all services to attend and contribute their views.

Feedback Received

The following gives an indication of the type of comments which were made by services, specifically about the relationship between Fire Standards and inspections and the Fire Standards Board and HMICFRS.

Whilst this is only a snapshot of the feedback from services, the workshop was well attended with lots of discussion and debate. The FSB Chairs are keen to discuss some of the feedback received with HMICFRS and the NFCC.

1. HMI has replaced several different assessment methods with a single method of consistent inspection, which services support.
2. Some services would welcome thematic future inspections, as the MET Police have, allowing a focus on Fire Standards which would be a valuable approach.
3. There is a disconnect between HMI and the Fire Standards Board which creates nervousness in services over whether the standards will be a measure of success in future inspections.
4. HMICFRS are not interpreting Fire Standards in the same way as services.
5. Services would like Fire Standard outcomes to be referenced in HMI judgement criteria.
6. HMICFRS do not take into account plans that services have to address the Fire Standards; they are only interested in what has been achieved already, which puts services in the first tranche at a disadvantage.
7. Services in the first tranches tend to share their experience and what early inspections are asking.
8. Services focus on improving inspection grades rather than improving the organisation / service provided to the public which is represented by the Fire Standards.
9. The current focus within services on HMI inspections means that the Fire Standards, along with other improvement drives, get left behind
10. The general rule is whatever HMI inspect within services is what is actioned - "what gets inspected gets done".

Attending Services

The list below includes those services who sent a representative to the workshop.

1. Cambridgeshire
2. Cheshire
3. Cumbria
4. Defence Fire and Rescue (MOD)
5. Devon and Somerset
6. Dorset and Wiltshire
7. East Sussex
8. Essex
9. Hampshire and IOW
10. Kent
11. Leicestershire
12. London
13. Northamptonshire
14. Nottinghamshire
15. Oxfordshire
16. Staffordshire
17. Suffolk
18. Surrey
19. Warwickshire
20. West Midlands

Workshop Programme

Welcome and Introductions

The Journey of Fire Standards

Impact Assessment Tool and Group Discussion. Questions posed:

- Are the standards doing what they should?
- What has been the impact so far?
- What is your experience of receiving and implementing the standards?

Lunch

Feedback to Group

Thank You and Next Steps