



## Professional Standards – Briefing Note (July 2018)

### Progress Update

In Spring 2018, the Professional Standards Body Project Board accepted a proposal to establish professional standards for the fire and rescue services and a body that would be responsible for them.

In April 2018, the Home Office submitted this proposal to the Police and Fire Minister seeking approval for a sector led approach to standards for the fire and rescue service (explained below). In June, the Minister approved the submission and the Home Office [announced their intentions](#) to establish a Fire Standards Board for England.

This briefing note aims to explain the proposed way forward.

### Fire Standards Board

The independently chaired **Fire Standards Board (FSB)** will be established by the autumn to provide oversight and scrutiny of the initial establishment and then on-going maintenance of professional standards for fire and rescue services in England.

Services within the Devolved Administrations operate against their own standards and inspection frameworks and will have the option of adopting all, or part of the professional standards developed through the new board as they see fit.

Support and delivery will be provided through the **NFCC**, led by the **Fire Central Programme Office (CPO)** in their new capacity as providing programme and project management in support of the NFCC Programmes.

The benefits of this approach maximise efficiencies by using existing structures where they exist and enhancing them where they don't. It will also result in an efficiently created, high quality and useable framework of professional standards that will seek to state "what good looks like" in any given area of operating a fire and rescue service.

The framework will be informed by the HMICFRS inspection arrangements., The standards will need to evolve and be shaped by what is learnt through post-incident reviews, inspection findings and any legislative changes.

The benefits include:

- A more consistent approach to service delivery while providing enough flexibility for services to meet local needs.
- Standards remain current by reviewing good practice and learning gleaned through inspection findings and past incidents.
- Continual improvement of the fire and rescue service performance in line with public expectations.

It is proposed the development of the framework and all identified standards will be complete as part of a five-year programme. The Home Office are providing funding to support the development of standards.

Work is underway to establish the new Board and appoint a chair and vice-chair independent from both the fire and rescue services as well as government. The aim is to appoint candidates with appropriate experience and background in professional standards but from another sector.

## Professional Standards Priorities

The business case put to the PSB Project Board included a number of priorities for professional standards which will be shared with the Fire Standards Board once established. It will be the responsibility of the new board to further evaluate and clarify the recommendations and priorities and to formulate a work programme to deliver the professional standards framework.

1. Consistent **leadership standards** for fire and rescue services (including values and a code of ethics) are developed.
2. Standards are developed in how fire and rescue services should **best deploy their resources to identify, assess and manage risks** at strategic level in communities.
3. Collate current good practice on **prevention** and undertake research to set appropriate standards for **delivery as well as quantitative and qualitative evaluation**.
4. Standards and good practice for **fire protection** should be reviewed as a high priority, linked to the Hackitt review.
5. NOG is adopted and implemented as a common standard for **operational response**, ensuring that national operational learning is considered in the development of new standards.
6. Common standards for **business continuity** are developed.
7. The **Fire Professional Framework** is updated to include standards for selection, training, development and appraisal of FRS staff, apprenticeships, and supporting an increased focus on diversity in selection and progression processes.

## PSB Project Summary

Work on developing specific standards was not undertaken by the project team. Defining, prioritising and development work on professional standards will only commence following the establishment of the Fire Standards Board.

### What we did

- Carried out a survey to establish the standards and accreditations currently in use across all areas of fire and rescue service business.
- Explored methodologies for the development or review of professional standards by researching how other sectors set, develop and maintain professional standards.
- Identified an appropriate methodology used by many sectors and used to develop National Operational Guidance
- considered a range of the options for how professional standards could be delivered and overseen for fire and rescue, ranging from collaboration with the College of Policing; a new fire standards body; and a sector-led approach.
- Completed feasibility studies of all options explored

## What we found

- Services currently align to a variety of standards and accreditations - some established by different bodies that have evolved over time, with others chosen or defined locally.
- Many recognised standards and benchmarks have lost currency because there has been no centrally coordinated oversight, maintenance or validation of standards.
- There is limited evidence currently to assess whether the variety in use today achieve the best outcome for the public.
- Where there are standards that are recognised nationally, there is evidence that a higher number of services align to them; examples include the National Operational Guidance, JESIP and the CFOA Competency Framework for Fire Investigation.

## What we recommended

- Inconsistencies and potential gaps in standards in use could be addressed by the introduction and maintenance of a professional standards framework.
- Professional standards and the framework should be overseen by a strategic board with an independent chair and a mix of other members including key stakeholders to provide oversight and scrutiny and to commission and approve professional standards.
- There is capacity within existing structures to provide support for the board and to provide the delivery of professional standards.
- An appropriate and widely recognised standard setting process along with an external quality assurance process has been identified for use in the development of professional standards.
- All stakeholders should have the opportunity to be involved in standards development work and be consulted throughout.

Should you have any further queries about the Fire Standards Board or standards framework, please contact the NFCC CPO on [fireCPO@ukfrs.com](mailto:fireCPO@ukfrs.com)