

<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Item 3 – Paper 1</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Communications and Engagement Strategy and Planning</b>
<b>Decision or Information</b>	For decision
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
<b>Presented by</b>	Fire Standards Team and Implementation Support Team
<b>Attachments</b>	Appendix A – Feedback Summary from Services Appendix B – Draft FSB Communications and Engagement Strategy Appendix C – Draft Communications and Engagement Schedule

## Summary

Following the decision taken at the last Board meeting for communications and engagement with services and other stakeholders to be a primary focus in 2023, the purpose of this paper is to provide the Board with the following documents;

- Feedback summary from Impact Assessment Engagement Workshops
- Revised Draft FSB Communications and Engagement Strategy
- Draft Communications and Engagement Schedule

## Recommendations and decisions required

The Board is asked to:

- Note the contents of the paper and appendices;
- Review and, if content, approve the Communications and Engagement Strategy.

## Background Information

Considering that there are now 14 Fire Standards published and a further two more planned for launch next month, at the last Board meeting it was agreed that emphasis and priority now needs to be placed on communication and engagement with services to help them achieve and embed the Fire Standards.

Working with relevant teams within the NFCC, the intention is to ensure that opportunities to engage with services about Fire Standards are maximised and where support is needed it is provided. It is also the intention to clarify and respond to the misperceptions about Fire Standards

that have been identified through evaluating the feedback. A summary of the feedback is attached to this paper (Appendix A).

As discussed, the communications and engagement approach has been reviewed resulting in the revised draft strategy (Appendix B).

The range of communication and engagement activities needed are linked to the range and levels of the stakeholders for Fire Standards. Our priority stakeholders remain the fire and rescue services, chief officers, and governing bodies. Working with members of the Board we hope to maximise opportunities to engage with those groups as we did recently both at the LGA Fire Conference and Chiefs Council meetings in March.

Ongoing engagement with the network of Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) who are driving local activity to achieve Fire Standards is also important, in liaison with the NFCC Implementation Support Team.

The NFCC Implementation Support Team have achieved a huge amount over the past twelve months with a significant proportion of their time and attention focussed on supporting services with achieving Fire Standards. There will be a verbal update given by the NFCC Implementation Liaison Manager at the Board meeting.

For the coming year the NFCC Implementation team will continue their work in raising awareness of Fire Standards, supporting services in their activities to implement change to achieve the Fire Standards, and maintaining awareness of the NFCC Implementation Support Team. They will achieve this through:

- ongoing workshop activity, regular communication and engagement with services, targeted online and in-person implementation support workshops for all new Fire Standards;
- development of additional materials to support services in achieving the new Leadership and People Fire Standards and continuing this approach with any further standards produced this year; and
- evaluation and review of workshops held during 2022/23 to confirm interest and to plan future workshops in accordance with demand.

The longer-term aspiration, as Fire Standards become more widely embedded and achieved, is that staff at all levels within each service will be aware of them, and of their service's ambitions to achieve them.

The Board is asked to review the draft Communications and Engagement Strategy, and if content, approve it.

## APPENDIX A - FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The feedback received from services at the three Impact Assessment Engagement Events held during 2022 which over 30 services attended, has been fully analysed and evaluated.

This appendix contains an overview of the key themes resulting from that analysis with a sample of comments received in relation to the themes. The Board should note that ongoing engagement activity undertaken by the FSB Chairs, the Fire Standards Team and the NFCC Implementation Support Team, may mean that some of these views may have changed. The Fire Standards Team and Implementation Support Team will monitor feedback from services about the impact of Fire Standards and respond accordingly.

Whilst the tables below capture mainly areas of concern, there was a high level of support from the those attending the events which centred around these aspects:

- The Fire Standards have been a good tool to reflect on what organisations are doing;
- The introduction of Fire Standards is a great opportunity to create a benchmark and level playing field across the country.

<b>Summary of Feedback – Impact of Fire Standards</b>	
	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Fire reform and direction</b>	Services are feeling there is too much direction from multiple angles (NFCC, national guidance, HMICFRS, Fire Standards and internal planning and delivery).
	Concerns over the longevity of Fire Standards linked to how much attention services will pay to them - will they still be there in years to come?
<b>Strategic Level Awareness and Responsibility</b>	Senior managers have competing priorities and often improvements recommended after inspections take priority. This can be influenced by the mindset and priorities of the chiefs and senior leaders.
	The level of understanding of Fire Standards is good amongst SPOCs, however the level of understanding with Chiefs and Chairs is variable leading to inconsistent approaches and challenges with implementing change linked to Fire Standards, due to a lack of senior level support.
	Local MPs and local authorities have little awareness of Fire Standards
<b>Implementation, process and capacity</b>	Services lack the resources and capacity to achieve Fire Standards, especially smaller services.
	How the Desired Outcome statements are interpreted is subjective. Services would like to see how other services are interpreting them and the actions they are taking to know what they should be aiming to achieve.
	There is a lack of senior oversight in implementing the Fire Standards.
	Once a Fire Standard is perceived to have been achieved, the Fire Standard is set aside and continued achievement is not checked again.

<b>Summary of Feedback – Impact of Fire Standards</b>	
	<b>Comments</b>
	Those implementing the standards within services do not necessarily have the right skills or levels of authority to do so.
	The pace of Fire Standards being published is difficult for services to prioritise and implement.
	Interpretations of what the implementation tools are and how to use them are varied. Some services use these to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. evidence compliance</li> <li>2. identify gaps</li> <li>3. define action plans</li> <li>4. capture the whole journey of achieving a Fire Standard</li> </ol>
	Some services have a clear approach and process from when a standard is published through to how they achieve it, other services do not have a process in place at all. Varied approach across the country.
	Fire Standards action plans are not always brought into the wider service continuous improvement plans. Various improvement plans sit across the service in various teams and functions, creating inefficiencies and duplication of work.
	Trying to retrospectively fit Fire Standards into existing long term change plans action plans can be an issue.
<b>Awareness and local communication about Fire Standards</b>	Not all staff are aware of Fire Standards and there is confusion over what they need to know about the Fire Standards.
	There is confusion over how NFCC tools, products and guidance link to Fire Standards. NFCC has not clarified how all of it is linked
<b>Perceptions about inspection and Fire Standards</b>	There is a perception within services that HMICFRS and their Inspectors have limited awareness and knowledge of Fire Standards in how they reference and inspect against them.
	HMICFRS are focussed on small changes rather than the services long term change programmes.
	Concern that HMICFRS Inspectors will not take into account plans that services have to address the Fire Standards; they are only interested in what has been achieved already or short term change plans.
	Services are focussed on achieving good inspection outcomes rather than longer term improvements to the organisation and the service it provides.
	There is a culture of whatever gets inspected gets improved, leaving some areas of the organisation behind.

## Fire Standards Board’s Communications and Engagement Strategy 2023-24

### Introduction

The purpose of Fire Standards is to **achieve better outcomes for communities through improving consistency in approach, driving continuous improvement in service delivery, and improving professionalism**. It is anticipated that the full suite of Fire Standards as originally envisaged, will be published by Spring 2024.

The Fire Standards Board from the start has actively listened to views and been consultative in its approach to developing Fire Standards. This communications and engagement strategy has as its focus supporting services in achieving Fire Standards and embedding them across services.

The strategy is supported by a “live” communications and engagement plan and schedule (Appendix C) which detail planned activities or events and show when these may take place. Whilst some activities are known and planned for in advance, the plan will continually evolve as opportunities to communicate and engage emerge.

The content of the strategy has been influenced by the challenges the Fire Standards Team and the Chairs have identified in their engagements with services, particularly through the impact assessment engagement work.

It has also been informed by the work of the NFCC Implementation Support Team. They have undertaken a range of engagement activities with services to support them as each Fire Standard has been published and continue to do so. Much of their work is connecting services and directing them to those who are further ahead with implementation and achievement of Fire Standards.

Whilst the Fire Standards are primarily for services in England, the Board positively encourages the Devolved Administrations’s ambition to adopt, at least in principle, the Fire Standards.

# The Fire Standards Board's Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Vision

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Effective communication and stakeholder engagement with services and other stakeholders about the Fire Standards that improves awareness, understanding and prompts action.

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## Communications And Engagement Aims

This communications and engagement strategy aims to:

- promote and broaden awareness of the Fire Standards and their role and purpose in achieving better outcomes for communities and improve professionalism within services through consistency of approach and driving continuous improvement in service delivery;
- help clarify and build understanding about the connection between Fire Standards and inspection;
- continue to raise awareness of the published Fire Standards and support the publication of new or revised Fire Standards; and
- explore and introduce new methods and enhance current methods of supporting services in their work to embed and achieve Fire Standards.

## Communication objectives

Our communications and engagement planning will focus on delivering against these objectives:

- 1) To maximise opportunities to communicate and engage with services to support the successful achievement of Fire Standards by England's fire and rescue services including:
  - a) finding new ways to promote Fire Standards through communicating to services their value and benefit;
  - b) identifying or establishing creative and innovative ways services may approach achieving Fire Standards by supporting them and encouraging them to share and learn from each other.
- 2) To establish and utilise key messages or lines to take, aligned to our stakeholder groups.
- 3) To continue to use and build on existing communication methods and platforms, such as social media channels, publishing engaging and accessible content to help raise awareness and understanding and ensure our website provides what our stakeholders need, working to grow our number of followers.

- 4) To support effective stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the right audiences are reached using the most appropriate channels in a timely way, enabling inclusion opportunities for all through peer review and open consultation as part of the development and review of Fire Standards.

## **Approach to Communications and Engagement**

The approach presented in this strategy is to provide direction and clarity to the level, tone, frequency and quality of communications and stakeholder engagement activity undertaken in relation to Fire Standards by the Fire Standards Board.

Engaging with the right people, at the right time, via the right channels, is crucial.

The strategy will help the Board and those who support it to:

- Ensure that our voice is consistent and professional in its tone
- Provide a structure for communication
- Identify key audiences and stakeholders and how best to engage and communicate with them
- Help to regulate the content and frequency of communications
- Closely align our messaging with our communication objectives so that we are in a better position to evaluate success

While the strategy does not aim to be prescriptive in its approach, all communications should be of a high quality being:

- Professional yet friendly in tone, style and level of authority
- Open, honest and accurate
- Clear, accessible and understandable, appropriate to the audience
- Consistent and with agreed messaging and objectives
- Monitored and reviewed regularly

## Stakeholders and audiences

The Board's communications and engagement activity is directed at both transmitting and receiving information. It recognises that there is a broad range of stakeholders who have varying levels of interest in, and influence over, Fire Standards.

The Board's Stakeholder Register contains all of the Board's potential stakeholders and is referenced to identify relevant stakeholders at the development stage of a Fire Standard or when a Fire Standard is being reviewed. The register is reviewed and maintained by the Fire Standard Team each time work on a new standard is initiated.

The figure below shows how we group the stakeholders in the register:

Fire & Rescue Services	Local Governance	Central Government	Professional Bodies & Associations	Academic and research institutions	Fire Industry and General Public
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chief Officers</li><li>• Senior Leaders</li><li>• Single Points of Contact (SPOCs)</li><li>• NFCC Lead Officers and Subject matter experts</li><li>• All employees</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Governing bodies</li><li>• Local Resilience Forums</li><li>• Other Responder Agencies Cat 1 + 2</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Departments, Agencies, Projects, Inquiry Teams</li><li>• Devolved Administrations</li><li>• Assurance / Inspecting Bodies</li><li>• Other National Projects / Boards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employers</li><li>• Trade Unions</li><li>• Other fire related bodies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Universities and education establishments</li><li>• Research bodies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Private sector fire services</li><li>• Suppliers</li><li>• Insurers</li><li>• Trade Journals</li><li>• General public</li><li>• National media</li></ul>

## Priority Stakeholders

The priority stakeholders for the Fire Standards Board remain those to whom they specifically apply – the fire and rescue services. However, the Board's stakeholders can broadly be split into three categories:

- **Fire and Rescue Services**, including those of the Devolved Administrations. Within services there are different stakeholders, for example, Chiefs Officers, Senior Leadership Teams, Single Points of Contact for Fire Standards and subject matter experts.
- **Governing bodies**, those representing fire and rescue service governance and who are the employers.
- **Internal stakeholders**, colleagues working within and for the NFCC who are frequently involved in development of Fire Standards and supporting guidance and tools.
- **External stakeholders**, including central government departments, agencies and national projects or programme teams, professional bodies and associations, assurance and inspecting bodies, other responder agencies (cat 1 +2), representative bodies, education centres, academic institutions, suppliers, trade press and the general public.

We aim to ensure the methods and channels of communication and engagement we use are most appropriate for the stakeholders with whom we need to communicate.

The Fire Standards Team will work with the NFCC Communications and Implementation Support Teams in identifying the most effective and appropriate way of communicating and engaging with our range of stakeholders, utilising the range of tools, platforms and methods available.

Working with others in the NFCC is also important to ensure alignment of the Fire Standards with the guidance, tools and support they provide and combining communications and engagement activity where it will be effective to do so. This will inform our more detailed communications plan and schedule.

We will evaluate effectiveness through feedback to continually improve our approach.

## **Fire Standards and Inspection**

A requirement within the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England states that “HMICFRS will have regard to Fire Standards” as part of its inspections. Therefore, a service is expected to demonstrate how they are achieving, aligning to, or are working towards aligning to, the published Fire Standards.

The Fire Standards Board and Team will seek to work with HMICFRS to jointly communicate and bring clarity to services about the role and purpose of Fire Standards and their relationship with inspection.

The existing Memorandum of Understanding between the two bodies may require review and revision as part of developing and maturing the understanding about Fire Standards, their implementation and their relationship with inspection going forward.

The feedback and key themes drawn from it, has informed the communications and engagement approach described in the strategy and will inform key messages, activities and plans.

Below is an indication of the types of activity either underway and to be continued or being considered to further support the local achievement and embedding of Fire Standards.

## Activities

- Collate key messages or lines to take that more accurately represent the current status of Fire Standards and the work of the Board and seek to address the feedback from services, especially about the role and purpose of Fire Standards, to be utilised in multiple communication activities including presentations and updating website content).
- Continuing to work with the LGA and APCC to improve levels of awareness and understanding about Fire Standards within governing bodies, helping them to understand their role in relation to Fire Standards and gaining increased support for them and the benefits they bring in improved leadership and positive culture change.
- Continuing to work with the NFCC to improve levels of awareness and understanding about Fire Standards amongst Chiefs Officers and senior leadership teams, helping them to understand their role in relation to Fire Standards and gaining increased support for them and the benefits they bring in improved leadership and positive culture change.
- Continuing to work with services to support them achieve Fire Standards through their existing continuous improvement or change plans, encouraging them to combine activities where appropriate. Gathering and sharing case studies of what has worked well to help.
- Work with services to help them promote and raise awareness of Fire Standards locally through producing communications tools and content centrally for services to use locally, including a refreshed set of short videos and standardised web content.
- In liaison with the NFCC Implementation Support Team, plan for continued engagement with services via direct visits, online meetings or discussions, attendance at sector events and potentially regional workshops.
- Encourage services to share and network with each other to share what works and effective practices including working with partners in the building of a catalogue of good practice case studies.

# Communications and Engagement Schedule (Draft)

	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24
<b>Fire Standards - Regular Development Communications</b>													
Peer Review - Resources Fire Standards				■									
Consultation - Resources Fire Standards				■	■	■	■	■					
Publish - Resources Fire Standards										■	■		
Launch - Resources Fire Standards											■	■	
Initiation Review of Operational Response Fire Standards						■	■						
<b>Specific Engagements</b>													
Cornwall FRS			■	■									
West Sussex FRS													
Chiefs Council	■	■											
LGA Conference	■	■											
<b>Communications Activities</b>													
Develop updated key lines to take			■	■	■								
Review Implementation Tool				■	■	■	■						
Engage with services to consider and develop effective communications tools					■	■	■	■					
Talking Heads Videos - Fire Standards Board Members production					■	■							
Develop and publish FAQ's						■	■	■	■				
Build a catalogue of Case Studies					■	■	■	■	■	■			