

Terms of Reference

1. Role & Purpose

The role of the Fire Standards Board (FSB or Board) is to oversee the identification, organisation, development and maintenance of Fire Standards for fire and rescue services in England to support the continuous reform agenda and to increase the professionalisation of services for the communities and the public served by them.

The Board has responsibility for agreeing priorities and its workplan; oversight of standards in development; approval of final standards produced; and consideration of the published standards and whether they remain current. The Board is conscious of the need to ensure value for money in the way it works and the work it does.

The Board considers the work of other standards producing bodies and organisations and will reference or adopt equivalent existing standards, wherever appropriate.

The Board monitors the effectiveness of the standards produced for the profession to support continuous improvement, including considering feedback from HMICFRS on how standards have been implemented.

The Board engages with key stakeholders, as and when appropriate, in multiple ways.

Where appropriate, the Board provides advice to government on issues of fire reform, which are affected by, or impacted on by fire standards.

2. Membership

The Board has a Chair and Vice Chair, both independent from Government and the fire and rescue services. Their roles are to lead the Board in ensuring that the Fire Standards support the professionalism of the sector and the highest quality delivery of services to the public.

Other Board members represent key stakeholder organisations. Their role on the Board is to represent the interests of their organisation in discussions, but to take decisions collectively in the interests of the public and the fire and rescue services as a whole.

It is the responsibility of each key stakeholder organisation to put forward one representative with authority to take decisions as part of the Board discussions. In the interests of continuity, this should be the same representative at all meetings.

If a Board member is unable to attend a meeting, in certain circumstances and in agreement with the Chair, they may nominate an appropriate alternate representative to attend on their behalf. If this is agreed, then the nominated representative must have the same authority to take decisions. Board members may invite members of their organisation's staff to attend meetings as observers to support them in their role.

The Board has the following members:

- Independent Chair
- Independent Vice Chair
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) representative
- National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) representative
- Local Government Association (LGA) representative
- Police, Fire & Crime Commissioners representative (via the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners - APCC)

3. How the Board operates

The Board is supported by the NFCC through its Fire Standards Team which acts as secretariat to the Board.

Specialist subject matter experts or guests may be invited to attend the Board, as and when required, in line with the agenda and in agreement by the Chair. This is likely to be in relation to specific pieces of work or agenda items. If this is the case, the Fire Standards Team will inform all Board members of their attendance in advance.

The Board may invite representatives from HMICFRS to attend meetings, as and when, required.

The Board may establish additional advisory groups to assist with delivery of its purpose.

Board meeting agendas are prepared by the Fire Standards Team in agreement with the Chair. Board members may raise any items for the agenda. Meeting papers are distributed one week in advance of each meeting. The Chair approves the agenda and chairs Board meetings. If the Chair is absent, their role is taken by the Vice Chair.

Board Members are free to express their own views within the context of a Board meeting discussion.

Board members are given an appropriate amount of time to consider any decisions required of them.

Whilst the Board aims to make decisions by reaching consensus through discussion, it is accepted that decisions may be based on a majority decision to allow work to progress. Once a decision is reached all Board members must abide by it.

The Fire Standards Team is responsible for preparing the minutes after each meeting and agreeing their content with the Chair before distributing them for comment to the Board.

From time to time the Chair, Vice Chair or members of the Fire Standards Team may be required to represent the interests of the Board outside of the formal terms of reference, such as through engagement with Government fire reform activities. The Board will endeavour to fulfil these obligations.

4. Accountability

The Board is responsible for approving Fire Standards and the approach to their development. The Board sets the priorities for standards development work. They commission work based on proposals presented to them, monitor progress with ongoing work and approve completed work.

The Board seeks to ensure that any standards presented to them for approval have:

- been developed in line with the agreed development process;
- undergone appropriate consultation with subject matter experts and relevant stakeholders; and,
- undergone an independent quality assurance process.

5. Development of Standards

The Board is responsible for the creation and maintenance of a framework of Fire Standards that is applicable to, or in use within, fire and rescue services in England.

The Board commissions the NFCC Fire Standards Team to coordinate and facilitate on their behalf. In doing so, the Board:

Considers the developing fire and rescue landscape informed by outcomes and recommendations made as a result of inspections or inquiries; the fire reform programme; the findings from or impacts of research; operational or organisational learning from past incidents; and legislation;

- Identifies gaps within the framework, and priorities for new or revised standards;
- Works with key partners to plan and align standards development work in line with their strategic objectives, change and improvement programmes;
- Reviews proposals for work to be completed and commissions work;

- Agrees delivery plans for the standards and monitors delivery against them;
- Ensures published standards remain current and fit for purpose using learning or information on impact assessment, benefits realisation and periodic review;
- Commissions work to review and revise published standards, as and when, required;
- Builds and maintains relationships with fire and rescue services, including those in the Devolved Administrations, to encourage their involvement in the development of the fire standards and to inform similar work they may commission and approve; and
- Communicates proactively with a wide range of stakeholders, including HMICFRS, to inform them of progress, discuss any factors which may impact standards and gather feedback, as necessary.

As part of the development process, the Fire Standards Team ensures wider stakeholder groups have the opportunity to contribute to, and be consulted on, standards both directly and through various engagement channels including via the NFCC's network of committees, groups, engagement forums.

5.1. Fire Standards Team

The Fire Standards Team provides secretariat support to the Chair, Vice -Chair and the Board, which includes:

- Organisation of meeting dates, venues and inviting Board members to meetings;
- The preparation of meeting agendas, papers and minutes in liaison with the Chair; and,
- Coordination and planning of communications and engagement activity, for and on behalf of the Chairs and the Board.

The Fire Standards Team facilitates and coordinates development work, it is responsible for:

- Preparing proposals for and planning standards development work;
- Facilitating development work when commissioned including coordinating external quality assurance of the development of a Fire Standard;
- Managing the periodic review cycles of published standards;
- Monitoring and informing the Board where a standard may need revision outside of the agreed review cycle;
- Monitoring impact assessment, benefits realisation and periodic reporting on these subjects to the Board;

The NFCC and its members are responsible for:

- Nominating a relevant national lead officer to sponsor development work and provide subject matter expertise and strategic direction;
- Providing adequate resources, within the provided funding, to enable the delivery of the suite of fire standards to agreed timescales; and
- Contributing to the development of proposed content for the standards with support from the Fire Standards Team.

Stakeholders (which can include the NFCC) are responsible for:

- Producing guidance and other related materials that may underpin or support the standards.

6. Board Member Behaviours

Members of the Board are expected to operate in line with the principles set out in the [Cabinet Office's Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies](#).

The Code sets out the standards expected of those who serve on Boards in the UK public sector.

7. Meetings and Secretariat

The Board meets as frequently as required, but no less than four times per year.

Meetings of the Board may be held in person or via remote communication. The arrangements and venue for meetings are made known to Board members in advance of each meeting.

Members of the Board are occasionally asked to take decisions outside of the scheduled meetings. Should the Board not be able to reach a decision outside of a Board meeting, the decision will be deferred to the next scheduled meeting. Alternatively, the Chair may schedule an exceptional meeting of the Board to resolve the matter.

The Chair and Vice-chair may meet with members of the Fire Standards Team, as and when needed, to discuss outcomes from previous Board meetings, matters arising in between meetings and preparations needed in advance of future Board meetings.