BOARD PAPER

FIRE STANDARDS BOARD

Item Number	Item 5 - Paper 2
Title of Paper	Fire Standards Board Delivery Plan Mid-Year Review
Decision or Information	Information
Date of Meeting	17 September 2025
Presented by	Fire Standards Team
Attachments	None

Summary

The Fire Standards Board Delivery Plan for 2025/26 was agreed in April 2025. The key objective of the plan is to continue to support continuous improvement in England's fire and rescue service.

The plan for 2025/26 has three objectives:

- Objective 1 – Fire Standards Selected for the 2025/26 Review Programme
- Objective 2 – Supporting Sector Improvement
- Objective 3 - Confirming the role of Fire Standards Board

There is flexibility built into this plan, which recognises the changing political landscape in which the team, and Board members, are operating in should any of the timing of activities or deliverables need to be moved or adjusted.

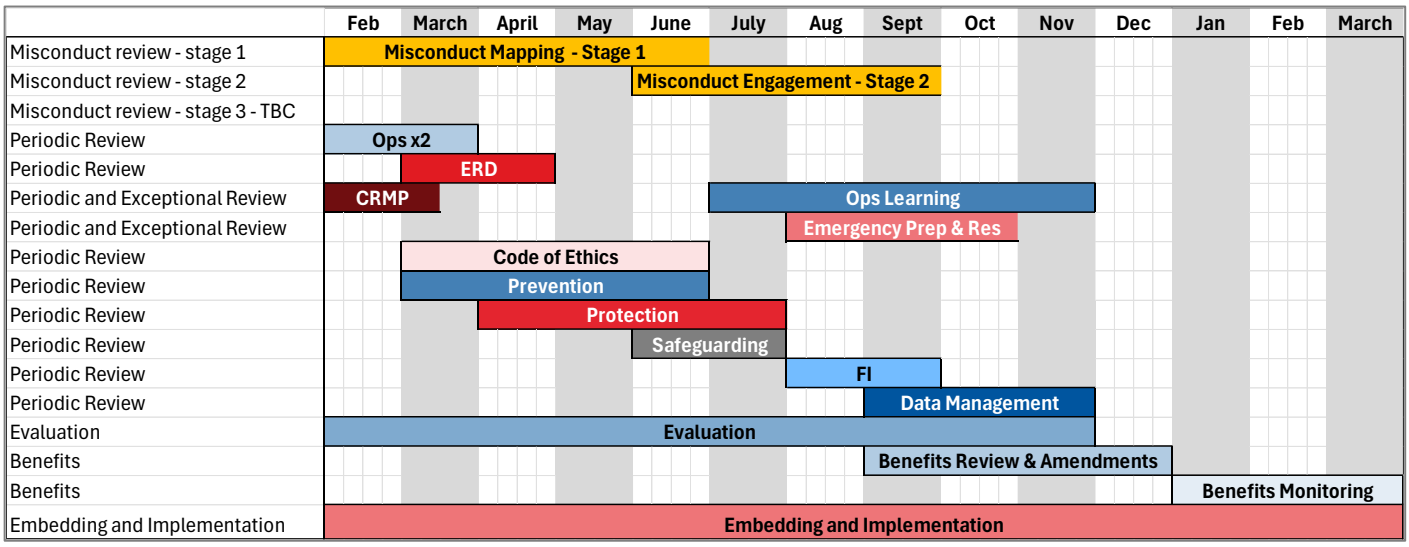
This paper provides an update on progress on each objective.

Objective 1 – Fire Standards Selected for the 2025/26 Review Programme

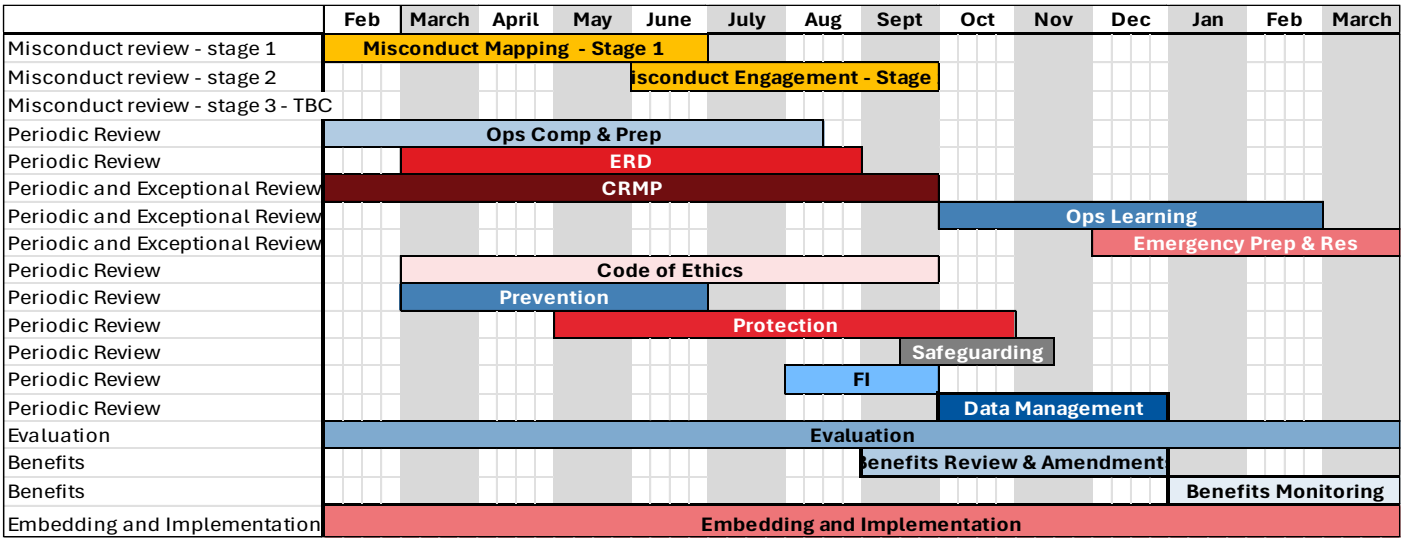
Each of the Fire Standards are periodically reviewed to ensure they remained current and relevant. The Fire Standards scheduled to be reviewed in 2025/26 are outlined in the graphic below, which illustrates the proposed review workplan as agreed in April 2025.

2025/26 Fire Standard Review Process and activity timeline 2025/26

Proposed April 2025 delivery timeline:



Updated September 2025 timeline:



As of August 2025, all scheduled reviews have been initiated by the Fire Standards Team. The timeline for some of the review activities have been impacted by challenges including sourcing appropriate SME expertise and delayed government legislation, which are explained in the following review section, addressing individual Fire Standards.

The team is confident that all reviews agreed as part of the delivery plan will have been completed by the end of the financial year. A summary of those reviews that are in progress or have completed can be found below:

Operational Competence and Preparedness Fire Standards:

The Operational Competence and Operational Preparedness Fire Standards were reviewed in October 2024, and a consultation took place between May and June 2025. The Fire Standards Team

has faced challenges in accessing practitioners to support the review of consultation feedback however a review is scheduled to take place in September 2025 with an expectation for the standards to be published in Autumn 2025.

Emergency Response Driver Fire Standard:

The Emergency Response Driver Fire Standard review was initially expected to commence in October 2024. Due to the introduction of incoming legislation and the recruitment of a new NFCC Lead for this area, it was agreed that the review would be postponed until more clarity about the timeframes for the legislation was available and the post was filled. The review commenced in February 2025, with support from the NFCC Driver Training Advisory Group (DTAG) earlier than planned and the Fire Standards Board agreed that the proposed amendments to the standard warranted a consultation which took place between June-July 2025.

The standard is expected to be published in October 2025. Please see Item 4, Paper 1.

Community Risk Management Planning (CRMP) Fire Standard:

The CRMP Fire Standard review was initiated in November 2024 by the CRMP Working Group, chaired by Nikki Richards, the NFCC CRMP Lead. The group welcomed the review, although there were delays to its delivery due to both a reprioritisation from the FST to assess the need for a Misconduct Fire Standard and illness of a key member of the group. A consultation of the standard took place in June 2025, with a review of the feedback in July. As NFCC does not have a funded CRMP workstream, there were challenges to source CRMP practitioners to support the review, which led to a delay in its completion.

The draft CRMP Fire Standard is expected to be published in October 2025. Please see Item 4, Paper 1.

Code of Ethics Fire Standard:

With support from the NFCC People, Culture and Leadership Hub (PCL), two review workshops with HR Practitioners from across six fire and rescue services took place in May and June 2025. The Fire Standard review was expected to be completed in June 2025, however due to the substantive amendments proposed, the Board was asked to agree to open a consultation on the changes which delayed the completion of the review.

Subsequent to the consultation, the Fire Standards team has been asked to consider whether some of the changes to the Leading and Developing People Fire Standard (to incorporate elements from misconduct) should instead be included in the Code of Ethics Fire Standard. This analysis has commenced in September with the support of the PCL NFCC Professional Leads network and the Fire Standards team will look to the Board for direction on how to progress, whether through a further consultation, a decision at NFCC Chiefs Council or a decision from the Fire Standards Board.

Prevention Fire Standard:

The Prevention Fire Standard was reviewed in May 2025. The proposed amendments were presented to the Board in June 2025. Following queries from Board members, the Prevention Fire Standard was approved In August 2025 and published in September 2025.

Protection Fire Standard:

Two Protection Fire Standard review workshops took place in June 2025. The review was expected to complete in July 2025, however due to the substantive amendments proposed, the Board is asked to agree to open a consultation on the changes which will delay the completion of the publication.

The proposed amendments to the Fire Standard are currently out for consultation, closing on 23rd October 2025.

Safeguarding Fire Standard:

A review of the Safeguarding Fire Standard was expected to commence in June 2025. Due to delays in recruiting an NFCC Lead in this area, the review has been postponed until September 2025.

The Operational Learning Fire Standard

The Board agreed that consideration should be given to the revision of the Operational Learning Fire Standard to evolve to become the Organisational Learning Fire Standard. Organisational Learning has been recognised by Fire and Rescue Services as a key driver for change and following analysis of the Operational Learning Fire Standard and engagement with the NFCC Organisational Learning Board, that board advised that an Organisational Learning Fire Standard would be beneficial for the sector. The Fire Standards Team presents more information on this in Item 6, Paper 3.

Delivery of the Organisational Learning Fire Standard is expected to commence in October 2025.

Objective 2 – Supporting Sector Improvement

This objective is concerned with the embedding and implementation of the Fire Standards through engagement and communication together with benefits management and evaluation to help strengthen the position of Fire Standards in supporting sector improvement. As part of this work specific consideration of the relationship and linkages between Fire Standards and the developing competency frameworks will be necessary.

Progress Update

Embedding and Implementation

The Fire Standards Chairs continued their communication and engagement programme which is built around raising awareness of fire standards through visits to services, particularly those who would welcome and benefit from independent input and at events such as NFCC and LGA Conferences and the HMICFRS Positive Practice Masterclass.

Between April and September 2025, the Fire Standards Board Chairs attended the following engagements:

- Two quarterly meetings with HMI Roy Wilsher (HMICFRS) – June and September 2025
- London Assembly Fire Committee – July 2025
- Service visit to Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service – September 2025

The Chairs are accompanied on service visits by the local NFCC Implementation Manager and members of the Fire Standards team. The Chairs are scheduled to visit Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service in December 2025 and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service in early 2026.

Members of the Fire Standards team also gave presentations about embedding relevant Fire Standards at the following NFCC events:

- Protection Conference – March 2025
- Digital and Data Conference – July 2025

HMICFRS Characteristics of Good

The team has updated the Fire Standards website to make a direct reference to the HMICFRS Characteristics of Good. This will support the NFCC Implementation team in their work to embed Fire Standards by demonstrating the link between HMICFRS, Fire Standards and NFCC in supporting service improvement.

Implementation Workshops

The Implementation team continues to deliver Fire Standard workshops, including regional Leadership Thematic workshops to support the sector.

These workshops reflect the demand for specific functional areas from services and between March and August 2025 there have been 12 workshops for over 200 people representing 40 English FRS. In addition, there have been three Leadership Thematic Fire Standards workshops for FRS in the Southwest of England, which were attended by 31 participants across 5 services. The team will be delivering two new series of six regional thematic workshops starting in September for the Southeast and East of England.

Working with Others to Understand the Professional Standards

There is not a single definition of professional standards and this potentially results in a lack of clarity and conflicting messaging by different bodies. For example, we have heard assertions by some that there are currently no professional standards in fire. Descriptions of competency, guidance and operational readiness have sometimes been described as professional standards. The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) has also made the following note:

> "[Fire] Standards were recognised as critical in driving consistency and professionalism across the sector [and] that the Fire Standards Board's work to define standards and their role in fostering cultural and operational improvements is ongoing"

Progress Update

Completion of this activity remains ongoing. The Fire Standards Team and the Chairs have continued to engage with the other members of the MAG, including an initial meeting with the Assistant General Secretary of the FBU, representatives from the LGA and the APCC to strengthen relationships to develop the definition. Subsequently, the team is also reviewing the initial governance documentation and planning materials used when initially forming the Fire Standards Board to confirm and build a definition.

Complementing the NFCC's work on Competency Frameworks

Due to demand from across the sector, NFCC is proposing to deliver work starting in 2025/26 to reform FRS competence and associated frameworks to address inconsistencies in current frameworks, support modernisation, enhance operational readiness as well as to demonstrate assurance across the sector. The suite of Fire Standards should be recognised as a key driver of this work. The Fire Standards Board will be able to support the NFCC by seeking to align the standards with the competency frameworks.

Progress Update

NFCC has developed a new Sector-Wide Model of Competence to support a consistent, modern approach to defining and maintaining competence across UKFRSs. Built around strategic activity mapping and incorporating both behavioural and technical elements, the model aligns with national standards, the NFCC Core Code of Ethics, and the Leadership Framework. The work has been collaboratively developed through the People, Culture and Leadership Hub with input from subject-matter experts and the consultancy RedQuadrant.

The model is being piloted across several NFCC Hubs, with the first frameworks to be developed against the new model focusing on Extrication and Children and Young People, both of which are now undergoing detailed review and revision. This work is on track, with publication of the revised frameworks planned for January 2025. These frameworks will not only set clear standards of competence but also act as exemplars for how the wider model can be applied across a range of operational and people-focused disciplines.

Alongside this programme of development, the NFCC is preparing a formal request to government to address the long-term governance and ownership of sector-wide competence. Clear arrangements for accountability and oversight are essential if the benefits of a consistent, evidence-based approach are to be sustained. This will ensure that competence is recognised as a collective responsibility across the fire and rescue sector and properly supported through national policy, investment, and regulation.

Evaluation Review and Monitoring

In addition to the completion of the initial suite of fire standards, the supporting products and guidance developed by NFCC have reached a level of maturity. The NFCC is now seeking to consolidate its work in continuous improvement by ensuring the products supporting fire standards can be fully embedded and lead to the realisation of benefits. To this end, NFCC intends to engage in a strategic evaluation of both its products and measurable benefits.

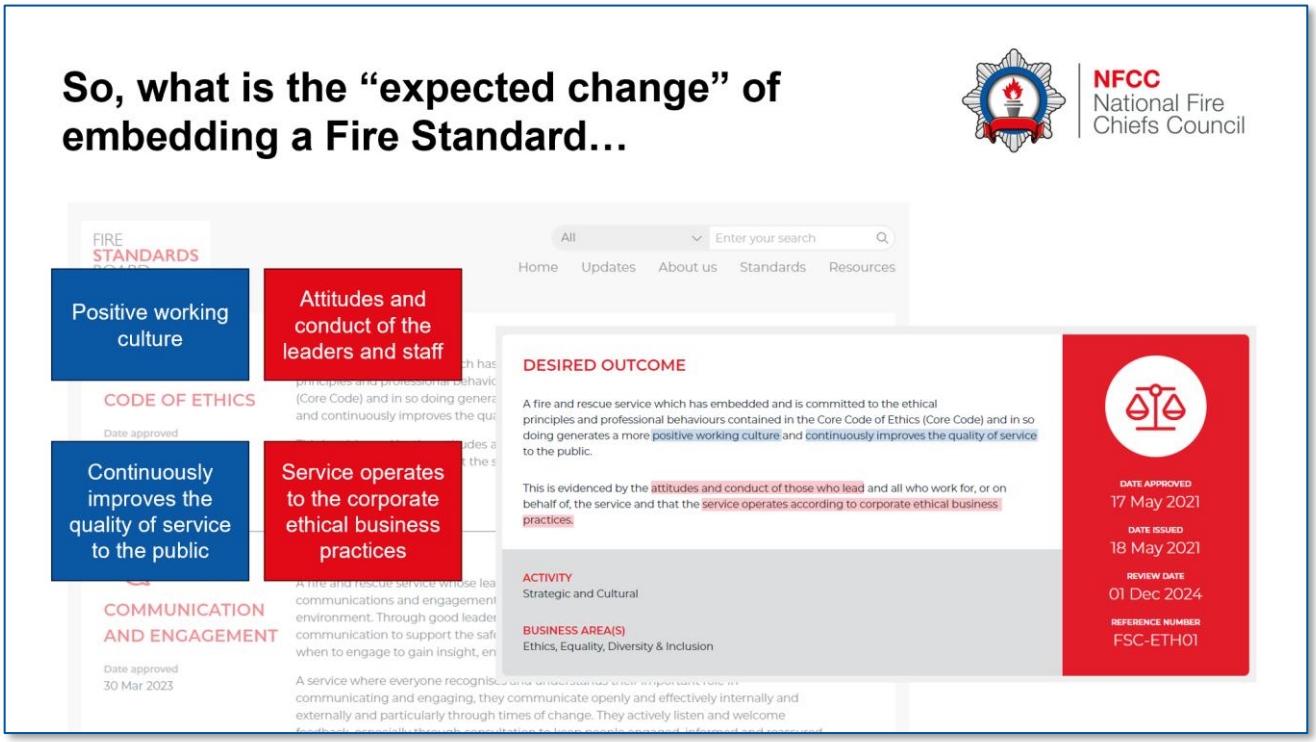
Progress Update

The NFCC Analysis and Insight team is undertaking this exercise and has provide progress updates at each Fire Standards Board and, to increase awareness more widely, the approach has been shared at a meeting with MHCLG and at the NFCC Improvement Committee. The purpose of sharing with Improvement Committee is to then provide challenge to Chiefs Council.

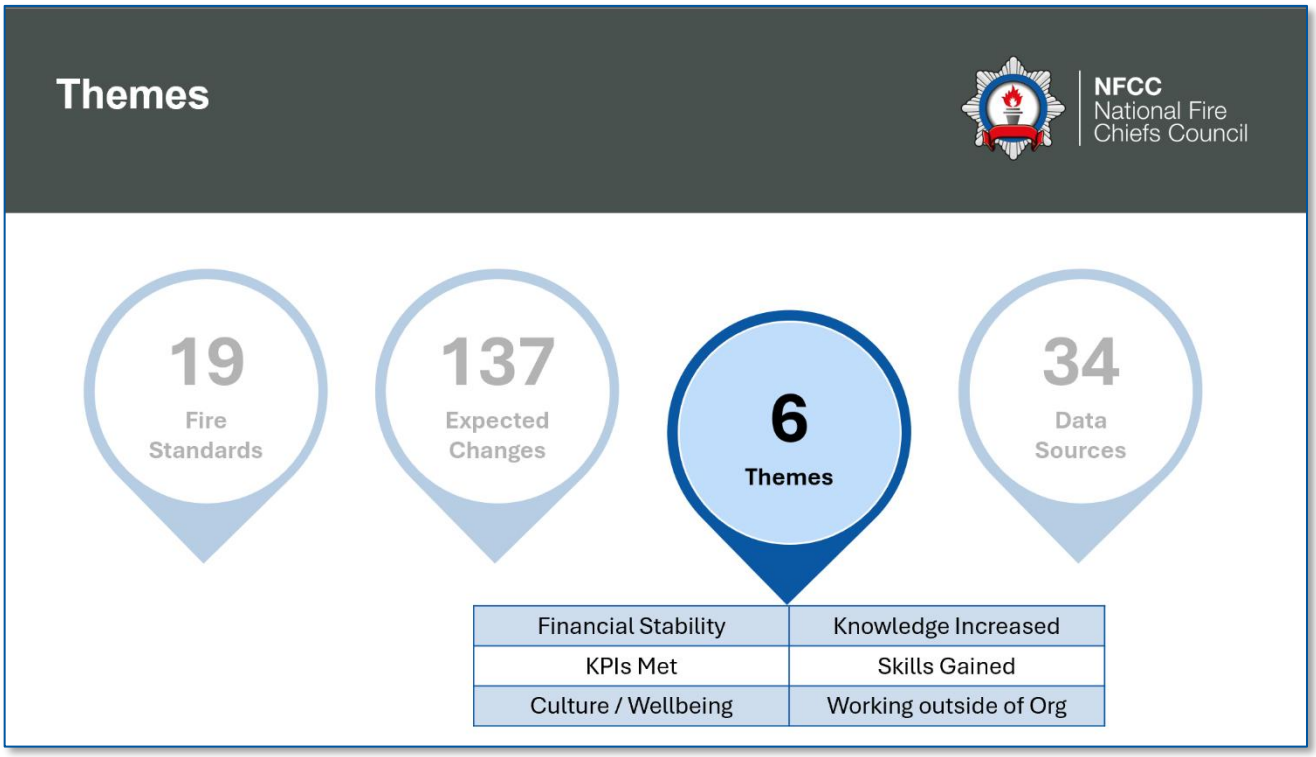
To date, the evaluation review has leant on the data published by HMICFRS through their inspection reports, in particular looking for measurable trends in Areas for Improvement (AFI) data and correlation between AFI data, individual service improvement and the adoption of Fire Standards. The work remains challenging but is demonstrating interesting findings:

- When the Fire Standard Outcome Statements are analysed, they point to 137 distinct outcomes an FRS will have achieved if they fully embed Fire Standards, shown as impacts (in

blue) and expected changes (in red), in the illustration below. These impacts can then be measured. The Illustration below uses the Code of Ethics Fire Standard as an example:

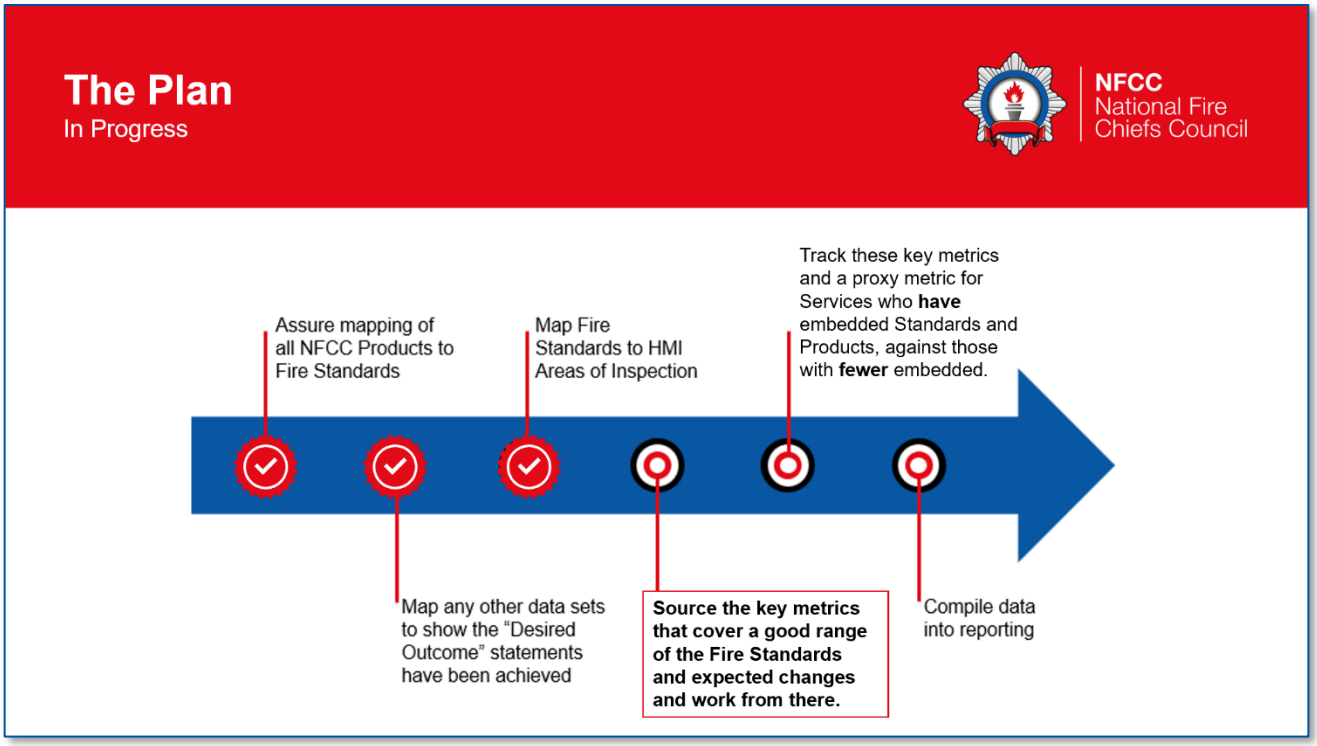


- 34 data sources have been identified, which could be used to measure expected changes including HR data published by services, HMICFRS data, HO/MHCLG statistics, staff surveys and academic research
- When further drilled down there are six themes repeated throughout the analysis:



The team is continuing to analyse the data and is now investigating additional sources and will continue to progress the work throughout the year, with the intention of adopting a business as usual (BAU) methodology moving forward from 2026. The methodology will support the Fire Standards team in evaluating the impact and progress of Fire Standards and should also support the wider sector including NFCC and MHCLG to provide challenge and scrutiny to activities and helping to prioritise new work.

- The ongoing plan is illustrated below



Objective 3 - Confirming the role of Fire Standards Board

The role and purpose of the Fire Standards Board remains key to ensure that Fire Standards are universally recognised, understood and engaged with across the fire sector to ensure that they are embedded in each service and support continuous improvement. Without the continued governance and oversight of the Board this is unlikely to happen, therefore the Board expects to remain in place to secure the continuing understanding and consolidate the benefits of this work. During 2025/26 the Board will continue to consider how its role should evolve considering the context in which professional standards operate. In addition to continuous improvement and inspection reports there are several high-profile drivers in the sector, including decisions on:

- Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Recommendations
- College of Fire and Rescue
- Competency Framework

Progress Update

The Fire Standards team is supporting MAG and the two Task and Finish Groups established by the Minister. To date, there have been two MAG meetings during the 2025/26 reporting period and three meetings of the College of Fire and Rescue Task and Finish Group. The support to these groups continues to align to the role and purpose of the Fire Standards Board.