

Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008–11





Fire and Rescue Service
National Framework 2008–11

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Ministerial Foreword

Over the last few years the Fire and Rescue Service has made a significant contribution to improving the safety of local communities. However, we have more to do together to deliver a Service ready for the challenges the 21st century will bring.

The response to last year's flooding demonstrated the professionalism, flexibility and commitment of the Fire and Rescue Service. Going forward the impact of climate change, the threat of terrorism, an aging population and other environmental, economic and social factors will all present further challenges for the Service. The National Framework seeks to set out clearly the Government's expectations and proposals for the next three years and is intended to help the Service build the foundations to enable it to meet these challenges.

The number of fires in England continues to fall and fire deaths are at the lowest since the 1950s. Government has set ambitious targets to drive down accidental fire deaths and deliberate fires. To continue to achieve these targets and deliver better value for money for our communities the Fire and Rescue Service needs to continue to improve its ability to work with other public services and tackle local issues in partnership.

We have consulted extensively on the draft National Framework¹ and I am grateful to all those who responded. We have carefully considered all the responses and reflected them, where possible in the National Framework. The Government's full response to comments was published today on Communities and Local Government's website: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/nationalframeworkresponse².

The pace of change within the Fire and Rescue Service since 2003 has been rapid. One of the main objectives of this National Framework is to balance the overall weight of expectation placed on the Service in order to provide the capacity to deliver FireControl and other priorities. Three of the key priorities for this National Framework are:

- Delivery of an enhanced resilience capability
- Fire and Rescue Authorities taking ownership and successfully implementing the Equality and Diversity Strategy; and
- That in a tighter fiscal climate, Fire and Rescue Authorities meet public expectations of a modern, efficient and effective Public Service.

¹ Published November 2007

² www.communities.gov.uk/fire

Public services must be properly representative of the communities they serve and implementation of the Equality and Diversity Strategy is central to the Service playing a full role in meeting the needs of our diverse communities. I'm looking for a step-change from Fire and Rescue Authorities over the next three years. We will implement, with the involvement of stakeholders, a graduate scheme and a high-potential development scheme to continue to strengthen the service.

The Local Government White Paper: *Strong and Prosperous Communities*³ set out government's vision for local government to be more responsive and deliver better outcomes for communities. Fire and Rescue Authorities have a crucial role to play in delivering that vision. It will be for them to shape their role by evolving their work with all partners to develop Sustainable Community Strategies and through Local Area Agreements to deliver community priorities. It is vital that the service, its representative bodies and local government partners, take clear ownership of the improvement agenda and build sector-capacity to support and challenge performance.

I look forward to working with you to achieve these goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Parmjit Dhanda', written in a cursive style.

Parmjit Dhanda

Minister for the Fire and Rescue Service

³ Published October 2006

Introduction

1. The Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for the Fire and Rescue Service. It does this by making clear:
 - the Government's expectations for the Fire and Rescue Service
 - what Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to do; and
 - the support the Government will provide in helping them to meet these objectives.
2. The Framework is a strategic plan which outlines the outcomes the Government expects to see delivered by Fire and Rescue Authorities and Regional Management Boards across the range of their functions. It is not a national blueprint and does not provide detailed guidance on how to meet these objectives. Building on the publication of the joint vision for the Fire and Rescue Service by the LGA, CFA and Communities and Local Government last year, this Framework sets out the challenges and opportunities faced by the Service, its partners and government in support of the Service over the next three years.
3. The Framework is a foundation on which to build local solutions. Giving Fire and Rescue Authorities the flexibility they need to meet the specific needs of their local communities, which remain at the heart of the government's approach. The move to local risk assessment and Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) has proved to be a success. The Fire and Rescue Service has delivered real achievements; an increase in the amount of prevention work being undertaken which is contributing to achieving the lowest level of fire deaths since 1959. The Fire and Rescue Service has flexibly deployed its resources to tackle the risks to communities and has delivered improved efficiency and value for money. To date, it has achieved the PSA target set in the 2004 Spending Review. Consolidating and building on this success will be the next challenge.
4. *The Local Government White Paper: Strong and Prosperous Communities* sets out central government's expectations for local government and the Fire and Rescue Service has an important role to play in delivering that vision. Local Area Agreements provide real opportunities for public services and local partners collectively to change outcomes for local people. Communities and Local Government will also expect to see Fire and Rescue Authorities applying robust performance management principles, evaluating outcomes and considering value for money issues as they take forward this agenda. While Chapter 4 of the Framework sets out the implications of this new agenda for Fire and Rescue Authorities, working with and delivering through partners is a theme which runs throughout the document and should be considered in particular in Chapter 1 which deals with Prevention, Protection and Response.

5. The Comprehensive Spending Review 07 (CSR) reflects expectations that public services continue to deliver improved efficiency and introduces a fresh approach to target setting for central and local government. The number of Public Service Agreement targets have been substantially reduced and refocused to reflect clear priorities for central and local government to deliver together. Alongside PSA targets which are cross-cutting, each department has agreed a set of Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs) against which its performance can be measured. Communities and Local Government's DSOs include the objective of:

Ensuring safer communities by providing the framework for the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies to prevent and respond to emergencies.

6. Two fire indicators form part of the national set of indicators to apply to local government performance agreed as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review:

NI 33 – Arson Incidents (deliberate fires)

NI 49 – Number of primary fires and related fatalities and nonfatal casualties (excluding precautionary checks).

The relationship between these indicators and the new performance framework for local government can be found in Chapter 4. The DSO and the full set of indicators are available on Communities and Local Government's website:

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/735112.pdf

7. The DSO and the indicators are key measures on which government and Fire and Rescue Service performance will be measured in this CSR period. However, this does not mean that they are in any sense the only outcomes against which Fire and Rescue Authority performance will be assessed. The Audit Commission has responsibility for performance assessment of Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Commission will base their performance expectations on the priorities and objectives set out in this Framework and will assess to what extent individual authorities are delivering against them as well as progress against the indicators and the effectiveness of Fire and Rescue Authorities' contributions to priorities set through Local Area Agreements. Chapter 4 provides more information on the new performance framework for the Fire and Rescue Service and on how Fire and Rescue Authorities can look to contribute more widely to the delivery of other indicators in the set.
8. There has been a huge expansion in resilience activity within the Fire and Rescue Service in recent years which is set to continue. In response, Communities and Local Government has made significant investment in Fire and Rescue Service resilience with a major provision of resources and training, as part of its ongoing Fire Resilience Programme. The Fire and Rescue Service has responded well to the resilience challenge

thus far, as demonstrated by the effective response to recent emergencies, which included the use of New Dimension resources.

The Fire and Rescue Service will need to show the same positive flexibility in addressing the future challenges of Firelink and Firecontrol implementation. To achieve this, authorities must look closely at the effectiveness of their joint working arrangements. While we remain committed to locally accountable Fire and Rescue Authorities, meeting the needs of national resilience requires effective mechanisms for co-ordination and integrated service delivery at regional and national level. Chapters 1 and 2 of this Framework sets out the balance that we believe needs to be struck between delivery at local, regional and national level.

9. Equality and Diversity is another key priority for delivery within the Framework. Fire and Rescue Authorities need to take ownership of and implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy in order to reduce the impact of fire on the diverse communities they serve, to continue to build community engagement, and to ensure an efficient and effective balance in their recruitment and deployment of a retained and wholetime workforce. We will consider how nationally supported initiatives can build on local positive action events, outreach work and awareness raising to help change the profile of the workforce by encouraging people from all sections of the community to consider a career in the Service.
10. We recognise that the pace of change within the Fire and Rescue Service since 2003 has been demanding for Fire and Rescue Authorities. This National Framework is intended to streamline expectations of Fire and Rescue Authority performance to free up capacity to deliver FireControl and other critical priorities over the next three years. To that end we have significantly reduced the “must” and “should” requirements in this version from those in previous versions and have looked closely at the expectations reflected in the Framework and organised it around four key themes:
 - Prevention, Protection and Response;
 - Resilience
 - Diversity and Workforce
 - Governance and Improvement.

Many of the messages set out in the introduction cut across these themes but the aim is to make the document more concise and precise in the expression of the “must” and “should” requirements. We have also aimed to focus more in the document on the outcomes we want to see delivered rather than the processes we want Fire and Rescue Authorities to adopt. This has not been possible in all parts of the document but where processes are already established, such as IRMP, the Framework focuses on what we expect to see as part of an IRMP rather than on the detailed processes that Fire and Rescue Authorities need to go through to produce them.

Summary

11. The Framework is divided into four chapters:

Chapter 1 – Prevention, Protection and Response – covers the core business of Fire and Rescue Authorities in analysing risks and taking action to meet and mitigate the effect of those risks.

Chapter 2 – Resilience – covers the delivery of the key resilience programmes and the actions authorities need to take to ensure they are fully equipped to meet the demands of the resilience agenda.

Chapter 3 – Diversity and Workforce – covers the importance of mainstreaming diversity in all levels of the Fire and Rescue Service and workforce development, training and health and safety.

Chapter 4 – Governance and Improvement – covers institutions in place to support the delivery of Fire and Rescue Authority business, the new Local Government White Paper framework including Local Area Agreements, Performance Assessment and Finance.

Legislation

12. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides the statutory authority for the National Framework and requires:
- The Secretary of State to prepare a National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service
 - The Secretary of State must consult with representatives of Fire and Rescue Authorities and their employees before making significant changes to the Framework
 - The Secretary of State must bring the Framework and any significant revisions to it, into effect by statutory instrument subject to annulment in either of the Houses of Parliament
 - Fire and Rescue Authorities must have regard to the Framework in exercising their functions.
13. In addition, the Act gives the Secretary of State the power to intervene if he/she considers a Fire and Rescue Authority is failing, or likely to fail to act in accordance with the Framework. While Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to make progress in all areas set out in the Framework, references to what authorities “must” or “should” do indicate those areas that Ministers consider to be most important, with “must”

being stronger and more specific. Any use of the intervention powers attached to the National Framework will be in accordance with the Local Government Intervention Protocol⁴ which should be taken to be the protocol prepared by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 23 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. We envisage that government powers would only be used as a last resort.

Timescales and future frameworks

14. For the first time, this Framework has a lifespan of three years so that it reflects the Government's plans for the whole of this Comprehensive Spending Review period. However, the Framework must continue to remain current and meaningful so the Government will review whether changes need to be made to the document after two years of the three have elapsed. We will aim, however, to leave the document in place for the whole three year lifespan if possible. If that is not possible we will consult on any proposed revisions prior to implementation. The commencement date is 30th June 2008.
15. The National Framework draws together existing priorities and objectives for the service into one place. As a result we do not consider that it will place extra burdens on business, charities, the voluntary or the public sector, and therefore no separate Regulatory Impact Assessment has been produced.

Scope

16. The National Framework covers England only. It does not apply to Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales where responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service is fully devolved.

⁴ Protocol on Engagement and Intervention in Poorly Performing Local Authorities and jointly signed by the LGA and government in 2003.

Chapter 1

Prevention, protection and response

- 1.1 Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) has successfully enabled improvement and reform in the way the Fire and Rescue Service works and has helped deliver the achievements of significantly reduced fire deaths and deliberate fires. Fire and Rescue Authorities have used the freedoms to evaluate risk to communities – risk to life, the economy, heritage and the environment – and to use their resources more flexibly in prevention, protection and response measures, to meet those challenges and deliver better outcomes for communities.
- 1.2 Going forward IRMP will provide a foundation for Fire and Rescue Authorities to deliver government’s expectations for public services to meet the needs of local communities; consider the impact of the services they deliver on the environment, and for Fire and Rescue Authorities working together and with other agencies to respond effectively to regional or national emergencies.
- 1.3 Leadership and good management by locally accountable elected councillors and senior officers is fundamental to a community based Fire and Rescue Service. In taking forward development of their IRMP an effective authority will seek genuine engagement with local people in shaping services; have strong working relationships with partners; and a workforce that is representative of, and able to engage effectively with, the people that it serves. Chapter 4 addresses in more detail many of these factors in the context of Local Area Agreements.
- 1.4 Recent large scale incidents have re-emphasised the importance of well integrated services across authority boundaries and the evidence for the potential gains in effectiveness and efficiency this can help deliver is clear. In taking forward development of their IRMPs, authorities need to ensure their plans and operational practices are properly integrated with their neighbours and consider the joint resources they have available to respond to incidents of every type and size. Government is supporting this process with the creation of Regional Control Centres, which will further enable the mobilisation of nearest resources across borders to deal with all types of incident. The implementation of the National Resilience programme also supports this.
- 1.5 The relationship between prevention, protection and response is fundamental to the effective and efficient delivery of functions by Fire and Rescue Authorities and how resources are used. The appropriate balance between these three approaches within IRMPs relies on robust and up to date risk data reflecting both international, national and local research, effective information exchange with partners and thorough evaluation of outcomes delivered by programmes in each of these areas.

- 1.6 Government will continue to support Fire and Rescue Authorities in developing IRMPs and is currently evaluating the adequacy and impact of IRMP policy (including how it links with IPDS) and expects to publish its findings during 2008. It is important that IRMPs take an appropriately strategic view of service planning and development and are properly integrated with business planning processes and any agreed Local Area Agreement objectives. Communities and Local Government strongly recommend use of the Fire Service Emergency Cover toolkit (FSEC), with the support from other risk assessments. Communities and Local Government continues to develop and support the FSEC model. The IRMP Steering Group is developing a range of good practice guidance.

Each Fire and Rescue Authority must produce a publicly available IRMP covering at least a three-year timespan which:

- **is regularly reviewed and revised and reflects up to date risk information and evaluation of service delivery outcomes**
- **has regard to the risk analyses completed by Local and Regional Resilience Forums including those reported in external Community Risk Registers (CRRs) and internal risk registers, to ensure that civil and terrorist contingencies are captured in their IRMP**
- **reflects effective consultation during its development and at all review stages with representatives of all sections of the community and stakeholders**
- **demonstrates how prevention, protection and response activities will be best used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities in a cost effective way**
- **provides details of how Fire and Rescue Authorities deliver their objectives and meet the needs of communities through working with partners and**
- **has undergone an effective equality impact assessment process.**

Fire and Rescue Authorities should review the effectiveness of “cross-border” integration arrangements with neighbouring authorities and set these out appropriately in their IRMPs. Such reviews may best be carried out jointly and Regional Management Boards provide a potential forum for this to be taken forward.

Prevention

- 1.7 Fire and Rescue Authorities have delivered impressive outcomes in prevention programmes, contributing directly to the reduction in fire deaths and deliberate fires, as well as in areas such as reducing road traffic collisions (RTCs). Government has supported Fire and Rescue Authorities' transition to a statutory responsibility for fire prevention work directly by providing £36 million over four years in additional grant funding. Communities and Local Government will be evaluating the outcomes delivered by the Home Fire Risk Check and Fire Prevention grant programmes and expects to publish its findings in late 2008.

Additionally authorities have re-invested the efficiency gains of the last three years in mainstreaming prevention programmes in their service provision. Fire and Rescue Authorities have embraced the home fire risk check initiative with great enthusiasm, completing more than 1.3 million visits to people's homes and installing 1.1 million smoke alarms by the middle of 2007. Highlighting the importance of smoke alarms in saving lives will continue to be a key role for the Service.

- 1.8 Fire prevention programmes will remain at the heart of the work of Fire and Rescue Authorities in local communities. In taking forward this work authorities will be seeking to influence the behaviour of many of the same groups within communities as other public service providers – for example the elderly, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, those living in poor quality housing, drug and alcohol users and those involved in crime and disorder. This provides clear opportunities for development of effective partnership programmes and this is discussed further in Chapter 4. Similarly evaluation of the effectiveness of prevention programmes in reducing deaths and injuries and the demands on response resources will support local decisions on participation in programmes addressing issues such as RTC reduction.
- 1.9 Deliberate fires continue to be a significant problem in many areas. Local Area Agreements (LAAs) provide a new focus for partnership work in this area. Within the overall context of LAA objectives, Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to work through Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Arson Task Forces and other local performance frameworks to take a cross cutting view on reducing arson and deliberate fires. Fire and Rescue Authorities working with young people on education and intervention in this area will need to have regard to the Children and Young People's Strategy, the action plan for which is being updated during 2008.
- 1.10 The government will continue to develop the national Fire Kills campaign in parallel with local activity carried out by Fire and Rescue Authorities. Fire Kills campaigns, covering faith festivals and targeted weeks such as child safety have proven to be a successful way of delivering fire prevention messages and providing a focus for local programmes. Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to support the Fire Kills campaign and strategy and have regard to any guidance issued by government.

Protection

- 1.11 Fire and Rescue Authorities continue to have a key role in enforcement of fire safety regulations for non-domestic premises through audit, provision of advice and working with responsible persons to make improvements where necessary. In carrying out their risk-based audit and enforcement functions, Authorities are expected to be mindful of the need to take an open and proportionate approach in accordance with the principles of good enforcement set out in the Compliance Code and the Enforcement Concordat.
- 1.12 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which came into force in October 2006, gave those responsible for fire safety a legal duty to carry out fire risk assessments and put in place the necessary fire precautions to reduce or control the risk. Communities and Local Government will carry out an initial evaluation of the Order during 2008, which will look at the impact of the change in legislation on Fire and Rescue Authorities; the responsible person and the fire industry. Government is committed to supporting Fire and Rescue Authorities in taking forward their enforcement role and will provide further guidance, which will be available on the Communities and Local Government website.

Fire and Rescue Authorities must have a management strategy and a risk-based inspection programme to enforce the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and this must form part of the IRMP.

- 1.13 Fire protection measures have an important role to play as part of a balanced strategy of risk reduction. Fire and Rescue Authorities have a central role to play in protecting people in their homes and communities through their expertise and influence co-ordinating and co-operating with other bodies involved in protection, such as local authorities, building control bodies, the fire protection and insurance industries.
- 1.14 Fire and Rescue Authorities are ideally placed to promote a better understanding of how fire protection measures can reduce the risk to life and limit the detrimental impact of fire on the environment and the economy through their role in providing fire safety advice to the business community. A major review of the fire safety aspects of the Building Regulations (Part B) and Approved Document B (ADB) was undertaken in 2007. These regulations affect future building work in England and Wales, such as the erection, extension or material alteration of a building. The changes, which came into force on 6 April 2007, include the provision of sprinklers in tall blocks of flats, the introduction of a maximum unsprinklered compartment size for single storey warehouses, guidance on residential care homes and changes to the provisions for fire-fighting access and facilities to reflect modern fire-fighting practice. The Department for Children, Schools and Families Building Bulletin 100 guidance recommends that sprinklers should be installed in all new schools and significant refurbishments.

- 1.15 Fire and Rescue Authorities continue to be statutory consultees in the Building Control process. The primary focus of Government policy on prevention measures remains life safety. There are a range of protection measures, including sprinkler systems, which may be utilised to reduce risk. The balance between active and passive protection measures appropriate for an individual building, considered in conjunction with risk management strategies, will ensure an effective approach will be adopted. For the social housing market Fire and Rescue Authorities need to work in partnership with social housing providers to target the most vulnerable households with appropriate risk reduction strategies.

Effective response

- 1.16 Having effective emergency response arrangements in place is paramount for both public and fire-fighter safety. The 2007 Operational Assessment of Service Delivery, conducted using a CFOA/Communities and Local Government developed assessment toolkit, provides a benchmark for all Fire and Rescue Authorities from which to move forward over the next three years. Whilst overall the assessment was generally positive, there were some areas for improvement identified which were common to a number of authorities – training and development of staff, the currency and provision of risk information, the balance between prevention, protection and response and learning from experience and incident command training.
- 1.17 Individual Fire and Rescue Authorities will wish to address any issues identified by the Operational Assessment of Service Delivery (OASD) through their improvement planning processes. The Service collectively has an important role to play as self assessment and peer review can provide crucial support in delivering improvement and in embedding and sharing notable practice. Greater collaboration and joint working has considerable potential to improve effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of both response and prevention services. One of the key learning points from the OASD process was that **Fire and Rescue Authorities must:**

Have in place effective arrangements for gathering risk information and making it readily available to operational crews. This should include an effective audit and review system to ensure that the information is current and in the required format.

- 1.18 Government has previously published guidance on reducing the number of false alarms from fire detection and fire alarm systems. More recently, CFOA has been working on updated guidance. Reference to these documents should allow risks to be assessed more effectively, providing the flexibility for a more appropriate and better targeted response.

- 1.19 The early part of this chapter focused on areas where Fire and Rescue Authorities have statutory duties and a leading role in the provision of services. However in considering the needs of communities and opportunities to support partners effectively through joint working, Fire and Rescue Authorities may wish to consider extending existing successful initiatives, or developing new approaches to meeting the needs of their communities with their partners. This may be in areas where other public services have the statutory lead, but where experience has demonstrated that the Service's participation can help improve outcomes. Equipment provided to enhance national resilience in the event of catastrophic incidents (e.g. terrorism) can be used for such purposes.

Co-responder schemes are an example of innovative ways of working which can have significant impact. Assessment of outcomes has shown that fire fighters, working in partnership with their local Ambulance NHS Trusts on co-responding schemes, have had an impact on patient outcomes and further evaluation work is currently being undertaken. The introduction and maintenance of such schemes is a matter for Fire and Rescue Authorities, based on local needs, risk and resources and discussion with partners, however cross-Whitehall/stakeholder discussions will be taking place, on the basis of the latest research, with a view to determining the feasibility and desirability of a national co-responding protocol, as recommended by the Select Committee on the Fire and Rescue Service.

Contingency planning for emergencies

- 1.20 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 lays down duties for specified "Category 1 responders", including Fire and Rescue Authorities, to assess, plan and advise in relation to emergencies. For a Fire and Rescue Authority, an emergency includes a period of industrial action.
- 1.21 Government has worked actively with the Local Government Association and with the Chief Fire Officers Association to support self sufficiency in emergency cover across the country. It is the responsibility of individual Fire and Rescue Authorities to keep under review the levels of emergency cover that they deem to be appropriate.

Each Fire and Rescue Authority must:

- **have in place a plan to provide such level of emergency cover as it regards as appropriate during any period of emergency, liaising as necessary with other relevant organisations, but without reliance upon support of the Armed Forces**
- **ensure the availability of all necessary vehicles, equipment, training and support; and**

- **Have in place arrangements for heightening public awareness and vigilance in respect of safety issues during periods of emergency cover.**

Research and statistics

1.22 Effective research, evaluation, data collection and sharing by Fire and Rescue Authorities are essential tools in the development of local IRMPs. Authorities will wish to avoid unnecessary duplication by drawing on others' work and sharing their own findings and plans, including through the Practitioners' Forum and the proposed Fire Research Academy. Government's research programme in support of the Fire and Rescue Service is wide ranging and includes research on:

- Economic analysis of the fire and rescue system (Fire and Rescue Services, government and others) to analyse efficiency and effectiveness
- Risk Management, in particular the continued development of the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) methodology and the associated toolkit to underpin consistent risk data in Regional Control Centres and IRMPs
- Projects identified by the Building Disaster Assessment Group (BDAG) to ensure that fire and rescue service procedures and building design are compatible
- Evaluation of Community Fire Safety, including an evaluation of the Community Fire Safety and lower cost domestic sprinkler pilots
- Providing a toolkit to assist Fire and Rescue Authorities in setting stretching yet robust outcome targets and local indicators in the context of Local Area Agreements (see Chapter 4), and
- Science and technology to underpin the national critical infrastructure in Fire and Rescue Authorities programmes to ensure that the fire and rescue service has the capabilities and resilience to respond major disasters, including terrorist incidents.

1.23 The proposed Fire Research Academy will provide a collaborative forum for fire related research across industry, academia and government. The academy will be jointly funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, government and various stakeholders. As well as advising on research, the academy will also seek to improve communications between sponsors of research and all those that can benefit from it. The academy will lead the development of a national research strategy which embraces the whole cycle of risk identification, prevention, mitigation and emergency response.

- 1.24 Government will continue to collect and publish a range of Fire and Rescue related statistics to support the Service in achieving improvements in service delivery, HR issues and Equality and Diversity. We will introduce the electronic Incident Recording System, which will include all incidents attended by the FRS, improve data quality, coverage and timeliness. We expect savings arising from implementing IRS will offset any net additional costs of introducing the new system. Individual Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to undertake an impact assessment on the impacts of moving to IRS within their own authority.

Fire and Rescue Authorities must be ready to implement the electronic incident Recording System by 31 March 2009.

Chapter 2

Resilience

- 2.1 The Fire and Rescue Service has a vital role to play in providing the national resilience capability against the largest risks such as terrorist attacks, chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) incidents or major disasters including flooding.
- 2.2 Government will support the Service nationally in taking forward its role and working effectively with other agencies and this is reflected in Communities and Local Government's Departmental Strategic Objectives. Communities and Local Government will also work with the Service in taking forward government's investment in the Fire Resilience Programme which is delivering a significant increase in the operational capability of the Fire and Rescue Service in England to deal with incidents requiring local, regional or national response.

Local/regional resilience

- 2.3 The importance of effective co-ordination in planning and provision of services across Fire and Rescue Authority boundaries and with other agencies is stressed in Chapter 1 of this document. Regional and local resilience forums have a key role to play. For the purposes of dealing with the largest risks, Local and Regional Resilience Forums (RRFs) bring together representatives of local responders and central government bodies to address large-scale civil protection issues. With the exception of London, Local Resilience Forums (LRF) are based on the area which relates to each police authority. They bring together the organisations who have a duty to co-operate under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the purpose of the LRF process is to ensure effective delivery of those duties. Regional Resilience Forums (RRFs) bring together representatives of local responders and central government bodies to address large-scale protection issues. RRFs are particularly well placed to consider and plan for wide-area risks such as flooding and major outbreaks of disease.

Key risks identified by central government inform the work of RRFs and LRFs, and the Community Risk Registers which are the collective view at the local level of the key risks for the area. As category 1 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act, Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to work with other local responders to plan against the risks in their area. Having identified their specific role, this informs each Fire and Rescue Authorities' IRMP, as set out in Chapter 1. Emergency Preparedness, published by HMG in November 2005 and giving guidance on Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, its associated Regulations and non-statutory arrangements, advises that a single

representative representing all fire and rescue authorities within any given region be nominated to speak for those FRAs. Nomination is overseen by the Chief Fire Officer's Association and the nominee is likely to be at Chief Fire Officer level.

Fire and Rescue Authorities must work together with partners within their LRF to address the risk profile in their area.

At the regional level Fire and Rescue Authorities should work together to ensure effective Fire and Rescue Authority representation at Regional Resilience Forums.

Fire Resilience Programme

- 2.4 The Fire and Resilience Programme is an integrated set of projects to enhance the nation's ability to handle emergencies and crises – for instance natural disasters or industrial accidents. It consists of three key delivery projects:
- FiReControl – this will provide an enhanced call handling and mobilising control service using a national network of nine resilient Regional Control Centres
 - Firelink – the introduction of a common interoperable radio communications system; and
 - New Dimension – which has put in place a wide range of new capabilities including equipment and training to deal with a range of major incidents.

FiReControl

- 2.5 The FiReControl project is critical to enhancing the capability of the Fire and Rescue Service to respond to the challenges of the future. It will enhance the Service's ability to respond to all types of incident: at the local level; those incidents which cross traditional boundaries; and major incidents of national significance. The FiReControl project is about giving the FRS the mobilising and response tools they need to enable a continuing world-class service.
- 2.6 Communities and Local Government remains committed to working in partnership with all Fire and Rescue Services across England to ensure the FiReControl network is delivered efficiently and effectively, and able to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.
- 2.7 Significant progress has been achieved in delivering the FiReControl project over the course of the previous Framework. For instance, at the time of writing, four Regional Control Centre buildings have been built; four more are under construction and due to reach Practical Completion between May and October 2008. The London building will begin construction later in 2008.

- 2.8 Local authority controlled companies are up-and-running in seven out of the eight regions which need them – two of the first regions to ‘go-live’ have taken on their building leases. We remain committed to the local authority controlled company approach and encourage those FRAs which have not yet set up their company to do so as quickly as possible, not least to enable effective consultation with affected staff.

Where companies have been set up we encourage the constituent FRAs to continue to participate actively and to take on the lease for their RCC, as soon after practical completion of buildings as possible.

- 2.9 The contract for providing the IT infrastructure was signed with EADS in March 2007. Key elements of the contract will roll out shortly after the National Framework is published. This includes data capture and migration and new station end equipment to replace obsolete equipment.
- 2.10 Over the course of the period covered by this Framework, the RCC network will become operational. To make it a success, this will require significant effort and resources from all those involved, particularly the FRS, Regional Management Boards and Communities and Local Government.

To enable progress across the country, the Department has produced a transition planning framework to support delivery across the country – this is backed by significant funding provided under ‘New Burdens’ principles.

At the same time, fire and rescue authorities will need to use resources that would have been used to replace or upgrade existing control rooms to assist with the implementation of FiReControl.

- 2.11 All Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to enter into a contractual arrangement with their local authority controlled company to agree responsibilities for the delivery of FiReControl and the running of the new control service. All Fire and Rescue Authorities need to give appropriate priority to making the necessary preparations to transfer their control to the RCC, monitor progress and keep the Department informed of any issues which arise.

While the final decision rightly rests with the individual FRSs to cut-over to the RCC, Regional Management Boards remain an important vehicle for FRAs to come together at the regional level to ensure effective FiReControl delivery. Following cut-over to the RCCs, it will be for FRAs in every region to decide how they can best manage the relationship between RMBs and the RCCs.

- 2.12 A review of the current national aid agreement is underway. This will consider the arrangements post implementation of FiReControl encompassing section 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act arrangements as appropriate.

Fire and rescue authorities must:

- **make preparations to move their control service to the Regional Control Centre network, complete the tasks in the FiReControl transition plan in line with the dates set out and to carry out any tasks specific to their FRS necessary for the move of their control service**
- **participate actively and constructively in existing regional arrangements for the transfer of the control service to the RCC**
- **ensure that the local authority controlled company in their region is established by the FRAs, working through their RMB, as soon as possible, and in good time to carry out formal requirements as a good employer and to take on the lease of the building as quickly after practical completion as possible**
- **enter into agreements, at least six months before cut-over:**
 - i. **with the RCC company in their region for the delivery of the control service on their behalf by the RCC**
 - ii. **with Communities and Local Government and other fire and rescue authorities to provide national co-ordination of the RCCs where necessary and to provide a flexible approach to the use of all FRS resources**
 - iii. **to ensure that resources can be mobilised across fire and rescue authority borders.**
- **co-operate fully with the FiReControl technology supplier, and any relevant sub-contractors**
- **report progress regularly to Communities and Local Government using the tools provided for that purpose.**

Firelink

- 2.13 Firelink will form a critical part of the communications link between control rooms and Fire and Rescue Authority vehicles. Network in Fire and Rescue Authorities and installation in all fire vehicles (radio terminals, GPS units and mobile data terminals) is scheduled to be completed by mid 2009 (Phase B). Firelink will also be providing interim connections into existing control rooms so that fire vehicles can be transferred across to Firelink prior to migration to the new Regional Control Centres.
- 2.14 The existing radio system will remain operational for each Fire and Rescue Authority until all fire appliances have been migrated across to the Firelink system prior to moving to the new Regional Control Centres (RCCs). As the RCCs become available, Firelink will install the necessary network access equipment and then assist in the migration from existing control rooms to the new RCCs.

Fire and Rescue Authorities must support the rollout of Firelink by:

- **co-operating with the suppliers by giving access to vehicles and existing control rooms, and by ensuring that training programmes are completed to timetable, providing all reasonable support**
- **assisting the Firelink programme with testing of the new system and migration of radio communications to the RCC.**

2.15 Initial training of Fire and Rescue Service trainers and specialist users, and maintenance of the system is part of the contract with the supplier of Firelink.

New Dimension

2.16 New Dimension resources are intended to be mainstream Fire and Rescue Authority assets, and Fire and Rescue Authorities are encouraged to use New Dimension resources in all appropriate circumstances where they will bring benefit to the response: their use should not be restricted to major emergencies.

2.17 Capital investment on the New Dimension programme is complete, including specialist equipment that has been rolled out to the Fire and Rescue Service and specialist state of the art training facilities located at the Fire Service College. The Government will continue to provide resource funding according to New Burdens principles, including long term maintenance. The funding mechanism will move in stages from grants under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 to inclusion in the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) in the medium term. Such a transfer would be a separate decision for the formula review, anticipated at the time of the next spending review, and subject to authorities' views at that time. This will further mainstream this enhanced capability within the Fire and Rescue Service.

The intention under the New Dimension programme is that the capability should remain in place for 20 years. Mechanisms are in place through the assurance body to maintain the fitness for purpose of the capabilities, and their continued match to changing risk profiles. It is anticipated that there will be a major refresh to consider update/replacement of various New Dimension assets every 5-6 years during the life of the programme, though this will of course be a decision for the Government of the day. The major refreshes would tie in with the nearest spending review, to ensure that changes will not be made except in the context of a mechanism to resource them.

2.18 In 2008, it is intended that the New Dimension assets will be transferred to the Fire and Rescue Service. The Fire and Rescue Service will be responsible for maintaining these resources and ensuring their continued interoperability, and for continuing to meet the requirements for training and response. To ensure that these national assets, held at the local level, are sustained over the long term, a maintenance contract is being secured by the Department on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Service, through Firebuy.

Fire and Rescue Authorities must use the contract established by Communities and Local Government to secure the long term maintenance of the New Dimension resources for which they are responsible.

- 2.19 Funding will be provided for this in line with New Burdens principles. It is proposed that funding to meet this additional cost will be distributed through grants under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and then in the medium term through RSG.
- 2.20 A partnership agreement will be established between Communities and Local Government, CFOA and the LGA to ensure that the national capability as a whole is effectively maintained. This will lead to a national team operating under the umbrella of CFOA which will, among other responsibilities, provide a quality assurance function. This will give assurance to both government and the Fire and Rescue Service that national capability continues to be fit for purpose and that the equipment remains interoperable. This new role for CFOA will be supported by funding from Communities and Local Government.
- 2.21 The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007 (S.I. 2007/735: 'the Emergencies Order'), which came into force on 6 April 2007, encompasses the use of New Dimension resources and cross border working during serious emergencies.
- 2.22 The Communities and Local Government Emergency Room will provide comprehensive advice and support to the Fire and Resilience Directorate, the Cabinet Office Briefing Room, the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, the National Strategic Advisor Team, the Fire and Rescue Service National Coordination Centre and Gold Command. It will be responsible for ensuring the effective distribution of Fire and Rescue Service/ Government assets during any major emergency. In close liaison with Fire and Rescue Service National Co-ordination Centre it will plan and advise on national co-ordination, whilst providing the strategic oversight and maintenance of national resilience.
- 2.23 The National Strategic Advisory Team will operate within a National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework which provides a structure to support and advise Fire and Rescue Services Gold Command and central government.

Chapter 3

Diversity and Workforce

- 3.1 Fire and Rescue Authorities' most important resource is their people. In order to be able to deliver services which meet the needs of the whole community Fire and Rescue Authorities need to introduce, review and maintain effective employment policies, procedures and processes so that they can:
- recruit people with the right skills and potential
 - develop them to realise that potential, support them by ensuring they are valued, treated fairly and with respect; and
 - provide them with equality of opportunity to progress.

Expectations of staff

- 3.2 Core Values for the Fire and Rescue Service were published in 2006. The Core Values, which can be found on the CFOA website apply to Fire and Rescue Authorities as organisations, to all elected members on the Fire Authority and to all members of staff. They set out the attitudes and behaviours expected of all staff whatever their role.
- 3.3 In order to engender the trust and confidence of all sections of the community in the integrity of Fire and Rescue Authority employees and to meet their statutory obligations to promote equality, both in employment practices and service delivery, Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to ensure that:
- all staff and those applying to join meet the standards of honesty and integrity which the public expects
 - all staff and those applying to join are aware that membership of or affiliation to organisations, groups or societies which espouse views, hold doctrines, have policies or undertake activities which are incompatible with the Core Values would make them unsuitable for employment within an organisation which serves the whole community. grievance and disciplinary processes, in particular to deal with bullying and harassment, are fair, open, transparent and timely.

Equality and diversity

- 3.4 The National Equality and Diversity Strategy sets out the Service's commitment to ensuring that diversity and equality are fully integrated into all aspects of the Service. It sets out the actions required on leadership, service delivery, employment practice, evaluation and dissemination of good practice, and accountability to achieve this vision.
- 3.5 The Strategy also requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to monitor their progress on equality and diversity and to provide information on progress for inclusion in a national equality and diversity report to be published annually by Communities and Local Government. Evidence on the development and implementation of policies which support and promote equality and diversity will form one measure of progress. Statistical information on service delivery and workforce diversity will provide another.
- 3.6 Improving workforce diversity through recruitment and retention is a key component of the Strategy. Previous targets for women in operational roles and ethnic minority staff have aimed to measure change in the composition of the workforce, which remains our goal. But to focus effort on factors which can be significantly changed in the short term the Strategy sets targets on recruitment, retention and progression to be met by 2013.
- 3.7 The targets are:
- a) By 2013, a minimum of 15 per cent of new entrants to the operational sector to be women.
 - b) By 2013 recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation to be at the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation in the local working population.⁵
 - c) Fire and Rescue Authorities with very low minority ethnic working age populations and low recruitment requirements may set a target in terms of individuals recruited over the five year period rather than a percentage of total recruitment.
 - d) By 2013, parity in rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women.
- 3.8 In addition Fire and Rescue Authorities may set their own target or targets to measure the proportion of all applications received which come from under-represented groups (attraction targets).

⁵ A series of regional workshops will take place in Summer 2008 to provide guidance and support to Fire and Rescue Authorities in identifying and setting appropriate employment targets for their area.

- 3.9 The targets set out at paragraph 3.7 are the minimum required under the National Framework. To encourage Fire and Rescue Authorities to strive for more rapid improvement in the diversity of their workforce, Communities and Local Government will allocate an additional capital grant payment to those Fire and Rescue Authorities that commit to the achievement of higher recruitment targets.
- 3.10 A minimum of £42,000 in capital grant will be allocated in 2009/10 or 2010/11 to those Fire and Rescue Authorities which make a commitment to achieving the following higher targets:
- By 2013 a minimum of 18 per cent of new entrants to the operational service to be women.
 - By 2013 recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation to be at 2 to 5 per cent above the minority ethnic representation in the local working population.

Details of how FRAs can apply for this additional grant and the method by which it will be allocated will be announced in a future fire circular.

- 3.11 The aim in the long term is to change the composition of the Fire and Rescue Service workforce in England so that it includes the same percentage of minority ethnic staff as in the working age population (currently 12 per cent) and 15 per cent of women in operational roles (as an achievable basis for further action). New targets for the second half of the Strategy's life will need to be considered depending on progress.
- 3.12 While specific targets have not been set to measure performance on recruitment, retention and progression in relation to the other equality strands (disability, faith and belief, sexual orientation, gender identity and age) and for women in non-operational roles, monitoring of the progress in these areas will be required and the resulting statistical information will be published as part of the Communities and Local Government's annual report.

3.13 **Fire and Rescue Authorities must:**

- **Implement the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy**
- **Ensure that all plans, policies, practices and procedures are effectively equality impact assessed and appropriate action is taken to remove or mitigate any adverse impact**
- **Produce and at least annually review an action plan for implementation of the Strategy, and report to elected members on progress**

- **Provide annually to Communities and Local Government evidence of progress on equality and diversity for publication in the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Report including:**
 - **statistical information on staff recruitment, progression and retention and service delivery across of staff across all diversity strands, and**
 - **qualitative information on policies, procedures, practices and processes which support equality and diversity in service delivery and the workplace as evidence of progress made.**

3.14 To help and support Fire and Rescue Authorities in improving the diversity in their workforce at all levels Communities and Local Government will work with stakeholders to develop the following initiatives:

- High Potential and Graduate Entry Management Development Scheme
- Awareness raising campaigns to encourage people from under represented groups to consider the Fire and Rescue Service as a career.

Workforce planning

- 3.15 As employers, Fire and Rescue Authorities need to provide for the well being of all their staff, including through a professional Human Resources function. Fire and Rescue Authorities are encouraged to develop workforce strategies to plan and review staff resources and employment practices. This will assist in meeting statutory obligations; support the needs of a diverse workforce, the delivery of IRMP objectives and improved efficiency and effectiveness.
- 3.16 In order to ensure IRMPs are inclusive, workforce strategies need to take full account of the contribution which can be made by part-time, flexible working and staff on retained duty systems. Fire and Rescue Authorities also need to ensure that they are able to redeploy operational staff to role related non-operational duties in order to meet the requirements of equality legislation. To help maintain reduced levels of sickness absence and support further reductions, Fire and Rescue Authorities are encouraged to review their attendance absence management practices in the light of joint Communities and Local Government/HSE research on attendance absence policies and procedures.

Recruitment and retention

- 3.17 Most Fire and Rescue Authorities are using the National Firefighter Selection (NFS) process for the recruitment of firefighters across duty systems. The process was subject to impact assessment during its development and subsequently Communities and Local Government has commissioned research to inform the continued use of the processes. Any necessary changes will be presented to the Practitioners Forum for approval. The research will be based on the outcomes achieved in recruitment campaigns. To ensure a fair, consistent and transparent recruitment process Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to use the NFS tests as specified (see paragraph 3.22).
- 3.18 Assessment and Development Centres (ADC) have been developed to assess the potential of staff. They are part of the selection process but are not designed to select individuals for a particular post. The assessment of the wider aspects of the individual that comprise their competency for a specific role will need to be assessed after the ADC as part of a specific selection process.
- 3.19 Returns to Communities and Local Government by all Fire and Rescue Authorities indicate that 14 per cent of Retained Duty System (RDS) posts are currently vacant. Improving recruitment and retention is vital as RDS staff play an essential role in ensuring Fire and Rescue Authorities can provide emergency response, particularly in rural areas, and support national resilience. RDS recruitment can also help to deliver efficiencies and improve representation of women in operational roles.
- 3.20 Part of the shortfall is due to lack of awareness among people in work and their employers of the benefits to both sides of releasing staff for the Retained Duty System. As identified in the Retained Review Report (2005), Fire and Rescue Authorities need to work proactively with potential RDS staff and employers, building on existing good practice. During 2008 Communities and Local Government will be providing guidance and materials to support Authorities in their engagement with the local business community. In addition to local engagement, it may be appropriate for Fire and Rescue Authorities to work together on programmes to raise awareness through their RMB or with their neighbours.
- 3.21 Overall the retention of wholetime duty system staff is not an issue for Fire and Rescue Authorities. However, this can mask retention issues for some under-represented groups in the workforce. This also applies to staff in certain employment groups such as those on the Retained Duty System and those in other Fire and Rescue Authority roles. In many instances poor retention is related to internal barriers, (identified for the RDS in the Retained Review Report (2005)) such as lack of recognition and inflexible working practices. Fire and Rescue Authorities will wish to develop effective strategies in response to these challenges.

Industrial relations

- 3.22 Healthy industrial relations are key in forming and sustaining a modern Fire and Rescue Service. They are also an important means of ensuring that all staff within Fire and Rescue Authorities are represented and feel that their voice is heard. Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to work effectively and communicate regularly with representative bodies on matters affecting their workforce. They are also expected to engage with workforce representative bodies in line with established best practice and nationally agreed protocols on industrial relations.

Workforce development

- 3.23 To improve efficiency and develop staff effectively, it is vital that all staff are recruited, developed and progressed fairly and transparently, with overall performance and competencies regularly reviewed. To ensure effective cross border working and the health and safety of operational staff there is an additional need for the consistency of national standards. The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) supports a competency based personnel management approach using role maps underpinned by National Occupational Standards.

Fire and Rescue Authorities must:

- **apply IPDS principles to the recruitment, development and progression of all staff**
- **use IPDS and the national processes based on it (National Firefighter Selection Tests, subject to final validation, and Assessment and Development Centres) for all Grey and Gold Book staff.**

Managing individual performance

- 3.24 Performance management has been consistently identified by the Audit Commission as an area in which the Service needs to improve. One key element of effective performance management is to ensure that staff have clearly defined personal objectives, that delivery is regularly reviewed through constructive feedback, and that operational capability and safety are maintained. IPDS supports the assessment of performance against objectives using the role maps/National Occupational Standards and Personal Qualities and Attributes.

Fire and Rescue Authorities should: carry out and record individual performance reviews annually which include an assessment of performance against:

- **role map units, National Occupational Standards or job description duties as appropriate, and**
- **agreed annual objectives, including the setting and assessing of equality and diversity objectives.**

Training and development

- 3.25 Training and development provides Fire and Rescue Authorities with appropriately skilled staff to meet their organisational objectives and offers staff the opportunity to build up their knowledge and skills. In particular, effective role related operational training, based on up to date experience, is essential to maintaining operational capability and ensure the health and safety of staff. The recent Operational Assessment of Service Delivery identified training and development of staff and the currency and provision of risk information as a key area for improvement.
- 3.26 Development programmes need to take into account individual needs, learning styles and work life balance and could include training courses as well as learning in the workplace. The Fire Service College, among other training providers, has developed an e-learning delivery platform and online learning activities to support flexible learning. The content and delivery of all training and development will need to be effectively equality impact assessed.
- 3.27 Evidence from a RDS staff survey suggests that they do not always have the same access to training and development opportunities as their wholetime colleagues. To develop an effective, professional and inclusive organisation Fire and Rescue Authorities will wish to ensure equality of access to training and development opportunities for all staff.
- 3.28 High potential development and multi-level entry schemes are designed to identify and bring on talent through the organisation and encourage recruitment of people with diverse skills and backgrounds. A collaborative approach to implementing such initiatives is likely to produce more resource-efficient solutions. Consideration should be given to the role of Regional Management Boards in taking this forward.
- 3.29 As recognised in the Leitch Report (Prosperity for all in the Global Economy: World Class Skills published December 2006) qualifications can be a useful testimony of knowledge and understanding. For example, National Vocational Qualifications help ensure that consistency of competence is achieved through everyone working toward nationally acknowledged standards. This enables people to benefit from transferability of competence both inside and outside the service. The National Qualifications Framework

(NQF) for the Fire and Rescue Service sets out the levels against which a qualification can be recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. More information on the NQF can be found on the web site of the Qualification and Curriculum Authority.

Fire and Rescue Authorities must:

- **ensure that they have in place role related training, development and assessment arrangements to develop and maintain the competence of staff. These should be linked to the IPDS framework and National Occupational Standards across the full range of operational activities**
- **have in place systematic arrangements to ensure incident and safety event outcomes inform the ongoing development of safe systems of work and training and development of staff. This should include the sharing of risk critical information on a regional/national basis when appropriate.**

Leadership

- 3.30 In 2006 the Communities and Local Government Select Committee identified the need for Fire and Rescue Authorities to strengthen leadership at all levels and in all sectors of the organisation to meet current and future challenges. Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to ensure that those with leadership responsibilities or potential to have the opportunity and encouragement to develop their skills.
- 3.31 There are a number of providers in this field, including the Centre for Leadership which has been established at the Fire Service College (FSC) with the help of stakeholder groups including CFOA and LGA. The FSC has developed a leadership programme that provides a range of learning resources and training and development activities underpinned by the Aspire leadership model.

Quality assurance

- 3.32 Quality assurance is essential if learning and development standards across the Fire and Rescue Service are to be maintained and improved. A quality assurance framework designed specifically for the Fire and Rescue Service has been developed with stakeholders at the Fire Service College.

Fire and Rescue Authorities should: appropriately quality assure their training and development programmes, and their use of the National Fire-fighter Selection process and Assessment and Development Centres.

Chapter 4

Governance and Improvement

- 4.1 The Local Government White Paper *strong and prosperous Communities*⁶ fundamentally changed the relationship between central and local government and between local government and local communities. Local government is being given more freedom to shape local services which meet the needs of their local communities and to be more effective at delivering outcomes for their communities by working with local partners.
- 4.2 Fire and Rescue Authorities are a crucial part of this agenda. Many already have effective partnerships in place that are delivering real change and which actively involve local people in a range of Community Safety initiatives. This chapter sets out the scope of the new challenges and expectations on Fire and Rescue Authorities and the Service's institutions and representative bodies in responding to this agenda. It sets out the support that can be provided by partners, institutions and the centre in delivering the benefits that this new relationship can bring to our communities.

Regional Management Boards

- 4.3 Working together remains essential to delivering efficiency, effectiveness and an enhanced resilience capability for Fire and Rescue Authorities. Regional Management Boards have been established for some time and it is now time to take stock of how effectively they have delivered the core functions that were set out for them in the Fire White Paper, *Our Fire and Rescue Service* in 2003.

To that end Regional Management Boards must:

- **have clear aims and objectives and where needed costed plans to deliver on their core business, which includes:**
 - **integrating common and specialist services**
 - **introducing regional personnel and human resource functions**
 - **developing a regional approach to training**
 - **introducing regional procurement within the context of the National Improvement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service.**

⁶ Published October 2006.

Regional resilience fora have now taken on the primary role in the coordination of effective resilience plans for large scale emergencies.

- 4.4 As Chapter 2 explained, to deliver efficiently and effectively, Fire and Rescue Authorities must work closely together. Communities and Local Government expects Regional Management Boards to undertake a review to establish any further efficiencies that can be driven out through collaborative working and sharing functions. Whilst closer joint working at a regional level has a role to play in improving efficiency; government has no plans to introduce a regional fire service.

To that end, Fire and Rescue Authorities working through Regional Management Boards must review the opportunities to deliver greater efficiencies through closer joint working or sharing of functions at regional or sub-regional level and take action to implement those efficiencies.

- 4.5 These reviews ensure that the necessary connections between the work of authorities are made without compromising local accountability. The government continues actively to encourage Fire and Rescue Authorities to consider any appropriate joint working arrangements, collaboration or voluntary mergers, in discussion with communities, workforce and local partners, which will deliver an enhanced level of service for their communities and greater value for money. However, the government has no plans to restructure the Fire and Rescue Service in England and will only consider the use of its powers to direct the combination of Fire and Rescue Authorities where public safety concerns require urgent action or there is clear evidence from the Audit Commission's performance assessment work that a Fire and Rescue Authority is failing to meet the needs of local communities.
- 4.6 RMBs have played an active and important role in establishing Regional Control Centres and are expected to continue to work closely with RCCs after the cutover date in a range of roles, for example in considering the requirements of the RCCs within the regional HR, training and procurement strategies. However, the relationship between the RMB and the local authority controlled company and details of the role of the RMB are matters for local decision. If Fire and Rescue Authorities wish to formalise relationships between RMBs, RCC companies and Fire and Rescue Authorities, they can do so via the member's agreement of the RCC Company.

Local Area Agreements

- 4.7 Working together in effective partnerships with other local services is vital to delivering more efficient and effective local services. The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities* signaled a step-change in the way local public services are expected to work together. In particular there are new requirements in the Local

Government and Public Health Act 2007⁷ to ensure that all partners engage in and deliver on a shared agenda for their communities.

- 4.8 The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is the overarching strategic partnership for an area. From 2008, local authorities will have a duty to consult partner authorities, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, when compiling their sustainable community strategies. Local Authorities will have to prepare an action plan known as a Local Area Agreement (LAA), for delivering an agreed set of priorities reflecting the needs of their communities as set out in sustainable community strategies. They will have to consult LSP partners on the preparation of the LAA which will establish an agreed set of up to 35 priority improvement targets for the area, to be negotiated and agreed by the Government Office and to be delivered by the LSP partners. Fire and Rescue Authorities will have a duty to co-operate⁸ with the principal local authority for each LAA in setting these targets and be required to have regard to the targets selected by each LAA. These targets will be drawn from a set of 198 national indicators agreed across Whitehall as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review process. This set of 198 represents central government's national priority outcomes for local government across the range of its services. The list of 198 indicators can be found on the Communities and Local Government website at:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator

Local partners can suggest additional local targets that should form part of the Local Area Agreement.

- 4.9 Involvement in the LSP and in LAAs offer Fire and Rescue Authorities the opportunity to engage and influence partners in the delivery of their own priorities and to assist partners more widely in the delivery of the community's priorities at a local level. This should mean that public services deliver more effectively and efficiently by working together to address common problems and, where appropriate, by targeting the same high risk groups.
- 4.10 It is therefore important that Fire and Rescue Authorities both promote their contribution to delivering targets suggested by the LSP partners and actively seek to influence the LSP and other partners to adopt relevant fire-related targets and put resource into community safety work. To do this effectively, Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to evaluate the effectiveness of existing partnership arrangements and use evidence to demonstrate the outcomes that can be delivered. To this end:

Fire and Rescue Authorities should work with local partners to identify targets, including fire targets where appropriate, that are priorities within the local area and offer appropriate contributions (time and resource) to meet those

⁷ The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

⁸ The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

targets. To do this effectively they will need to evaluate the effectiveness of partnership arrangements and programmes, sharing data and evidence of outcomes delivered.

- 4.11 It is for Fire and Rescue Authorities to determine their appropriate level of involvement in delivering LAA targets and partnership programmes. It is a matter for each Fire and Rescue Authority to consider its own priorities, those of its partners and how to deliver those priorities in a way that represents value for money for their communities.
- 4.12 To support Fire and Rescue Authorities in delivering on this challenging new agenda, Communities and Local Government has published a toolkit on partnership working and LAA targets. This is available on the Department's website at: **www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/workingtoolkit**

The toolkit sets out some examples of good practice in partnership working and evaluation. It also provides Fire and Rescue Authorities with robust approaches to target-setting and performance measurement to assist in negotiating LAA targets and demonstrating the impact of fire programmes in tackling community priorities. Additionally, the toolkit aims to provide other partners in the LSP with a sense of how Fire and Rescue Authorities can contribute to this agenda although it will be important for each Fire and Rescue Authority to ensure, through effective working relationships, that its partners understand what the Fire and Rescue Service can contribute. More information about how the Fire and Rescue Service fits within the performance framework for local government can be found in the suite of narratives explaining the performance framework for each LSP partner. 'Fire and rescue authorities: The crucial role of the new local performance framework' is available on the Department's website at: **www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/fire**

Community engagement and involvement

- 4.13 Evidence suggests that the quality of local services is improving but that public satisfaction with those services is decreasing. The Government believes that it is important to increase the influence of the citizen over the delivery of local services. Involving local communities in shaping local services and in their delivery is central to meeting the needs of all citizens within our diverse communities. This is especially important for Fire and Rescue Authorities where changing behaviour is a key factor in preventing fires and protecting people where they occur. As many Fire and Rescue Authorities have already done, involving local people and tailoring services to meet their needs should lead to better solutions and more cost-effective outcomes. The Local Government and Public Health Bill will place a new duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities along with other Best Value Authorities to inform, consult and involve representatives of local people including the business community with regard to exercising their functions.

Fire and Rescue Authorities must:

- **have regard to any guidance issued by Communities and Local Government in how to exercise this new duty**
- **demonstrate that they have made changes to service provision, where appropriate, to reflect the needs and views of local communities and to demonstrate that they have considered the needs and views of all communities in making these changes.**

4.14 Many authorities have established mechanisms for collecting the views of, and consulting with, their communities in developing their IRMPs and community fire safety programmes and these should be used as far as possible in fulfilling the new duty. Communities and Local Government guidance on exercising this duty will shortly be available on the website.

Performance assessment

4.15 A new approach to performance assessment is needed to support the delivery of LAAs. In March 2009, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process will come to an end for local authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will be introduced from April 2009 by the Audit Commission to take a proportionate and risk based approach to assessing delivery of local priorities and reduce the burden of inspection.

4.16 The Audit Commission remains responsible for performance assessment of the Fire and Rescue Service. The Commission's focus is both on building the new CAA regime and continuing to support improvement and report to the public through its existing performance assessment frameworks until 2009. Performance Assessment of Fire and Rescue Authorities is likely to comprise:

- **A scored Direction of Travel Assessment** which will state how well the authority has performed since the last assessment and whether it is considered that it will continue to improve.
- **A Use of Resources Judgement** which assesses a range of financial issues including the delivery of Value for Money.
- **A Service Assessment** which continues to form part of the CPA for Single Tier and County Councils and comprises a score from the Operational Assessment of Service Delivery conducted by Communities and Local Government in 2006 and a score derived from performance indicator information.

- 4.17 In addition, Fire and Rescue Authorities have been offered opportunity by the Audit Commission to have their CPA category re-assessed in 2007/08 and 2008/09, before CAA is introduced, to close this cycle of assessment work. The process will involve a Corporate Assessment of those authorities selected by the Commission. The Commission has established appropriate criteria that must be met by authorities wishing to be considered for a corporate assessment and published the methodology for this work in August 2007.
- 4.18 From 2009 onwards, the Comprehensive Area Assessment process will apply to Fire and Rescue Authorities and their local partners. While the methodology for CAA is being developed by the Commission and other inspectorates working together, the CAA will comprise:
- A Use of Resources (UoR) judgement for all local public sector bodies including Fire and Rescue Authorities
 - A Direction of Travel (DoT) Assessment for each local authority and Fire and Rescue Authority which will deliver a judgement on the rate at which performance is improving
 - An Assessment against national and local performance indicators and publication of performance against the national indicator set
 - A joint risk assessment for the area, drawing on these judgements and other evidence (including local self-assessment) which will identify the key risks to outcomes or delivery for each area, and how well they are being managed.
- 4.19 The Audit Commission has consulted on the composition of these judgements and is proposing further consultation on a detailed methodology in the summer. The Audit Commission remains on track to publish the final version of CAA early next year. It is likely that both the Use of Resources and Direction of Travel assessments will evolve and may include elements of operational performance assessment.

The Chief Fire and Rescue Advisers Unit is working with the Audit Commission to provide advice on how to take forward the assessment of operational performance following the Operational Assessment of Service Delivery but will not itself undertake any inspection or assessment activity.

- 4.20 The new performance framework focuses on delivery of LAA targets and continued progress in securing improvements in local services through collective action. The 198 national indicators replace the current suite of Best Value Performance Indicators for Local Government and Fire and Rescue Authorities. 2007/8 will be the last year of reporting against BVPIs. Of the set of 198 indicators, two apply to Fire and Rescue Authorities and these are set out in the introduction to this document. The indicators applying to Fire and Rescue Authorities are to be reported to Communities and Local Government annually using the FDR1 return.

Improvement

- 4.21 A new strategy for providing local authorities and their LSP partners with improvement and capacity building support will be in place to support the new performance framework. The Government believes that investing in improvement and capacity support will help to secure improvement in public services but there is a need to streamline existing arrangements and promote a more devolutionary approach to the funding of improvement support into the next CSR period.
- 4.22 Local Authorities and their LSP partners will be responsible for securing their own continuous improvement and for identifying improvement priorities at local level. There will be an increased emphasis on local authorities and their partners providing support and challenge at a regional and national level through peer review and challenge.
- 4.23 The delivery of improvement and capacity support will be through Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) which bring together existing Regional Improvement Partnerships and Regional Centres of Excellence into one body. The RIEPs will work closely with, GOs, all Local Authorities and their partners in each region to analyse the region's capacity and improvement needs and discuss these with Communities and Local Government. Communities and Local Government and the RIEP (in consultation with other departments where necessary) will then agree an improvement strategy and the funding to support that for the CSR period. However, the RIEP will retain flexibility over how it uses this funding to meet the improvement priorities set out in the strategy.
- 4.24 Communities and Local Government's National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy⁹ sets out further details of the principles behind RIEPs and the other support available from the LGA, IDeA and other partners under the new arrangements.

In the Local Government White Paper the LGA and IDeA committed to providing further sector self-challenge and improvement support to augment the work of RIEPs. In instances of under-performance, a sector-led response has a key role to play. This places the emphasis on local engagement and tackling local priorities through effective partnership working. Communities and Local Government is working with CFOA, GOs and the LGA/IDeA to build sectoral challenge including peer-review.

However, we need to be realistic about what sectoral challenge can deliver in the short-term whilst service specific capacity is built up. Communities and Local Government will continue to support the improvement of Fire and Rescue Authorities where performance or other risks to outcomes raise cause for concern through the Communities and Local Government support team. This support will be provided until authorities are judged by the Audit Commission as having achieved appropriate

⁹ Published January 2008, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/efficiency>

improvement since fire CPA **and** where no other significant problems have been identified in other assessment processes.

Government has retained its intervention powers for instances of serious under-performance. For example, should the pace of sector-led Improvement be deemed insufficient, or the risk of failure so serious as to require Immediate and directive action.

Centre of Excellence

- 4.25 It is recognised that as providers of an emergency service delivering a challenging modernisation agenda and critical to national resilience, Fire and Rescue Authorities face a different range of challenges than other local government services. Some functions need to be delivered nationally in order to drive up standards, to ensure consistency across authorities, and to enable the Service to respond quickly and to the highest standards in the context of rapid changes in the environment, technology, security, energy and transport.

Communities and Local Government consulted Fire and Rescue Authorities and other stakeholders on whether they wanted a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for the Fire and Rescue Service in England. The consultation paper made clear that a CoE would only be established if it had the support of the Fire and Rescue Service and other key stakeholders. Therefore, as the consultation outcome is not conclusive with regards to FRA commitment, Communities and Local Government will not be taking action to establish a CoE for 2009. But we do not rule out the possibility for the future. How functions delivered nationally to support FRA's operational role are delivered in the longer term will depend on how circumstances evolve.

The functions identified for early inclusion in a CoE in the consultation document will, for the time being, continue to be delivered by their current delivery bodies i.e. Communities and Local Government or the Fire Service College (FSC). However, we will continue to build on the work undertaken on developing proposals for a CoE and explore how best to take forward issues identified in the consultation responses. In particular, we will be looking at how we can improve our arrangements for securing the engagement and influence of stakeholders in the services Communities and Local Government, the FSC and Firebuy deliver to support FRA operations.

Chief Fire and Rescue Advisers Unit

- 4.26 The office of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser was established In October 2008, following the appointment of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser (CFRA), Sir Ken Knight.

- 4.27 The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and his team work in a strategic and advisory capacity, providing fire and rescue related advice and guidance to Communities and Local Government, the Fire and Rescue Service in England and other stakeholders. The team will support the Audit Commission In its role on performance assessment body for the Fire and Rescue Service. It will work with stakeholders on the dissemination of notable practice to Fire and Rescue Authorities. Liaison with stakeholders and the provision of advice during major emergencies will also be key parts of its role.
- 4.28 The team will also manage activities such as the commissioning, quality assurance and publication of operational guidance, the co-ordination of national assets during catastrophic and major incidents through the Communities and Local Government Emergency Room, and the (FRS) the National Strategic Advisory Team. With CFOA, the team will maintain and update the Operational Assessment of Service Delivery toolkit so that it can be used by Fire and Rescue Authorities for self assessment and peer review for assessment purposes where appropriate.
- 4.29 The Chief Fire & Rescue Adviser is also responsible for the audit of the fire safety arrangements in Crown Premises on a risk assessed basis.
- 4.30 The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser will provide broader challenge to specific policy areas where necessary, particularly on equality and diversity. He will also seek to ensure that the government is able to engage influentially in debate on Fire and Rescue Service issues and that the Service's interests are effectively represented by the Government both nationally and internationally.

Fire and Rescue Authority Finance

- 4.31 The overall outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review for local Government was announced by the Chancellor in the Pre-Budget Report in October 2007. This set the total amount of money which will be available for local government over the next three years. This money is distributed among authorities through the local government finance settlement. The final local government finance settlement for 2008/09 was announced in January 2008 together with provisional settlements for 2009/10 and 2011/12.
- 4.32 The Government is committed to sustainable funding for all fire and rescue authorities and believes that these settlements are fair and affordable. It is clear that they reflect a tighter fiscal climate in terms of public sector spending overall; but we expect that Fire and Rescue Authorities will build on the substantial recent investment in modernisation. The headings below are intended to encompass the key areas where Fire and Rescue Authorities can achieve this without placing an excessive burden on the local taxpayer.

Efficiency

- 4.33 Like all public services the Fire and Rescue Service must meet the expectations of tax payers and the government of continued improvement and value for money. There is still considerable scope for authorities to look closely at the way in which they deliver services and use resources and how they could do things better and more efficiently. Some good progress has been made, during the last spending review period FRAs in England were set a target to achieve £105 million in efficiency savings. Achieving these savings facilitated new investment at a local level in fire prevention and other community work without excessive rises in council tax.
- 4.34 In a tighter fiscal climate authorities will need to accelerate their efficiency agenda if they are to continue to meet public expectations for performance and to provide value for money. It is vital that authorities focus on making genuine efficiencies – achieving the same level of service with fewer resources or increasing the level of service with the same resources. This agenda is not about making cuts but about using the resources available more effectively. Communities and Local Government, the LGA and CFA have jointly produced case studies of innovative practice, including in the delivery of efficiencies, and will look to continue to support authorities with further guidance in this area.
- 4.35 The starting point is for each Fire and Rescue Authority is to balance its own budget and deliver its business plan objectives through effective planning and performance management. However to maximise savings and performance, Fire and Rescue Authorities need to look with neighbouring authorities and their local partners at how efficiencies can be secured collaboratively. As set out in paragraph 4.3 Regional Management Boards provide a mechanism for authorities to explore the scope for further efficiencies in areas such as joint service delivery and management and the provision of support functions. To this end:

Fire and Rescue Authorities should continue to report efficiencies on an individual authority basis; but Communities and Local Government will also provide a facility and guidance for authorities to report collectively on efficiency savings delivered through the Regional Management Board.

- 4.36 Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships, referred to at paragraph 4.23, also have an important role to play in supporting improved efficiency through identifying good practice and facilitating joint working and local initiatives with local authority partners and others. Fire and Rescue Authorities will wish to ensure that they are properly represented within the partnership's governance arrangements and that their own efficiency initiatives are appropriately linked to the work of the partnership. Authorities may wish to take this forward jointly through Regional Management Boards.

Pay

- 4.37 The government has made clear that it expects the public sector to control pay increases. Whilst it is for the Fire and Rescue Authorities as the employers to negotiate pay and determine the affordability of any settlement, in doing so:

Fire and Rescue Authorities should have regard to the government's public sector pay policy and equal pay legislation.

Council Tax

- 4.38 The government expects all Fire and Rescue Authorities to ensure that they do not set excessive council tax increases in 2008-09 and 2009-10. The government continues to be clear that it would not hesitate to use its capping powers to protect council tax payers from excessive rises in local taxation.

Asset management

- 4.39 In order to ensure efficient use of resources and to effectively manage their estates;

All Fire and Rescue Authorities should have an Asset strategy in place which reflects asset management guidance issued by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and Communities and Local Government.

National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service and Firebuy

- 4.40 Firebuy was established in March 2006 to drive forward the National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service. Its aim is to secure efficiencies in procurement, to advance interoperability and to improve standards of equipment. It will also assist in removing traditional barriers to recruitment and reducing environmental impacts.

- 4.41 A previous review¹⁰ on Fire and Rescue Service procurement indicated that there was potential for efficiencies from the reduction of overheads through to savings from joint purchasing. The work that Firebuy Ltd is undertaking is also part of the overall agenda on Transforming Government Procurement.¹¹

Fire and Rescue Authorities must submit a business case to Communities and Local Government to gain approval to extend existing contracts outside the National Agreements arranged through FireBuy Ltd.

¹⁰ A Uniform Approach – 2000 Audit Commission.

¹¹ Transforming Government Procurement – January 2007 HM Treasury.

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