

# Operational assessment and fire peer challenge



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# Introduction

## Background

Since 2009, the Local Government Association (LGA), in partnership with Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), has successfully delivered peer challenge in all 46 Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) throughout the UK, taking as a starting point self assessments carried out using the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge (OpA) toolkit.

In the new policy landscape with the abolition of the inspection and regulatory regime and the national performance framework, there is a shift to local accountability for performance and self-regulation. This fits well with the governance of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), and the sector-led approach to improvement.

This document presents the revised Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge process. This will remain the 'industry standard' improvement tool to provide elected members on fire authorities and chief officers with information that their operational service delivery is efficient, effective and robust, as well as providing a view on organisational effectiveness.

The process has been updated in 2014 to take account of detailed evaluation carried out by Cardiff University for LGA and CFOA, as well as views from the Fire Service Management Committee and a sounding board of CFOA members. This sector wide research indicated that the process is broadly fit for purpose, and that the operational focus is valued; but that the process required updating to take account of changes within the profession, and also to reflect the challenges facing FRAs as they manage reducing budgets whilst seeking to improve, thrive and innovate.

The evaluation found that the process:

- provides a structured and consistent basis to drive continuous improvement (88 per cent)
- provides councillors and chief officers with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust (88 per cent)
- is an effective way of ensuring the sector as a whole improves (82 per cent)
- is a transparent and robust mechanism for providing challenge to the sector (79 per cent and 71 per cent).

Recommendations from the evaluation have been taken into account in updating the process and toolkit. The full evaluation is available at:

[http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/publications/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/5998282/PUBLICATION](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/publications/-/journal_content/56/10180/5998282/PUBLICATION)

The OpA toolkit is set out in Section 2.

## Aims and objectives

The Fire and Rescue sector has a strong and long standing commitment to sector-led improvement. As part of this, the CFOA developed the concept of OpA in 2009, in partnership with the LGA and the CFRA. This process, which has a strong operational focus, comprises a self-assessment and external peer challenge and is designed to allow a “whole system” look at how a FRA leads, prioritises and delivers the interrelated functions of prevention, protection, preparedness and response in a way which is rooted in:

- a deep understanding of community risk
- the allocation of resources in accordance with that risk
- the marshalling of partnership resources to assist in managing the risk
- a high regard for operational good practice and the health, safety, welfare and development of all FRS staff.

The OpA and Fire Peer Challenge process is designed to:

- form a structured and consistent basis to drive continuous improvement within the Fire and Rescue Service, and
- provide elected members on fire authorities, and chief officers, with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery, and their organisational effectiveness, to ensure they are efficient, effective and robust.

The OpA and Fire Peer Challenge will:

- assist the FRA to identify its service’s strengths and areas to explore
- inform the FRA’s strategic improvement plans
- deliver a robust process for assessing operational performance
- complement and not duplicate any national requirements for financial audit, including the value for money judgement
- be used as a tool to assist FRAs in the identification and dissemination of notable practice
- be flexible in design, and simple in delivery.

The sector-led peer challenge process has been updated to take account of learning from the first three years of the programme, and the outcome of an evaluation conducted by Cardiff University. The overarching principles of peer challenge remain – that it is an effective way to help councils and FRAs strengthen local accountability and revolutionise the way they evaluate and improve services.

The Fire Peer Challenge is a voluntary process that is managed by and delivered for the sector. It is NOT a form of sector-led inspection and is a mechanism to provide fire authorities and chief officers with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery, and their organisational effectiveness, to ensure they are efficient, effective and robust.

The offer to each FRA is to have a peer challenge at a time of its choosing. As with previous rounds of OpA and Fire Peer Challenge, these will be delivered by the sector and at no cost to the receiving authority.

This guidance manual is designed for FRAs which are considering an OpA and Fire Peer Challenge. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but to impart the benefit of eight years of learning from peer challenges undertaken by the LGA and the professional and technical advice of the CFOA.

If you decide to use OpA and Fire Peer Challenge, please feel free to do so in a way which fits with your own approach to service improvement, so that you can take the most benefit from the process.

### **Changes to the peer challenge process**

The peer challenge process has been updated following evaluation, and continues to provide an additional level of external challenge and improvement by bringing together a peer team, using the best peers from across the sector, to help each FRS to respond to its local priorities and issues in its own way.

The offer to each FRS is to have a peer challenge at a time of its choosing. These will be delivered by the sector and at no cost to the receiving authority, although there is recognition that this comes at an opportunity cost to FRAs in the provision of peers.

In addition to reviewing the operational elements of the self assessment, the Fire Peer Challenge will have an increased focus on leadership, governance, corporate capacity and financial planning, and how the FRA delivers outcomes for the communities it serves, because these are key factors in performance and improvement. These six key themes in terms of leadership and corporate capacity have been given additional prominence in the toolkit alongside the operational Key Assessment Areas.

The Fire Peer Challenge will engage with all areas of the self assessment, but will focus on specific priorities and challenges for the FRA, which will be worked up with each FRA based on the outcome of their self assessment.

The Fire Peer Challenge approach is flexible in terms of timing in that FRAs will select a time that is best for them and in terms of the emphasis as the Fire Peer Challenge will be worked up with each FRA individually and will focus on specific areas as identified through the outcome of the OpA self assessment.

The Fire Peer Challenge will also consider equalities and diversity through the OpA self assessment but will not replace self assessment or peer challenge using the FRS Equality Framework.

As a result of the evaluation, additional follow-up peer support may be available to FRAs which identify a need for this through their OpA and peer challenge process. This could focus on particular difficult challenges a FRA is facing, and provide advice and support to the leadership team in addressing these issues. This additional work is by negotiation with the LGA.

[More detailed guidance on the Fire Peer Challenge is available in Section 3.](#)

The Fire Services Management Committee of the LGA approved the partnership approach between CFOA and LGA to develop the already established OpA toolkit and Fire Peer Challenge process to meet the needs of the fire and rescue sector.

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# Operational assessment and fire peer challenge

Operational Assessment  
(OpA) toolkit

# Operational Assessment (OpA) toolkit

## Overview

The OpA toolkit is the industry standard self assessment tool which provides elected members on fire authorities and chief officers with one mechanism to self assess and to re-assure themselves that their operational service delivery is efficient, effective and robust, as well as providing a view on organisational effectiveness.

Self assessment against the OpA toolkit should be undertaken regularly with operational effectiveness viewed as a 'whole systems' approach by the professionals in the sector.

Prevention, protection, preparedness and response are core statutory responsibilities of FRAs, underpinned by effective risk management. Health and safety, training and development and audit and review are by necessity interdependent.

It is suggested that FRSs should use the toolkit with this holistic approach as a principle. Undertaking self assessment against the toolkit is recommended at least every three years, and is a prerequisite for authorities wishing to undertake a peer challenge.

## The operational key assessment areas

The operational Key Assessment Areas (KAA) are:

1. **Community risk management** – How well does the authority understand the local context and identify, plan for and prioritise the risks faced by the community?
2. **Prevention** – How well is the authority delivering its prevention strategy?
3. **Protection** – How well is the authority delivering its regulatory fire safety duties?
4. **Preparedness** – How well is the authority ensuring that its responsibilities for planning and preparing are met?
5. **Response** – How well is the authority delivering its response, call management and incident support activities?
6. **Health, safety and welfare** – How well is the authority ensuring its responsibilities for health, safety and welfare are met?
7. **Training and development** – How well is the authority ensuring its responsibilities for training, development and assessment of its staff are met?



# Using the toolkit

The emphasis of OpA is on the outcome and impact of activities. Each operational KAA has the following elements:

## **Key Area**

Poses a fundamental challenge question for the Authority on the area under review.

## **Focus**

Gives more detail on the evidence required to demonstrate the level of performance.

## **Descriptors (Developing, Established, Advanced)**

Provides a framework for the Authority to reach a view on its current level of performance, based on the evidence. These are intended as food for thought and to promote honest consideration of how developed an authority's approach is.

## **Briefing sheets**

Provide more detail of what might be expected of a high performing organisation.

In completing a self assessment using the toolkit, FRAs should evidence the results of their activities in terms of performance, benefits to the community and outcomes for the organisation. The KAAs should be used in a spirit of genuine challenge and self awareness.

The process is not intended to be burdensome and should make use of evidence readily available, whether that is evidence of strategy, performance data or "case study" type examples of interesting or notable practice. It is envisaged that OpA should be treated as part of the "business as usual" of performance management in the FRA.

## **Key reference documents**

Each briefing sheet contains a list of key strategic documents which a FRA should be aware of in developing its strategy in relation to the relevant aspect of service delivery. These may include statutory guidance where there is a duty to comply; or national strategy or best practice published by government, CFOA or other relevant bodies. It is the intention to keep these lists up to date during this lifetime of this toolkit, and to provide links to the relevant documents for the convenience of FRAs and peer teams.

Operational Assessment and peer review is a voluntary activity and is not about compelling compliance with strategies which do not have statutory force. However along with nationally agreed strategies, it is part of CFOA's approach to sector led improvement. FRAs may wish to reflect on their approach to these statutory, guidance or national strategy documents as they prepare for peer review; peers may engage in conversation with FRAs about their approach to these documents as part of the peer review.

# Leadership and corporate capacity

In addition to the operational Key Assessment Areas, FRAs are encouraged to consider the following six themes, which are concerned with organisational effectiveness and ability to improve, thrive and innovate in challenging times:

- **Understanding of local context and priority setting:** Does the FRA understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities? NB this question is also drawn out in the Community Risk Management section, reflecting the risk based nature of the fire and rescue service.

- **Delivering outcomes for local communities:** How is the FRA delivering outcomes for the local community, and is it performing well?
- **Financial planning and viability:** Does the FRA have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
- **Political and managerial leadership:** Does the FRA have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?
- **Governance and decision-making:** Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?
- **Organisational capacity:** Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?

For the broad organisational themes, there are no detailed questions or descriptors. There is a briefing sheet for each theme, setting out some areas the FRA and peer teams may wish to think about.

# Key assessment areas

## Community risk management

**Question 1:** How well does the Authority understand the local context and identify, plan for and prioritise the risks faced by the community?

<b>Key Area</b>		
1.1 Does the FRA have an effective, evidence based risk strategy that reflects the diverse nature of the community, and identifies and prioritises those most at risk through its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)?		
<b>Focus</b>		
<b>The organisation:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a strong, clear leadership focus on reducing community risk effectively with the resources available</li> <li>• understands local risk and has established arrangements to gather and use data, intelligence and targeting to assess risk to the community and develop appropriate approaches to prepare, prevent, protect and respond</li> <li>• uses the FSEC toolkit or alternative approach</li> <li>• understands the diverse nature of the community it serves, and consults and engages with the community as part of its approach to community risk</li> <li>• considers the future planning of partner agencies (eg in terms of planning, transport and regeneration) that potentially change community risk</li> <li>• has taken statutory responsibilities and national guidance into account when developing plans.</li> </ul>		
<b>Descriptors</b>		
<b>Developing</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<p>The FRA is developing risk analysis processes to become more effective.</p> <p>The FRA is building up knowledge and understanding of its community and priorities.</p>	<p>A risk analysis process is in place and the FRA is well aware of the different risk groups representing the diversity within the local area. The FRA has regard to statutory responsibilities and national guidance but does not extend its process to reflect local circumstances. Leaders understand the nature of community risk.</p>	<p>A well informed and developed risk analysis process exists and the FRA is very aware of the diversity in the local area and takes active steps to inform itself about the distinctive needs and opportunities, and engages in discussion with the local community about community risk. Statutory guidance is fully implemented and is extended in a coherent way to reflect local circumstances.</p>

**Key Area**

1.2 Does the FRA use the outcomes of its risk analysis effectively and efficiently to plan, prepare and successfully implement and deliver prevention, protection, call management and incident support, response, health, safety, training and development activities within its IRMP?

**Focus****The organisation:**

- uses risk analysis to develop appropriate approaches to prepare, prevent, protect and respond
- ensures that the appropriate resources have been targeted and distributed to meet identified priorities and reduce risks
- ensures that resources are sustainable in the medium to long term to ensure risk can continue to be targeted
- uses the IRMP to balance risk and resources
- has robust processes to ensure continuity of service.

**Descriptors**

Developing	Established	Advanced
The use of risk information is increasing in order to identify areas of priority and apply appropriate resource allocation.	A range of information is used to ensure an appropriate, effective and efficient balance of resources to meet the FRA priorities and risk. The FRA is using the IRMP to balance risk and resources.	Detailed use of risk information, from a range of sources, is used to allocate resources appropriately to areas of priority and risk resulting in a safer community. The FRA routinely uses the IRMP to balance risk and resources, and is taking a medium to long term view to ensure the strategy is sustainable.

**Key Area**

1.3 Does the FRA have a robust process for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness and improving performance of its risk analysis process?

**Focus****The organisation:**

- has a sound understanding of performance and a clear approach to making improvements
- uses available data to benchmark performance and support improvement
- measures and evaluates the effectiveness of its risk analysis work, and addresses areas of under performance
- has arrangements for auditing and reviewing its risk analysis process on a planned basis
- shares the results of any audit and evaluation with relevant stakeholders.

**Descriptors****Developing**

The FRA is extending the use of audit, review and evaluation information to highlight the effectiveness of risk analysis work and drive improvement.

**Established**

Risk analysis performance information is used to address areas of underperformance. Quality assurance arrangements are provided to ensure customer satisfaction. Planned audits, reviews and evaluations identify areas of strengths and areas of improvement and are used to inform the IRMP, action planning and to update policies, procedures and practices. Performance is improving.

**Advanced**

Detailed risk analysis performance information is effectively evaluated at all levels to drive improvement. Audit, review and evaluation systems involve all levels within the organisation, external agencies and stakeholders where relevant, and results are shared with personnel and partners. The FRA uses other organisations and peers to conduct or assist in the audit process.

# Community risk management briefing sheet

## **Policy**

- policy is driven and supported by clear, effective political and managerial leadership
- statutory duties and national guidance have been considered in the devising of the risk analysis policy
- the policy considers effectively key factors such as life, the economy, heritage and the environment when determining risk
- the policy clearly states the strategic aims and objectives in reducing the level of risk through the use of prevention, protection and emergency response
- the policy is clearly linked to the organisation's medium term financial strategy
- the policy identifies the risk management process used for determining the existing and potential risks within the community and how available resources will be allocated accordingly
- the policy describes a range of risk reduction proposals to support the management of risk
- the policy has been subjected to appropriate impact assessments

## **Risk management processes**

- the risk management process is based on the principles of the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) Guidance and Toolkit or is supported by appropriate alternative arrangements
- appropriate arrangements exist for the comprehensive collection of empirical and statistical data which accurately represents the diversity of the local community; to support the collection of data, appropriate data sharing protocols are in place with other agencies or adjoining Fire Rescue Authorities
- risk is assessed and prioritised subject to probability and impact
- the risk analysis process has taken account of community, personal and corporate risk
- the process considers the availability of resources within local, regional and national boundaries to ensure the most appropriate speed and weight of emergency response

## **Data, intelligence and targeting**

- the risk analysis process has determined the number, type, geographical location and time and day of all types of incidents in recent years and this information is considered fully in its risk mitigation strategies<sup>18</sup>
- the speed and weight of response of both emergency appliances and operational personnel have been considered within the process
- the risk analysis process takes account of the makeup of the local community both currently and in the future, using social and demographic data including data shared between partners
- data used with the risk analysis process is current, managed securely and presented in a suitable and understandable format
- information technology resources (including FSEC or similar) are used to assist the speed and ease with which the community risk profile can be updated
- the evaluation of community risk is supported by documentary evidence

## **Management systems**

- the policies and processes are subject to an appropriate document control system
- a suitable management structure, supported by an organisational chart, is in place to assign responsibilities to the appropriate level
- responsibilities are clearly defined and regularly reviewed
- objectives and targets are agreed and set with teams and individuals
- key findings and mitigation solutions are determined and presented to the FRA for approval
- the organisation operates with regard to Protective Security guidance

## **Planning and implementing**

- political and managerial leaders are accountable for setting clear priorities and driving and inspiring delivery
- the FRA will have considered all relevant key legislation, guidance and consultation when formulating its plans
- the FRA establishes plans, procedures and practices in relation to risk analysis and assessment; these contain details of the priorities, resource implications, targets and options required to achieve objectives
- the FRA undertakes medium and long term planning to ensure that its risk based service is sustainably resourced

## **Consultation and communication**

- appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure effective engagement and consultation with stakeholders and the wider community
- appropriate communication strategies are in place to ensure that the findings from the risk analysis process and the control measures put in place to control risk are effectively discussed with stakeholders and the wider community

## **Measuring performance**

- the FRA will have appropriate arrangements to monitor its risk management process and to measure performance
- prevention, protection and response arrangements are monitored, and analysed continuously, to ensure that selected options achieve, and continue to achieve, established standards
- risk reduction initiatives, including response, are monitored and analysed to determine the potential for improvements or alternative delivery methods.
- benchmarking is carried out to assist in reducing risk, using available local and national datasets

## **Evaluation**

- prevention, protection and response arrangements have been evaluated to determine their effectiveness in reducing risk within the community
- in particular, there are arrangements in place to measure the effectiveness of changes to emergency response provision to inform future improvements

## **Equality and Diversity**

- the FRA is involving the local community in shaping local services and in ensuring service delivery is central to meeting the needs of all citizens; local community needs and aspirations are expressed with the desire of delivering future improvement and better outcomes
- the FRA is proactive in promoting its contribution to the wider public safety agenda; this should enable the FRA to contribute to building a society where everyone has access to opportunities
- policies and practices are subject to appropriate full equalities impact assessments
- the FRA demonstrates a clear commitment to equality, diversity, respect and dignity in its relationship with its staff

## **Key reference documents**

Community Risk Register



# Prevention

**Question 2:** How well is the Authority delivering its prevention strategy?

<b>Key Area</b>		
2.1 Has the FRA clearly defined, planned and implemented a prevention strategy linked to its IRMP?		
<b>Focus</b>		
<b>The organisation:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has documented and published its plans for delivering its prevention work</li> <li>• recognises the diverse nature of its community and engages with the community in developing prevention strategies</li> <li>• uses data, intelligence and targeting in its prevention work and has targeted its prevention work at areas of priority</li> <li>• has regard to statutory duties, guidance and best practice in developing its plans</li> <li>• understand the risks to people within its communities, and targets resources towards those most vulnerable</li> <li>• has assigned clear responsibility for the delivery of its community safety strategy</li> <li>• conducts a range of effective prevention activity.</li> </ul>		
<b>Descriptors</b>		
<b>Developing</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
The FRA is developing a prioritised prevention strategy to meet the needs of the local community. Clarity in defining responsibility for its implementation is being increased.	A community safety strategy has been planned and implemented, takes account of the needs of the local community and is linked to the IRMP. Work is focused on areas of priority and clear responsibility for implementation of the strategy is assigned.	<p>A comprehensive community safety strategy has been planned and implemented, and ensures that the needs of all sections of the community are met.</p> <p>The strategy supports agreed local priorities.</p> <p>There is an extensive range of effective established partnerships that deliver a joined up approach to community safety.</p>

**Key Area**

2.2 Does the FRA deliver prevention activities effectively, and engage partners and stakeholders effectively in its prevention activities?

**Focus****The organisation:**

- involves partners, staff and the public in the design and delivery of community safety activities to improve responsiveness to local needs
- takes into consideration partners' priorities and works effectively with partners to develop a cohesive, shared programme of preventative actions
- has competent staff who are able to engage with partners and stakeholders
- has competent staff who are able to engage effectively with the community, individuals and stakeholders.

**Descriptors**

Developing	Established	Advanced
Engagement arrangements with partners and stakeholders in the design and delivery of community safety activities are being extended to become more effective.	There is evidence of staff and stakeholder consultation and involvement in policy, planning, design, delivery and evaluation of community safety initiatives.  Local collaboration takes place for the efficient and effective delivery of agreed local priorities including prevention activities.	Partners, staff and the public are engaged effectively in the design and delivery of community safety activities. Prevention activity is tailored to meet the needs of the local community and complements the delivery of agreed local priorities. Progress on delivery is consistently and effectively communicated to them. As a result, success is being achieved in reduction of incidents, deaths and injuries.

**Key Area**

2.3 Does the FRA have a robust process for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness and improving performance of its prevention activities?

**Focus****The organisation:**

- has a sound understanding of performance and a clear approach to making improvements
- measures and evaluates the effectiveness of its preventative work, and addresses areas of under performance
- has arrangements in place for auditing and reviewing its prevention work on a planned basis
- shares the results of any audit and evaluation with relevant stakeholders
- seeks to learn and understand from others about what “works”.

**Descriptors**

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Performance management arrangements for prevention activities are being developed to effectively identify strengths and areas for improvement. Arrangements for auditing and reviewing prevention work are being increased.</p>	<p>Planned audits, reviews and evaluations of prevention activity identify areas of strength and improvement which are shared with relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Quality assurance arrangements are provided to ensure customer satisfaction. Outcomes of evaluation and review result in actions to improve performance and methods of delivery.</p>	<p>Prevention performance information is effectively evaluated at all levels and drives improvement. Audit, review and evaluation systems involve all levels within the organisation, external agencies and stakeholders where relevant, and results are shared with personnel and partners. The FRA uses other organisations and peers to conduct or assist in the audit process.</p>

# Prevention briefing sheet

## **Strategy**

- the FRA has a clear strategy which sets out the priorities for community safety, placing its importance as an integral part of IRMP
- the strategy sets out priorities, deliverables and responsibilities
- the strategy takes into account national and local trends and is targeted, reaching out to the most vulnerable

## **Risk reduction**

- a process is in place for defining the level of community risk, and those most at risk
- risk reduction is linked to population social demographics in order to target community safety strategies, for example by the use of FSEC, other databases, shared information and local knowledge
- information is shared with other stakeholders in forums such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships
- FRAs engage effectively with the local community to build up a comprehensive risk profile for the area

## **Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC)**

- HFSCs are delivered effectively to those most at risk through use of data, local intelligence and referral programmes with other agencies
- the HFSC programme ensures high risk premises are revisited periodically
- the HFSC programme uses national and local data sharing protocols to target those most at risk, for example the use of health and social care data
- the HFSC process includes the opportunity to signpost vulnerable individuals to other agencies

## **Prevention campaigns**

- the FRA creates and delivers local campaigns and strategy to prevent fire and promote community safety
- the FRA integrates any national campaigns into local activity

## **Local Partnerships and Initiatives**

- the FRA involves the local community in developing community safety priorities
- the FRA ensures that it delivers any fire specific priorities agreed at the local level, such as tackling anti-social behaviour and RTC reduction in an effective, well coordinated and prioritised way
- partnerships are effectively managed, eg registers, toolkits utilised
- there are clearly defined aims and objectives

## **Targeted interventions**

- the FRA is clear about the groups and individuals it is targeting through prevention work, and has clear strategies for engaging with these
- the FRA has considered its strategy for engaging with vulnerable groups, such as young people and older people, to help improve the safety and quality of young persons' lives
- effective policy and training are in place for FRA engagement with young people and vulnerable adults to ensure they are safeguarded, protected and safe

## **Road Safety**

- the FRA and its partners have developed a clear approach to road safety, in order to contribute to a reduction in the number of those killed or injured on the roads

## **Review**

- there is an effective method of reviewing the value of all activities in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency aimed at improving organisational performance in reducing risk
- this includes both an assessment of FRA led activities as well as an assessment of partnership activities
- exit strategies are in place where required.
- the authority learns from others and shares good practice

## **Key reference documents**

CFOA Home Safety Strategy 2013-16

CFOA Road Safety Strategy 2013-16

Ageing Safely: protecting an ageing population from the risk of fire in the home. CFOA 2012

CFOA Children & Young People Guidance & Safeguarding Guidance – launch imminent

# Protection

**Question 3:** How well is the Authority delivering its regulatory fire safety duties?

<b>Key Area</b>		
3.1 Has the FRA clearly defined, planned and implemented a regulatory fire safety strategy to support local businesses, linked to its IRMP?		
<b>Focus</b>		
<p><b>The organisation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understands the contribution an effective fire safety strategy makes to local businesses and the local economy</li> <li>• has documented and published its plans for delivering its protection work, with an appropriate balance of support and enforcement</li> <li>• has regard to statutory duties, guidance and best practice in developing its plans</li> <li>• uses evidence to target its protection work at areas of priority in the community</li> <li>• has implemented a risk based inspection programme which takes account of the risks in the local built environment</li> <li>• has published a clear, transparent and easily understandable enforcement policy</li> <li>• has assigned clear responsibilities for delivering its protection strategy.</li> <li>• makes a clear link between prevention, protection and response activities.</li> </ul>		
<b>Descriptors</b>		
<b>Developing</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<p>The FRAs regulatory fire safety strategy is being reviewed to provide an effective risk based approach to the fire safety audit programme.</p> <p>Greater clarity in defining responsibility for its implementation is being developed.</p>	<p>The FRAs regulatory fire safety strategy is clearly defined, planned and implemented, and is linked to the FRAs IRMP.</p> <p>Clear responsibility for implementation of the strategy is assigned. The RR(FS)O audit programme work is focused on targeting priority areas and is risk based. Liaison with business and the third sector meets all statutory requirements.</p>	<p>The FRAs regulatory fire safety strategy has evolved to fully encompass other regulatory bodies, business and third sector groups. Liaison with these stakeholders informs proactive management of changing risks and priorities.</p> <p>A well informed risk analysis process including both local and national issues is used to identify trends, inform protection work locally and improves levels of safety in the community.</p>

## Key Area

3.2 Does the FRA deliver protection activities effectively and engage partners and stakeholders effectively in its protection activities?

### Focus

#### The organisation:

- involves partners, staff and the public in the design and delivery of protection activities to improve responsiveness to local needs
- fully integrates protection activity with all other aspects of the FRA's work
- shares risk information effectively across the service to ensure that risk is understood and mitigated
- has competent staff who are able to engage with partners and stakeholders
- demonstrates a supportive approach in its engagement with partners and stakeholders, balancing this effectively with enforcement.

### Descriptors

#### Developing

Effective engagement and consultation of staff and stakeholders in protection activities is being developed. Increased liaison arrangements with other agencies are being introduced.

#### Established

Consultation and engagement arrangements with staff and stakeholders in the policy, planning and delivery of fire protection activity are effective.

Suitable arrangements are in place for liaising with other relevant agencies.

Consultation meets statutory requirements and responds to stakeholders' requests.

#### Advanced

Robust and embedded arrangements are in place for liaising and working with other relevant agencies including data sharing, and this is improving safety in the community.

Effective consultation with other agencies provides consistency of advice and enforcement. Internal FRS stakeholders are fully engaged in the integration of protection work into other FRS activities.

**Key Area**

3.3 Does the FRA have a robust process for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness and improving performance of its protection activities?

**Focus**

**The organisation:**

- measures and evaluates the effectiveness of its protection work
- addresses areas of under performance
- has a sound understanding of performance and a clear approach to making improvements
- has arrangements in place for auditing and reviewing its protection work on a
- planned basis
- shares information, including the results of any audit and evaluation with relevant stakeholders
- seeks to learn and understand from others about what “works”.

**Descriptors**

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Developing Established Advanced Performance management arrangements for protection activities are being developed to effectively identify strengths and areas for improvement. Arrangements for auditing and reviewing protection work need to be extended.</p>	<p>Planned audits, reviews and evaluations of protection activity identify strengths and areas for improvement which are shared with relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Quality assurance arrangements are provided to ensure customer satisfaction. Outcomes of evaluation and review result in actions to improve performance and methods of delivery.</p>	<p>Protection performance information is evaluated effectively at every level and drives improvement across the organisation. Audit, review and evaluation systems involve all levels within the FRA, and information is shared both internally and with external agencies and stakeholders where relevant. The FRA uses other organisations and peers to conduct or assist in the audit process.</p>



# Protection briefing sheet

## **Enforcement and inspection programme**

- a guiding strategy is in place, which sets a vision for protection activity within the FRA's IRMP
- there is a well developed inspection programme, using robust audit and information gathering processes, which targets enforcement based on risk
- an evaluation process for assessing the range of premises and relative risks is used to inform the re-inspection programme
- a process is in place for communicating information on premises risk to operational staff
- a robust post fire audit programme is in place and used to reduce risk

## **Liaison with other relevant agencies**

- the FRA can demonstrate how it works effectively with other enforcement agencies to share information on risk and take action where appropriate; this could include local authority Licensing, Building Control and Trading Standards officers
- working arrangements are in place with other agencies to deliver effective services and reduce the burden of inspections

## **Business Support**

- there is engagement with local business forums to share information and expectations on compliance
- partnership arrangements are in place to facilitate compliance by large organisations, such as the NHS, making use of methods such as a memorandum of understanding
- the FRA is working in partnership to reduce the burden of unwanted fire signals

## **Primary Authority Schemes**

- the FRA understands and supports the principles of Primary Authority Schemes (PAS)
- the FRA takes account of the existence of relevant PAS in developing its risk based inspection programme

## **Consultation**

- regular liaison with relevant bodies is taking place to ensure a common understanding of standards and requirements
- there are agreed procedures and reporting mechanisms which evaluate the effectiveness of liaison arrangements

## **Key reference documents**

Primary Authority Statutory Guidance. BIS/Better Regulation Delivery Office 2013  
Regulators' Code 2014. BIS/Better Regulation Delivery Office 2014  
CFOA Business Safety Strategy  
CFOA Competency Framework for Business Fire Safety Regulators

# Preparedness

**Question 4:** How well is the Authority meeting its responsibilities for planning and preparing for incidents that could have a significant local or national impact on communities?

**Key Area**

4.1 Does the FRA have clearly defined and effective arrangements for preparedness linked to its IRMP?

**Focus**

**The organisation:**

- has assigned clear responsibility for the development of operational preparedness
- has taken the relevant national guidance into account when developing operational policy and plans
- has given due regard to the Community Risk Register when developing operational policy and plans
- has documented and published its operational policy and plans
- has robust processes to ensure continuity of service.

**Descriptors**

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Arrangements for operational preparedness are being developed based on the community risk profile and linked to the IRMP.</p>	<p>Arrangements for operational preparedness are established and implemented based on community risk profile and safety strategy and linked to IRMP.</p> <p>Clear responsibility to maintain and improve these arrangements is assigned.</p>	<p>Operational preparedness is based on multi-agency collaboration and cooperation which demonstrates safe and effective arrangements.</p> <p>These arrangements ensure that operational procedures are comprehensively underpinned by risk assessment.</p>

## Key Area

4.2 Does the FRA engage partners and stakeholders effectively in its arrangements for planning and preparing for operational incidents that could have a significant impact on their communities?

## Focus

### The organisation:

- involves partners, staff and the public in the development and implementation of its operational policy and plans
- has a sound understanding of partner organisations and their roles, responsibilities and capabilities
- has incorporated the relevant information from local risk analyses into their operational policy and plans
- has arrangements in place for key partner organisations to test joint ways of working.

## Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
Engagement of partners, staff and public in developing, maintaining and improving operational incident planning arrangements are being reviewed and implemented.	There is evidence of staff and stakeholder consultation and involvement in maintaining and improving operational incident planning arrangements.	All partners, staff and public are engaged effectively in maintaining and improving operational incident planning arrangements.
Enhanced multi-agency liaison and joint working is being developed.	Enhanced multi-agency liaison is established through the local resilience network and relevant forums.	There is effective multi-agency liaison in place which promotes ways of working that allow for integration with partner agencies.

<b>Key Area</b>		
4.3 Does the FRA have effective arrangements in place to support incidents of national significance		
<b>Focus</b>		
<p><b>The organisation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has arrangements in place to participate in the national mutual aid protocol</li> <li>• understands the requirements of mutual assistance arrangements</li> <li>• has arrangements in place to meet any requirements in relation to hosted national resilience assets.</li> </ul>		
<b>Descriptors</b>		
<b>Developing</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Arrangements for the FRA to deploy available resources outside of its area are being developed.	<p>The FRA has established and implemented arrangements to deploy specialist resources outside of its area when requested by neighbouring FRA or FRSNCC.</p> <p>Clear responsibility to maintain and improve these arrangements is assigned.</p>	<p>The FRA has strong, resilient arrangements in place which are capable of providing support to significant regional and national incidents and the requirements of national co-ordination.</p> <p>Arrangements are in place to ensure the readiness of National Resilience assets.</p> <p>Arrangements ensure that there is a continuous review following lessons learnt from such incidents.</p>

# Preparedness briefing sheet

## Planning and Preparation

- policy is based on the nationally recognised guidance including Fire Service Manual on Incident Command, Generic Risk Assessments and JESIP Doctrine
- risks to the implementation of the incident command model have been assessed and control measures have been implemented; this assessment takes account of cross-border arrangements and national resilience
- the FRA has established arrangements to provide appropriate resources, including adequate equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE), to meet reasonably predictable levels of operational activity; means to supplement those resources in the event of extraordinary need, such as spate conditions or a major incident, are in place
- the FRA has established arrangements to maintain the readiness of National Resilience assets against key performance requirements

## Operational Procedures

- the FRA has produced Standard Operating Procedures/Safe Systems of Work relating to the range of incident types to which operational personnel may respond and these have taken due regard of Generic Risk Assessments
- standard Operating Procedures include direction that promotes the JESIP principles and ways of working that allow for integrated effort to take place with partner agencies
- procedures are communicated to employees, are readily available and are reviewed/amended to take account of updates

## Risk Information

- effective arrangements are in place for gathering risk information and making it readily available to operational crews; information is shared across the FRA where appropriate, for example between protection teams and front-line firefighters
- criteria are in place to determine whether a site is inspected and re-inspected under section 7(2)(d) arrangements
- where site specific plans and procedures are required, they are founded upon a comprehensive risk assessment and produced by competent personnel following effective liaison with partner agencies
- the FRA can demonstrate effective liaison between partner agencies and major risk sites in the development of plans

## Business Continuity

- the FRA has appropriate and effective arrangements in place to ensure that services can be delivered in the event of a business interruption

## Joint Ways of Working (Interoperability and Intraoperability)

- the FRA recognises that JESIP (Joint Doctrine: the interoperability framework) is an essential element of operational guidance; they have used this operational information to promote joint ways of working that allow for interoperability to take place with partner agencies
- a joint exercise programme exists to enable key agencies to plan for and test arrangements for dealing with cross-border incidents or major incidents which require multi-agency involvement
- the FRA collaborates with other FRSs to ensure effective and efficient intraoperability in accordance with the relevant Fire and Rescue Service legislation

**Mutual Aid**

- the FRA has local arrangements in place which recognise and support the National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF)

**Cross-border and multi-agency training**

- a comprehensive training, development and joint exercise programme exists to enable key agencies to maintain competency within their organisations for dealing with cross-border incidents or major incidents which require a multiagency response
- the programme will be based on a training need analysis which takes into account local, regional and national risks
- multi agency training reflects interoperability and the JESIP principles

**Key reference documents**

# Response

**Question 5:** How well is the Authority delivering its response activities?

<p><b>Key Area</b></p> <p>5.1 Has the FRA clearly defined, planned and implemented a response strategy linked to its IRMP?</p>		
<p><b>Focus</b></p> <p><b>The organisation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has documented and published its risk based response standards and arrangements</li> <li>• has flexible response standards and arrangements appropriate to risk</li> <li>• has developed a response strategy which makes the best use of available resources and takes account of national guidance and best practice</li> <li>• has assigned clear responsibility for the development, improvement and delivery of response strategy.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Descriptors</b></p>		
<b>Developing</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<p>A response strategy to meet organisational needs is being developed, based on the community risk profile and linked to the IRMP.</p>	<p>The response strategy has been clearly defined, planned and implemented based on community risk profile and safety strategy and linked to the IRMP. Clear responsibility to develop, maintain and improve the response strategy to meet organisational needs within a safe system of work is assigned.</p>	<p>The response strategy demonstrates flexible, timely, safe, effective and efficient arrangements based on collaboration, cooperation and sharing of resources.</p> <p>The strategy ensures operational procedures are comprehensively underpinned by risk assessment.</p>

**Key Area**

5.2 Does the FRA deliver a safe and effective response and engage partners and stakeholders effectively in its response activities?

**Focus****The organisation:**

- involves partners, staff and the public in the design and delivery of response activities to improve responsiveness to local needs
- works effectively with partners in responding to emergencies
- has competent staff who are able to respond effectively to local need.

**Descriptors**

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Engagement of partners, staff and the public in developing, maintaining and improving response arrangements are being reviewed and implemented.</p> <p>Enhanced multi agency liaison, and joint working is being developed.</p>	<p>There is evidence of staff and stakeholder consultation and involvement in developing, maintaining and improving response arrangements.</p> <p>Effective arrangements address the area risk profile through involvement of external partners and agencies through relevant Resilience Forums.</p>	<p>All partners, staff and the public are engaged effectively in developing, maintaining and improving response arrangements.</p> <p>There is effective multi agency liaison, and joint working with visible or tangible outcomes.</p>



**Key Area**

5.3 Does the FRA have a robust process for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness and improving performance of its response activities?

**Focus****The organisation:**

- has a sound understanding of performance and a clear approach to making improvements
- measures and evaluates the effectiveness of its response activities, including those in a multi-agency setting, and addresses areas of under performance
- has arrangements in place for the active monitoring of incidents, including auditing, reviewing and improving its response activities on a planned basis
- works with partners on operational monitoring as appropriate
- shares the results of any audit and evaluation with relevant stakeholders
- learns from others to improve its response activities.

**Descriptors**

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Performance management arrangements for response activities need to be developed to effectively identify strengths and areas for improvement. Extended arrangements for auditing and reviewing response activities are being introduced.</p>	<p>Planned audits, reviews and evaluations of response activity identify strengths and areas for improvement and results are shared with relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Quality assurance arrangements are provided to ensure customer satisfaction. Outcomes of evaluation and review result in actions to improve performance and methods of delivery. Performance is improving.</p>	<p>Response performance information is effectively evaluated at all levels to drive improvement. Audit, review and evaluation systems involve all levels within organisation, and external agencies and stakeholders where relevant.</p> <p>Results are shared with personnel and partners.</p> <p>The FRA uses other organisations and peers to conduct or assist in the audit process.</p>

<b>Key Area</b>		
5.4 How well is the Authority delivering its call management and incident support activities?		
<b>Focus</b>		
<p><b>The organisation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has clearly defined policies for call management and incident support, developed in collaboration with other agencies as appropriate and linked to the IRMP</li> <li>• has assigned clear responsibility for the development, improvement and delivery of call management and incident support</li> <li>• ensures that call management and incident support activities include effective contingency (fall back) arrangements and appropriate staffing arrangements</li> <li>• has effective communications in place to support the command and control of incidents</li> <li>• measures, evaluates and audits the effectiveness of its call management and incident support activities and addresses areas of under performance</li> <li>• shares the results of any audit and evaluation with relevant stakeholders and can evidence learning from other services/organisations.</li> </ul>		
<b>Descriptors</b>		
<b>Developing</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<p>Call management arrangements and incident support policy are being developed.</p> <p>Performance management, and audit arrangements for call management and incident support activities are being developed to effectively identify strengths and areas for improvement.</p>	<p>Call management arrangements and incident support policies have been developed. Clear responsibility for implementation of the policies including contingency/ spare conditions/ recall to duty  are present.</p> <p>Planned audits, reviews and evaluations of call management and incident support activities identify areas of strength and areas for improvement which are shared with relevant stakeholders are actioned.</p>	<p>Call management arrangements and incident support policies have been developed in collaboration with other agencies and are fully integrated with all relevant policies of partner agencies. Effective implementation of AFA policy and call challenge, that have already reduced mobilisations, is evidenced.</p> <p>Call management and incident support activities performance information is evaluated effectively at all levels to drive improvement.</p> <p>Audit, review and evaluation systems involve all levels within organisation, external agencies and stakeholders where appropriate. Results are shared with personnel and partners. The FRA engages actively with other FRAs and has incorporated lessons learnt into its procedures.</p>

# Response briefing sheet

## Emergency response arrangements

- emergency response arrangements are delivering the FRA's statutory duties and IRMP. Response aims and objectives are clearly articulated
- response arrangements are organised to reflect the changes in key legislation and guidance, including the Civil Contingencies Act and the most recent edition of the Fire Service Manual on Incident Command, and has regard to national operational guidance; policies have been updated accordingly
- resources are deployed, and staffing arrangements designed, in an effective way based on risk
- the FRA has implemented suitable and sufficient arrangements for the command, management and supervision of operational incidents; policy is based on the nationally recognised guidance including Fire Service Manual on Incident Command and Generic Risk Assessments
- the FRA has conducted an analysis of its incident command requirements at all levels within the organisation and has implemented an appropriate model based on its IRMP
- risks to the implementation of the incident command model have been assessed and control measures have been implemented; this assessment takes account of cross-border arrangements and national resilience
- the FRA has established arrangements to provide appropriate resources, including adequate equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE), to meet reasonably predictable levels of operational activity; means to supplement those resources in the event of extraordinary need, such as spate conditions or a large scale incident, are in place
- the FRA collaborates with other Fire and Rescue Services to ensure effective and efficient interoperability in accordance with Section 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

## Risk information

- effective arrangements are in place for gathering risk information and making it readily available to operational crews. Information is shared across the FRA where appropriate, for example between Protection teams and front-line firefighters
- criteria are in place to determine whether a site is inspected and re-inspected under section 7(2)(d) arrangements
- where site specific plans and procedures are required, they are founded upon a comprehensive risk assessment carried out by competent personnel following effective liaison with partner agencies
- the FRA can demonstrate effective liaison between partner agencies and major risk sites in the development of plans

## Active operational monitoring

- monitoring systems are in place to measure and evaluate all aspects of operational performance, supported by robust procedures to rectify actual or potential shortfalls with the emphasis upon continuous improvement of organisational performance
- as a key component of this, a comprehensive debrief and review process is in place for operational incidents, with multi agency involvement if appropriate; this is used effectively to inform policies and practices across the organisation, and allow any necessary change to be embedded

- the organisation demonstrates that it learns from national incidents including section 28/rule 43 letters (check Scottish and Welsh equivalent)

### **Call management and incident support**

- clear policies (with change controls) are in place for call management and incident support, and these are fully documented and accessible to all staff, and regularly reviewed and quality assured
- collaboration takes place with other emergency services and agencies in defining and reviewing the policies, including learning lessons from major incidents
- procedures are in place to ensure the training needs and principles are correctly applied and are quality assured
- the training needs of operational and control staff are considered to ensure better understanding and effective cooperation including the work of other agencies

### **Contingency arrangements**

- resilient technology and procedures are available
- regular testing is undertaken of the fall back arrangements and collaboration with other Control Rooms
- arrangements are in place to receive advance warnings where these affect business continuity of the FRA and other agencies, eg severe weather warnings
- systems or procedures are in place to identify future deficiencies in respect of all duty systems utilised by the FRA, including recall to duty plans etc

### **Data and supporting documentation**

- data is used pro-actively to support review of service wide policies and to assure levels of service are appropriate and trends identified and acted upon
- standard formats are used and information is updated regularly
- information is available where necessary and shared with other agencies as appropriate
- procedures are in place for obtaining information for specific types of incident from specialist agencies and specialists are used, where appropriate

### **Key reference documents**

Generic Risk Assessment and Operational Guidance documents (DCLG/CFRA)  
CFOA Guidance for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals (and the accompanying FAMO Code of Practice)

# Health, safety and welfare

**Question 6:** How well is the Authority ensuring its responsibilities for health, safety and welfare are met?

**Key Area**

6.1 Does the FRA have clearly defined and effective arrangements to take account of its Health, Safety and Welfare responsibilities?

**KAA focus**

**The organisation:**

- has clearly defined Health, Safety and Welfare policies to support its plans and Strategies reflecting national guidance and best practice and aligned to the IRMP
- takes into account all relevant statutory provisions including health and safety legislation and guidance when developing policies
- has policies founded on risk assessment that are commensurate with the role of the Fire and Rescue Service and take into account the service’s statutory responsibilities
- has effective plans, procedures and practices in place to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare of all staff.

**Descriptors**

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>General Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) policies are in place and there is some evidence of policy in specific areas of HSW responsibilities.</p> <p>Greater engagement with key stakeholders and representatives in respect of policy, planning and development is being introduced. Policies are being developed to take account of relevant legislation and guidance.</p>	<p>Clearly defined health, safety and welfare (HSW) policies are communicated effectively to all staff to support the delivery of organisational plans and strategies. Policy planning and development involves staff and stakeholder consultation and the FRA demonstrates a clear commitment to consult with representative bodies on all aspects of HSW.</p> <p>Policies are developed to take account of relevant legislation and guidance.</p>	<p>Collaboration takes place on a local and regional basis for the delivery of Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) activities. HSW policies are embedded into all processes and activities of the FRA and a clearly demonstrable culture of HSW is evident at all levels within the organisation.</p>

## Key Area

6.2 Do effective management structures and arrangements exist within the FRA to support the development and implementation of Health, Safety and Welfare activities?

### KAA focus

#### The organisation:

- demonstrates clear leadership commitment to Health, Safety and Welfare throughout the organisation
- has clear procedures which are well understood by staff
- has a culture which promotes Health, Safety and Welfare within the organisation
- ensures clear responsibility exists for the planning, development, improvement and maintenance of Health, Safety and Welfare activities
- ensures that Health, Safety and Welfare responsibilities are allocated to line managers, with competent specialists appointed to act as advisers
- ensures that individuals at all levels of the organisation are clear about their personal role and responsibility in managing and promoting Health, Safety and Welfare
- has suitable arrangements to assess and support individuals to ensure they are competent and capable of undertaking their role safely
- has suitable arrangements in place to promote the welfare and wellbeing of staff.

### Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
Organisation of Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) management needs to be developed to provide members, managers and individuals with clarity on responsibilities. Greater delegation of authority for HSW is being introduced.	<p>There is a systematic approach to the identification and assessment of risk. Roles and responsibilities for HSW are clearly defined to ensure effective development and implementation of HSW activities. Members and Senior managers ensure that their responsibilities for HSW are discharged effectively.</p> <p>Individuals are fully aware of their responsibility for HSW.</p> <p>An effective communication system is in place to disseminate information on risk and safety critical information to relevant staff.</p>	<p>A robust structure for HSW management is in place with effective systems for performance management of data and information.</p> <p>Competent staff investigate and report safety events which results in a reduction of risk. Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) is embedded within all functions throughout the organisation and this is reflected in demonstrable improvements in HSW performance.</p>

## Key Area

6.3 Does the FRA have a robust process for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness, and improving performance of its health, safety and welfare activities?

### KAA focus

#### The organisation:

- has a sound understanding of performance
- measures and evaluates the effectiveness of its Health, Safety and Welfare work, and addresses areas of under performance
- sets robust and challenging targets for Health, Safety and Welfare
- has arrangements in place for auditing and reviewing its Health, Safety and Welfare work on a planned basis
- learns the lessons of internal and external audit and evaluations to improve the safety of the workplace
- shares the results of any audit and evaluation with relevant stakeholders
- is open to learning from across the Fire and Rescue, and other sectors, to improve the Health, Safety and Welfare of staff.

### Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Performance management arrangements for Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) need to be developed to effectively identify strengths and areas for improvement.</p> <p>Extended arrangements for auditing and reviewing HSW activities are being introduced. Challenging HSW targets are being implemented.</p>	<p>Planned audits, reviews and evaluations of Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) identify strengths and areas for improvement and these are shared with relevant stakeholders. Monitoring information and data are analysed to identify trends in HSW activity and outcomes are actioned as necessary. FRA members and senior managers are aware of HSW performance against challenging targets.</p>	<p>Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) performance information is effectively evaluated at all levels and benchmarked nationally to drive improvement. Audit, review and evaluation systems involve all levels within organisation, external agencies and stakeholders where relevant. Results are shared with personnel and partners The FRA uses other organisations and peers to conduct or assist in the audit process.</p>

# Health, safety and welfare briefing sheet

## **Policy**

- a clear health and safety (H&S) policy is in place which effectively communicates senior management's commitment to H&S
- the policy takes account of statutory duties, national guidance and best practice with regard to health, safety and welfare
- the policy clearly defines the responsibilities of policy makers, planners and implementers in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of staff in every aspect of their work
- the policy is linked to the IRMP and reflected as appropriate in other strategies and plans
- documentation identifies how the FRA will secure the control, cooperation, communication and competence necessary for the development of a positive health and safety culture
- operational policies take account of the overriding H&S policy, eg training for operational incidents

## **Active monitoring**

- comprehensive procedures are in place for active monitoring, eg inspections of premises, plant and equipment, skills validation
- mechanisms are in place to ensure safe systems of work for operational and training activities and these are being adhered to

## **Risk assessments**

- evidence is available to demonstrate that the FRA has carried out appropriate and proportionate risk assessments
- individuals or groups have been nominated to complete risk assessments
- these individuals/groups have received training in carrying out risk assessments
- risk assessments are regularly reviewed (at least annually)

## **Reactive monitoring**

- an accident reporting and investigation procedure is in place which involves the assignment of investigations to the appropriate level of staff; this includes a mechanism for reporting all accidents causing injury, ill health or damage
- the policy takes account of other adverse safety events
- there is a process for investigating events
- near miss reporting systems provide a mechanism for operational personnel to raise concerns on health, safety, welfare and training matters
- learning outcomes are identified and implemented

## **Training**

- all employees have the appropriate information, instruction and training within the context of prevention, protection and response to enable them to perform their duties safely at operational incidents
- the FRA has undertaken an analysis of training needs for all employees and appropriate actions have been implemented



### **Safety procedures**

- the FRA has produced Standard Operating Procedures/Safe Systems of Work relating to the range of incident types to which operational personnel may respond and these have taken due regard of Generic Risk Assessments
- procedures are communicated to employees, are readily available and are reviewed/ amended to take account of updates

### **Communications**

- there is a flow of HSW information into and out of the FRA
- there is a system in place for bringing safety information to the attention of employees, eg safety alerts
- national reports containing health and safety recommendations are considered by the FRA, and communicated where appropriate
- there is a joint consultative process in place, eg safety committee, service planning process
- lessons learned from incidents (local and national) are considered by the FRA and procedures are altered accordingly

### **Performance review**

- HSW forms an essential part of active operational monitoring and debrief processes
- the FRA has a process to audit and review the H&S management+ system;
- actions are regularly reviewed

### **Welfare and Support**

- arrangements are in place to provide support to individuals across the organisation in relation to their health, welfare and wellbeing
- individuals take responsibility for maintaining their own health, welfare and wellbeing
- welfare arrangements are in place to support those who have been exposed to a traumatic event

### **Key reference documents**

HSG 65 methodology

Health, Safety and Welfare Framework for the Operational Environment. DCLG June 2013

## Training and development

**Question 7:** How well is the Authority ensuring its responsibilities for training, development and assessment of its staff are met?

### Key Area

7.1 Does the FRA have clearly defined and effective policies to take account of its responsibilities in terms of training, development and assessment of competence?

### Focus

#### The organisation:

- has put in place a framework to ensure that all staff are competent to deliver the responsibilities of their role
- has clearly defined training, development and assessment policies to deliver the outcomes of its plans and strategies, aligned to the IRMP
- takes into account foreseeable risk at the local and national level in devising these policies
- takes statutory and sector guidance, good practice and health and safety requirements into account when developing training, development and assessment policies
- engages in training activity with appropriate partners to ensure an effective multi agency response.

### Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>The FRA is developing its training, development and assessment policies to ensure all fundamental components of national guidance are included and implemented.</p> <p>Greater engagement with key stakeholders and representatives in respect of policy, planning and development is being introduced.</p>	<p>Clearly defined training, development and assessment policies support all aspects of corporate strategy. The policies encompass statutory and sector guidance and include all fundamental components of national guidance. Good practice is followed. Policy planning and development involves staff and stakeholder consultation.</p>	<p>Principles are embedded in policies for the recruitment, development and progression of all staff.</p> <p>Effective collaboration takes place on a local and regional basis to ensure efficient delivery of training and development activities.</p> <p>Personal Development Reviews and Development programmes are structured to ensure all staff are provided with clear direction.</p>

## Key Area

7.2 Do effective management structures and arrangements exist within the FRA to support the development and implementation of training, development and assessment activities?

## Focus

### The organisation:

- provides appropriate training and development to all staff and Members to ensure they are able to fulfil their role
- has an appropriate structure to ensure training, development, appraisal and assessment is effective, including assessment for incident command
- ensures that clear responsibility exists for the planning, development, improvement and maintenance of training, development and assessment activities
- affords realistic training events (when providing operational training) that allow Firefighters to use the tactics, procedures, techniques and equipment employed at incidents
- tailors operational training activities to operational risk, including national intelligence about operational risks
- trains operational personnel to identify environments, activities and circumstances that may affect operational safety, to enable them to control risks consistently
- plans and delivers multi agency training in accordance with local risk and national guidance.

## Descriptors

### Developing

The FRA is in the process of developing clearly defined responsibilities and effective structures for promotion of training, development and assessment within the organisation are in place.

For operational staff, training activities are being developed to ensure sufficient realistic training opportunities are in place and these encompass all aspects of risk management.

### Established

The FRA has clearly defined responsibilities and structures for the delivery of training, development and assessment.

Effective, realistic and appropriate methods are used to ensure all personnel and Members develop and maintain competence in all aspects of their roles.

For operational staff, effective training activities ensure sufficient realistic training opportunities are in place to encompass all aspects of risk management.

### Advanced

The FRA can demonstrate a strongly embedded, coherent approach to learning, development and assessment which ensures that every member of staff and elected member is developed to fully deliver their role in implementing community safety priorities.

Individuals take responsibility for their own learning and development.

Systematic arrangements ensure that active monitoring of incidents informs the training and development of operational staff.

Effective arrangements are in place for cross agency training which ensures effective incident management and operational delivery at multiagency incidents.

**Key Area**

7.3 Does the FRA have a robust process for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness and improving the performance of its training and development activities?

**Focus****The organisation:**

- develops and maintains the competence of all its staff
- measures and evaluates the effectiveness of its training and development activities, and addresses areas of under performance
- has a sound understanding of performance
- has arrangements in place for auditing and reviewing its training and development activities on a planned basis
- shares the results of any audit and evaluation with relevant stakeholders
- is open to learning from across and beyond the fire sector to improve and develop its training.

**Descriptors**

Developing	Established	Advanced
Performance management systems for training and development activities are being established to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Extended arrangements for auditing and reviewing, training and development activities are being introduced.	Planned audits, reviews and evaluations of operational, training and development activity identify areas of strengths and areas for improvement and these are shared with relevant stakeholders. Quality assurance arrangements are provided to ensure learning and development standards are maintained and improved.	Established performance management systems are subject to external accreditation and regular peer review. Multi-agency training, development and assessment are subject to effective performance management systems with good communications established between key stakeholders.

# Training and development briefing sheet

## **Training and Development Strategy**

- a comprehensive Training and Development Strategy has been developed and implemented within the organisation, aligned to the IRMP
- the development of the strategy has been subject to a suitable engagement and consultation process with the relevant stakeholders
- the strategy has been designed to meet the FRA's legal duties and responsibilities under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other relevant legislation
- the strategy considers relevant national guidance and documentation, and in particular, will have been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment
- the strategy will encompass prevention, protection, intervention, civil resilience, leadership and management and will pay due regard to operational issues at a local, regional and national level
- the strategy will encompass all personnel at all levels in the organisation regardless of structure and duty system
- the strategy will ensure that suitable and sufficient training and development is provided for all elected members who have responsibility for the FRS, to enable them to carry out their executive and/or scrutiny responsibilities
- the strategy has been communicated effectively to all personnel within the organisation and in particular is understood by personnel who have responsibilities for the development and delivery of training
- the strategy is subject to audit and review and has been evaluated to ensure that it is suitable and sufficient for the needs of the organisation
- minimum training standards and frequency of training activity, where appropriate, are articulated clearly and communicated to all staff

## **Training and development arrangements**

- it can be demonstrated that arrangements are in place to support and complement the Training and Development Strategy
- arrangements exist to ensure suitable training, development and maintenance of skills for roles within specific functions, whether operational or otherwise, including the roles of elected members

## **Training needs analysis**

- a comprehensive training needs analysis has been carried out which is based on actual evidence and must not make assumptions; this encompasses all roles within the fire and rescue service
- the analysis encompasses the principles of the Integrated Personal Development System and ensures people have the training, development and competence to carry out all activity expected of them
- the training and competency requirements for each role within the Fire and Rescue Service, identified through the training needs analysis process, is recorded in a format that is clearly understood by all personnel regardless of role or duty system

### **Training and development delivery**

- the operational training plan describes how training will be organised, prepared, delivered and evaluated
- the delivery of training, the development of individuals and the maintenance of competence takes into account roles and duty systems of individuals and has been tailored to their needs, requirements and learning styles
- alternative delivery and support mechanisms, such as e-learning and modularisation of training programmes, have been introduced to support people's working patterns, eg The Fire Service College, among other training providers, has developed an e-learning delivery platform

### **Monitoring, reviewing and evaluation of training and development**

- training and development records are regularly monitored and suitable arrangements exist to ensure that all personnel are developed and remain competent within their role regardless of duty system
- arrangements exist to evaluate the training and development of personnel to ensure that it is effective and skills are maintained

### **Realistic training**

- suitable arrangements have been made to secure realistic training for fire safety operations, including exercises at high risk premises, to ensure that all personnel are suitably developed and remain competent within their role
- realistic training must have been identified as necessary through the training needs analysis process and will have been subjected to suitable and sufficient risk assessment
- arrangements are in place to ensure suitable and sufficient training for incident commanders in identifying and assessing risks at operational incidents; this should include the appropriate measures that need to be taken to control and mitigate risk, as well as the appropriate contingency to respond to and manage unexpected events
- arrangements are in place for training, development and assessment of people in relation to breathing apparatus and support activity; this includes initial and refresher training; training and development complements activity at operational incidents
- the safe and effective delivery of compartment fire behaviour training is in place for all operational personnel
- arrangements are in place to ensure people have the underpinning knowledge to support practical training and emergency response activities; it is for the FRA to determine the knowledge requirements but areas of significant importance include operational intelligence (7.2.d of The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004), building construction and fire behaviour

### **Incident command**

- the FRS has a clear and coherent policy that sets out the approach to delivering effective incident command
- arrangements by which the Incident Command System is delivered and supported are defined clearly
- systems are in place to assess commanders and potential commanders at all levels from Crew Manager to Brigade Manager, which is supported by a maintenance programme to ensure competency
- in particular, there will be clear evidence of training, development and maintenance of competency for staff who may be required to operate at Strategic, Tactical and Operational Command levels

- mechanisms have been established to verify incident command capability, eg a monitoring process that includes a mechanism to feedback into policies and processes, such as training

### **Cross-border and multi-agency training**

- a comprehensive training, development and joint exercise programme exists to enable key agencies to maintain competency within their organisations for dealing with cross-border incidents or major incidents which require a multiagency response
- the programme will be based on a training need analysis which takes into account local, regional and national risks
- multi agency training reflects interoperability and the JESIP principles

### **Operational incident and exercise debriefing**

- the Fire and Rescue Service has an effective policy and procedure for the delivery of operational incident and exercise debriefs/reviews; the policy and procedure is supported by a management system which enables the tracking of debriefs and ensures that any subsequent recommendations are addressed
- national advice and guidance on matters of operational assurance and effectiveness have been acted on and tailored to meet the FRS requirements and are fit for purpose

### **Personal development and performance reviews**

- individuals take responsibility for their own learning and development
- there is an annual review of each person's development and performance which also includes any interim reviews
- the review will be based on organisational need, the job description and the requirements of the role
- the review process will take account of career aspirations and development as well as the setting of objectives, including equality and diversity objectives
- personal development and performance reviews records are monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure all personnel are aware of any development needs or safety critical training

### **Equality and diversity**

- all staff, regardless of role, have been subject to a suitable development, assessment and maintenance of competency programme that ensure that they are aware of their moral and legal duties and responsibilities for equality and diversity

## **Key reference documents**

Fire Professional Framework  
LGA Guidance to councillors

# Leadership and corporate capacity

This section of the toolkit supports thinking about the six organisational themes linked to the LGA's peer challenge offer to councils. In keeping with the council approach, there are no detailed assessment areas for these themes; every FRA is different, and has its own local risks and its own approach to improvement, change and future sustainability.

Instead, the themes are designed for FRAs to consider where they sit as an organisation now and in the future; what particular challenges they face; how they are planning to handle them; and any areas they may want to discuss with peers as part of the fire peer challenge.

## **Understanding of local context and priority setting:**

### **Does the FRA understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?**

Because FRAs are risk based organisations, this question has been included as the fundamental question in the community risk management section. Please refer to the briefing sheet in that section.

## **Delivering outcomes for local communities:**

### **How is the FRA delivering outcomes for the local community, and is it performing well?**

- What outcomes is the FRA seeking to deliver?
- Is performance scrutinised and are outcomes for the community improving?

## **Key reference documents:**

- strategic plan/IRMP
- performance reports
- evaluations
- delivery of any commissioned outcomes

## **Financial planning and viability:**

### **Does the FRA have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?**

The FRA's financial audit focuses on the robustness of financial plans and value for money. The audit is a statutory form of assurance on financial viability and a peer challenge cannot, and does not need to replicate audit.

- What are the key messages in the Fire Authority's annual audit letter in terms of financial resilience, financial planning and value for money?
- If the audit identified any issues, how is the Authority addressing them?
- Does the Authority have a clear overview of its financial position in the short and medium term?
- What is the FRA's strategy for managing any budget reductions whilst continuing to manage community risk?
- Does the FRA feel confident that it is sustainable in the long term?



## Key reference documents:

Medium term financial strategy  
Statement of Accounts  
Annual Audit Letter  
Procurement strategy

### **Political and managerial leadership:**

#### **Does the FRA have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?**

- How do Members, management, staff and representative bodies feel about how they work together?
- How is the leadership team working together to set a clear direction for the future?
- Are there good relationships and a high level of trust between members and officers?
- Do members and officers actively embody the organisational values?

## Key reference documents:

Organisational values  
Codes of conduct

### **Governance and decision-making:**

#### **Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?**

- Are the FRA's priorities clearly stated and widely understood?
- Is there a clear framework for/approach to governance which is up to date, compliant with national requirements and accessible?
- Does the organisation take the difficult decisions?
- How does the FRA engage with its community, staff and stakeholders in taking decisions?
- What governance arrangements are in place between partners where there is collaborative working?
- Is the FRA committed to transparency?

## Key reference documents:

Strategic plan/IRMP  
Standing orders/terms of reference/financial regulations/delegation scheme  
Annual Governance Statement  
Statement of Assurance  
Codes of Conduct  
Local Government Transparency Code 2014. DCLG October 2014  
Guidance on Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Services in England. DCLG 2013

### **Organisational capacity:**

#### **Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?**

- How has the FRA assessed where resources should be focused in terms of prevention, protection, preparedness and response?
- What changes have been made, what changes are being made and what changes need to be made in the future?
- Is the design of the organisation right to best deliver its priorities?

# Operational assessment and fire peer challenge

Fire peer challenge

# Fire peer challenge

## Overview

Fire peer challenge is a constructive and supportive process with the central aim of helping FRAs/FRSs improve. It is not an inspection nor does it award any form of rating category or score. It is undertaken from the viewpoint of a critical friend. The peer challenge will help FRAs/FRSs to meet the challenges facing a modern FRS.

The peer challenge approach has been successfully delivered by the LGA in over 160 local authorities and all 46 English FRAs have had a peer challenge over the last three years.

Complementing self assessment with external challenge by undertaking a 'sector delivered' peer challenge once every three years provides chief fire officers and their chairs with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust. It also helps support sector improvement through the development of officer and Member peers and the sharing of notable practice.

Peer challenge is fit for the future, it is forward looking, flexible in its application and appropriate in terms of the resources required to both deliver and receive it. The fire peer challenge approach is flexible in terms of timing in that FRS's will select a time that is best for them and in terms of the emphasis as the fire peer challenge will be worked up with each FRS individually and will not cover all the KAAs but will focus on the specific areas as identified through the outcome of the OpA self assessment.

In addition to reviewing the FRS OpA, fire peer challenge will focus on leadership, corporate capacity and how the FRS meets the diverse needs of the communities they serve, because these are key factors in performance and improvement and it is understood that a focus on equalities and diversity by all FRS's is a core element of a high performing organisation.

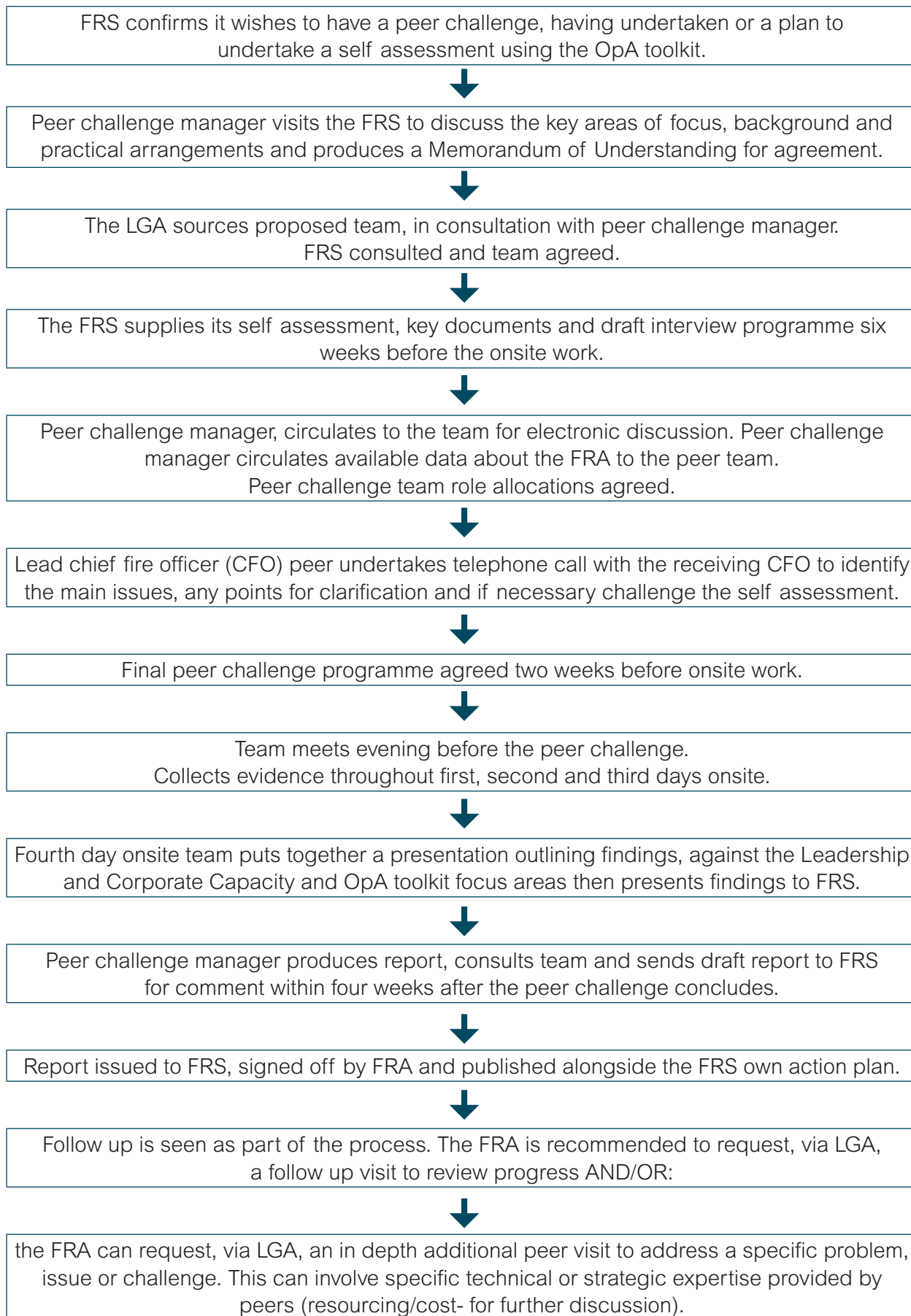
Therefore the fire peer challenge will consider equalities and diversity through the OpA self assessment but will not replace self assessment or peer challenge using the FRS Equality Framework.

The peer team will also consider the six core questions under the theme of Leadership and Corporate Capacity:

- Understanding of local context and priority setting: Does the FRA understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?
- Delivering outcomes for local communities: How is the FRA delivering outcomes for the local community, and is it performing well?

- Financial planning and viability: Does the FRA have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
- Political and managerial leadership: Does the FRA have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?
- Governance and decision-making: Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?
- Organisational capacity: Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?

## How a peer challenge works



## The peer challenge team

A standard fire peer challenge team is made up of six people:

- the team will be led by a serving chief executive/chief fire officer
- a further two officers from FRS and/or from other public sector organisations with specific expertise at group manager or equivalent level and above
- a FRA member peer
- an officer from another public sector organisation external to the FRS (optional)
- an LGA programme manager to act as peer challenge manager
- The peer challenge manager will act as the first point of contact for the authority.

Should a FRA's specific requirements make it necessary, the number of people on a peer challenge team can be amended, for example to focus on a specific area in more depth or to bring in expertise from another sector such as local government. There may also be occasions when, for the purposes of gaining first hand experience of a peer challenge, the LGA requests permission for another LGA member of staff to participate.

## Peer team role descriptions

Each of the peer team is expected to:

- Undertake pre-reading in advance of the peer challenge: Peers will be sent a set of information and documentation that they will need to read before meeting up with the peer team the evening before the peer challenge.
- Attend and participate in an initial peer team meeting: The peer team is required to meet the evening prior to the peer challenge. Peers are required to share initial impressions and views from the pre-reading, and prepare for the onsite phase of the process.
- Facilitate interviews and discussion whilst onsite at the FRS: A timetable of activity will be arranged in advance, including meetings, focus groups and site visits. Peers are expected to gather information via these and share key findings with the peer team.
- Draw on their relevant skills, knowledge and experience: Peers are expected to demonstrate specific know-how and share examples of best practice from their own experience to provide insights into how the FRS is performing and how it might accelerate the achievement of its ambitions.
- Analyse and quantify key messages throughout the process: Peers need to recognise and incorporate different stakeholders' perspectives, gather, analyse and communicate information in order to suggest realistic and credible solutions to challenges.
- Actively seek out and gather areas of notable or good practice from the receiving FRS. The benefits of being a peer are to learn from each other and from the receiving FRS.
- Work with others in the peer team to develop and deliver a feedback presentation: The presentation will normally be led by the peer challenge lead with input from other peers in the team.
- Provide written evidence on their relevant KAAs in report format to contribute to the draft feedback report within agreed timescales: Peers will be asked to comment on the draft report developed by the peer challenge manager on behalf of the team.

- Participate in the evaluation of the peer challenge: An evaluation of each peer challenge will be undertaken. Peers will be expected to contribute to this by self-assessing their performance and contribution.
- Undertake additional or specialist roles on the peer team: Some peers will be recruited to the team to undertake a specialist or additional roles – such as peer team leader, or an expert adviser role.

## Peer competencies

In carrying out the roles and responsibilities listed above, peers are expected to display the following competencies and behaviours:

- developing others by sharing learning and providing a supportive and non-judgmental environment, and demonstrating a personal commitment to continual development and learning
- work effectively with others in the peer team to achieve a common purpose through valuing the contributions of others and recognising and including diverse viewpoints
- providing challenge by being able to positively and constructively challenge individuals and groups in an effort to help them to improve; peers should be able to perform the role of a 'change agent' sensitively and inclusively
- planning and communicating effectively by analysing requirements and coordinating activity and priorities and providing evidence to support ideas
- political and organisational awareness by understanding the local context and overcoming political and organisational differences to work collaboratively with different stakeholder groups.

## Individual team roles

### Peer Challenge Lead

The chief executive/chief fire officer will take on the role of peer challenge lead. In addition to the standard peer role they will also be responsible for:

- making contact with the receiving CE/CFO prior to the onsite activity to identify the main issues, any points for clarification and if necessary challenge the self assessment
- leading the team whilst on-site and ensuring a positive and professional relationship within the team and the FRS
- providing the overall lead on the Leadership and Corporate Capacity area and, working with the LGA peer challenge manager, writing up the presentation slides and initial notes to feed into the draft report
- agreeing to lead on one other KAA and writing up the presentation slides and the initial notes to feed into the draft report
- actively seeking examples of notable and best practice and sharing these at the final feedback session
- determining points of judgement arising from the peer challenge
- presenting the final feedback to the FRA/FRS
- contributing to and having the final sign off for the report.

### **Peer Challenge Member Peer**

In addition to the standard peer role the peer challenge member peer is responsible for:

- providing specific political input into the peer challenge and ensuring positive and professional relationships with the respective FRA elected members
- leading on and providing input into the peer challenge on the followings areas:
  - community leadership mandate
  - political leadership and governance
  - professional and political relationships within the FRA
  - liaising with the lead peer on the Leadership and Corporate Capacity area
  - writing up the initial notes on the relevant findings concerning political leadership, governance and community leadership
  - contributing to the final report.

### **Peer Challenge Officer (x 2)**

In addition to the standard peer role the peer challenge officer is responsible for:

- providing specialist and expert input into the peer challenge
- agreeing to lead on two KAAs and writing up the presentation slides and the initial notes to feed into the draft report
- actively seeking examples of notable and best practice and sharing these with the team
- providing written evidence to contribute to the final report.

### **Peer Challenge External Officer**

In addition to the standard officer peer role the peer challenge external officer is responsible for:

- providing specialist external input into the peer challenge
- agreeing to lead on a specific area and to write up the relevant presentation slides and the initial notes to feed into the draft report
- actively seeking examples of notable practice and sharing these with the team
- providing written evidence to contribute to the final report.

### **Peer Challenge Manager**

The FRS will be assigned a peer challenge manager by the LGA within a few days of commissioning a peer challenge. Their role is:

- to manage the overall peer challenge process
- to identify and agree the peer challenge team with the FRA/ FRS
- to support the FRA/FRS in preparing for the peer challenge, including conducting a pre peer challenge meeting and liaising over the timetable and documents
- act as coordinator, facilitator and adviser and working with the peer challenge lead to guide the team through the peer challenge
- to input advice to the peer challenge.
- to collate all the notable and good practice identified by the peer team
- to work with the lead peer to draft the feedback presentation.



- to collate the initial notes and to draft the final report, process it through the relevant quality assurance procedures and liaise with the team and FRA/ FRS
- to ensure that the team jointly use their skills and experience to provide insights into how the FRA/FRS is performing
- to initiate the overall evaluation of the peer challenge and ensure timely and appropriate feedback is given to peer team members
- oversight of the quality assurance framework for the peer challenge to ensure quality standards are maintained and continuous improvement of the peer challenge offer.

## Preparing for a fire peer challenge

### **Self assessment**

Any FRS requesting a peer challenge should have completed, or should be intending to complete, a self assessment using the OpA Toolkit, and this will provide focus for discussions with the peer challenge manager in setting up the peer challenge.

The self assessment is an important improvement tool for the FRS and should be an accurate and honest representation as to how the FRS is currently performing against the KAAs. It should be submitted to the peer team as part of the supporting documentation at least six weeks prior to the onsite activity.

The self assessment will guide the peer challenge team on the key areas of focus for the peer challenge and will be worked up with each FRS individually and will focus on specific areas as identified through the outcome of the OpA Self Assessment.

The peer team will not cover all of the OpA KAAs during the peer challenge but will focus on the key areas as identified and will undertake a light touch review of the remaining areas.

The FRS is not required to complete a detailed self assessment against the six Leadership and Corporate Capacity themes. However, it may wish to reflect on these themes in a forward looking way, and reflect them in the narrative, as discussion of the themes will form part of the peer challenge.

The self assessment should be concise and include a narrative which should cover the Leadership and Capacity core questions plus include an introduction and overview of the FRS to give the context to the peer challenge.

Although it is necessary to highlight policies and strategies as set out in the KAAs, it is vitally important to give examples of the outcomes achieved.

The self assessment should be signed off by the chief fire officer and chair of the FRA.

Examples of self assessments are included on the LGA and CFOA websites.

### **Peer challenge manager's initial visit to the fire and rescue service**

As soon as the peer challenge has been commissioned, the peer challenge manager will contact the FRS to visit the lead officer for the peer challenge and the peer challenge coordinator. The purpose of this visit is to:

- discuss the motivation and aims for the peer challenge, and the thoughts of members and officers about it
- develop the peer challenge manager's understanding of the key issues facing the FRS, including any sensitive issues they may need to be aware of

- discuss the key areas for the peer challenge to focus on and the team requirements
- consider the peer challenge guidance, discuss the process and look at the arrangements that will need to be made to facilitate the work of the peer challenge team including: base room, workshop rooms, documentation, timetable and publicity.

Following this visit the peer challenge manager will produce a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will clearly articulate the areas of focus and the agreed approach.

### **Documentation**

**Six weeks** prior to the peer challenge beginning, the FRS will need to provide peer challenge team members with the self assessment and core documentation in electronic format. This also needs to be made available in hard copy in the team's base room while they are on-site.

It will also be useful to have in the base room examples of newsletters, magazines or publicity materials leaflets produced by the FRS.

We are trying to reduce the burden on FRS and want to reduce the amount of paperwork and documentation required. We have developed a suggested list of core documents which is available in Appendix 1.

The FRS should also provide details of the other documentation to evidence their self assessment so that the peer team can request these when required. This information should be provided as a tabular list.

### **On-site timetable**

In discussion with your peer challenge manager, it is the FRS's responsibility to draw up a timetable for the peer challenge that enables the team to gather evidence in the key areas of focus, and the Leadership and Corporate Capacity themes. This needs to be agreed at least two weeks in advance of the on-site work. This is often the most challenging part of the peer challenge process and the FRS must devote sufficient resources and priority to have the timetable finalised within the two week deadline.

### **Publicity**

Prior to the peer challenge the FRS will receive electronic copies of a "What's it all about" leaflet to distribute to staff, partners and elected members. This leaflet provides details of their forthcoming peer challenge and an example is contained in Appendix 2.

### **Transparency**

CFOA and the LGA encourages all FRA's to publish their reports and associated action plans and the FRS/FRA will need to think through in advance the timing and format of publication.

# Practical arrangements

## Peer challenge team base

The peer challenge team will have a room to use as a base for the time they are on-site, which should be located in the main headquarters of the FRS and large enough to accommodate the team. The room will be available for the sole use of the team members, with all interviews and focus groups being held elsewhere. It will be private and lockable, with keys for team members going in and out at different times. It will also be accessible to the team after hours.

The room will be equipped with the following:

- a telephone
- a computer with access to the Internet and the FRS's Intranet and email system
- access to a high speed, good quality black and white printer
- two flipcharts with marker pens and replacement paper
- a central meeting table providing adequate room for each person on the peer challenge team
- Wi-Fi facilities if available so that the peer team can access their own email/network.

The team will require around 250 large-sized post-it notes, for use in the team base room and during workshops and focus groups. Notebooks should be provided for all team members. A box of biro pens and some blue tack, plus access to a nearby photocopier, will also be required.

## Catering

The FRS should make arrangements for light refreshments to be available to the peer team in the room or nearby, accessible at any time throughout the day and evening. The team should also be provided with lunch each day in the team base room. The team will need to work together over lunch in the privacy of their base room.

LGA will liaise with each of the team members in advance and notify the FRS in good time of any specific dietary requirements they may have.

# Onsite

## The Onsite Peer Challenge Process

The core of the peer challenge takes place during the four days on-site at the FRS. The OpA Toolkit provides the framework for the peer challenge. The team will be seeking information that allows it to make explore current strengths or progress and areas that the FRS may want to explore. The process is a dynamic one and requires a high degree of flexibility throughout the peer challenge.

The approach to the onsite element is flexible and the purpose is to enable the team to get the best understanding of the FRS it can, in order to help advise on areas for improvement. The team will ensure that the onsite element is positive and will work in partnership with the FRS to structure it to the best effect.

There is not a standard approach to the onsite element and receiving FRS are encouraged to think creatively in order to maximise the input of the peer team

Prior to the visit each team member will have reviewed the self assessment and core documentation provided by you. The team will generally work in pairs in different sessions.

The team will work in three streams and the peer challenge manager will allocate team members to each activity. The FRS will arrange the timetable into three streams.

Information gleaned on-site is reviewed on a daily basis and compared to the KAAs, enabling gaps in information to be identified and covered during the remainder of the onsite activity. This may require additional meetings not foreseen in the original timetable to be arranged at short notice. On the final day, the team reviews the information it has collected then reports back its key messages and recommendations on areas the FRS may want to explore further.

The FRS should note that all information gleaned by the peer challenge team during the process is absolutely non-attributable to individuals. This will be explained at the beginning of every session the team undertakes.

### **First day morning**

The FRS coordinator should meet the team upon arrival to show them to their base room, inform them about the facilities that have been provided and address any immediate queries that they may have. The team will then go into private session and prepare for the peer challenge.

This will be followed by an introductory meeting and a presentation delivered by the chief fire officer. This meeting is usually attended by other key officers and the chairman or portfolio holder.

This is an important opportunity for the FRS to set out what it wants to achieve from the peer challenge and highlight the main successes and challenges facing the FRS.

### **Remainder of first, second and third days**

As referenced, the approach is flexible and FRAs are encouraged to consider how to get the best from the peer challenge. The team will spend time gathering evidence to enable it to compare the FRS against the agreed focus areas and key elements of the KAAs. A peer challenge consists of taking into account the views of a wide range of stakeholders. To gain these views the peer challenge team will hold a series of one to one conversations, group/team discussions and focus groups with leaders, senior managers, frontline staff and partners. There may also be observations of relevant meetings. Interviews can be undertaken by either one or two people. Workshops and focus groups will need two members to facilitate them.

The focus areas of the FRS being reviewed will lead the peer challenge team as to who is actually seen. The timetable should be developed to focus on the relevant areas from the following suggestions:

#### **Suggested Interviews**

Chief executive (CE)/chief fire officer (CFO)

Members of Corporate Management Team (CMT) with the reference for the seven areas of the OpA (this will overlap)

Operational level managers with reference to the key areas of focus from the OpA

Head of human resources

Chairman/portfolio holder/council leader/leader of opposition

Members of the FRA – all parties

Key strategic partners from police, ambulance, Local Resilience Forum, the relevant local authorities (chief executive or director level), local partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships

Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Retained Fire fighters Union (RFU) if appropriate, officer's representative body, and any other recognised representative body

CEs/CFOs from neighbouring FRS's

### **Focus Groups**

Fire fighters – this can be combined with a station visit

Retained fire fighters – this can be combined with a station visit

Area managers

Group managers

Control staff – this can be combined with a visit to the Mobilising and Control Centre

Staff from range of departments relevant to the specific areas of focus from the OpA, eg health and safety, training and development

Partners delivering prevention activity with the FRA in the community – voluntary sector, police, health, local authorities

Partners working with the FRA on protection – the business community and local authorities

Scrutiny Members

### **The peer challenge can include:**

- visit to at least two fire stations
- visit to the Mobilising and Control Centre
- visit to any key community facility to demonstrate prevention outcomes
- visit to the Training Centre if appropriate.

**N.B.** When organising the programme all sessions must start and end at the same time in order for the peer challenge team to share learning etc. The following should also be noted:

- Allow up to 60 minutes for interviews – with 30 minutes for telephone interviews.
- Allow 1.5 hours for workshops with no more than 15 people in each. Members of the peer challenge team will facilitate these sessions and they need to be done by at least two members of the peer challenge team.
- Some interviews (with partner representatives) can be by phone.
- The timetable will be agreed between the FRS and the peer challenge manager

Whilst on-site the team should have the option to observe any additional relevant meetings already scheduled to take place, eg fire authority, CMT, meetings with partners or internal improvement planning meetings. These should be noted on the timetable. The team may only stay for part.

### **Interim Feedback**

The timetable should accommodate a half hour slot for interim feedback to the CE/CFO on a daily basis. There should be also be time allocated for a run through of the presentation with the CE/CFO at lunchtime on the third day.

This meeting is an important part of the process and should be scheduled as late as possible at the end of each day.

The meeting will be attended only by the lead CFO peer, the CFO from the FRS and the LGA challenge manager.

#### **Fourth day**

The team will go into private session to assimilate the evidence gathered during the process and use this to compare the authority to the KAA's. The conclusions will then be summarised into a presentation for delivery to the authority that afternoon. The peer challenge team presents its findings to an audience of your choosing, however, it is suggested that this session is attended by the senior management team and the FRA chair or portfolio holder. There will be opportunity for people to raise questions and discuss the findings.

#### **The report**

The peer challenge manager will write the report based on the agreed feedback from the team. A draft of the report will be provided to the CE/CFO no more than four weeks after the peer challenge for comment and discussion before the report is finalised.

CFOA and the LGA encourages all FRA's to publish their reports and associated action plans and the FRS/FRA will need to think through in advance the timing and format of publication.

The final report and action plan should also be shared with the Fire and Rescue Authority.

#### **Follow up visit**

As part of each fire peer challenge we encourage all FRS to arrange a follow up visit.

This visit is flexible and can be arranged at a time that suits the FRA. It can be used to help deliver key messages from the fire peer challenge to wider Members or staff, as a session to support and challenge the FRS with improvement planning or to address a specific area of expertise.

The peer challenge manager will liaise with FRA to schedule the follow up session and to ensure the appropriate team members can attend.

#### **In depth visit**

If a FRA requests this, in discussion with the FRA the LGA will liaise with the peer challenge team, specific FRS contacts and CFOA to support the delivery of an in depth visit.

The focus of the in depth visit will be informed by the outcome of the OpA and fire peer challenge and will be agreed with the receiving FRA. Its aim will be to help the FRA move forward on a specific issue and will facilitate the involvement of subject matter experts.

There may be additional costs/resources implications.

#### **Additional support for FRAs**

Further information to be supplied by LGA once revised offer to councils/FRAs is finalised.

#### **Benchmarking**

CFOA and LGA are working together to ensure that comparative data is available in an accessible format on the LG Inform website. The intention is that nationally published data will be available in an accessible format so that FRAs will be able to routinely compare themselves with others; this information will be invaluable in day to day management and decision making, but also for the peer review process.

This work is ongoing and FRAs can access the current data at:

<http://www.local.gov.uk/about-lginform>

**Notable practice**

Notable practice is identified through peer challenge, and is collated and signposted on the LGA knowledge hub website. Following evaluation it is the intention to improve the signposting to, and accessibility of this information. Notable practice is available at:

<https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/group/fireandrescueservicenotablepractice>

# Operational assessment and fire peer challenge

## Appendices



## Appendix 1: Suggested list of proposed documents

**This is just a suggested list and the peer team does not require all documents.**

It is appreciated that the name of some of these documents may be different in various FRS's. In this case the nearest equivalent should be given and/or the peer challenge team be notified if the documents do not exist.

### **Core Documents**

- Self assessment document based on the OpA Toolkit
- Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and associated annual action plans
- Corporate Plan
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Management and FRA structure chart
- Statement of Assurance
- Previous OpA and Fire Peer Challenge report and action plan (if relevant)

### **Optional Documents – provided as a list so that they can be requested**

- Corporate partnership documents including partnership toolkit, register
- List of active partnerships including associated contract, protocols and service level agreements
- Minutes of relevant partnership meetings for previous six months
- Annual report
- Agendas and minutes of authority meetings for previous six months
- Community Safety Strategy
- Consultation Strategy
- Communications strategy
- Operational Risk Strategy and supporting documents
- Business Risk Strategy and supporting documents
- Service plans and team plans
- Equality and Diversity Strategy and supporting documents
- Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Development Plan
- Training and Development Plans for staff and authority members
- Performance management reports at authority level for the previous year
- Summary sheet of key performance indicators
- Examples of performance reports at stations and divisional level
- Two examples of internal peer challenges that have driven improvement
- Any other key documents providing strong evidence in support of the KAA or referred to in your self assessment

## Appendix 2 – Example What’s it all about leaflet

### Fire Peer Challenge Dates 2015

<p>Between the XXth and XXth month 201X Example Fire and Rescue Service is hosting a visit by a Fire and Rescue fire peer challenge team. The team will be here at the invitation of Example Fire and Rescue Service.</p> <p>The members of the team are:</p> <p>XXXXXX Chief Fire Officer XXXX FRS</p> <p>XXXXXX Deputy Chief Fire Officer XXXX FRS</p> <p>XXXX Group Manager XXXX FRS</p> <p>Councillor XXXXX Title XXXX Council</p> <p>XXXXX Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association (LGA)</p>	<p><b>Why?</b></p> <p>In the new policy landscape with the abolition of the inspection and regulatory regime and the national performance framework, there is a shift to local accountability for performance and self-regulation.</p> <p>The fire and rescue sector has a strong and long standing commitment to sector-led improvement with OpA self assessment and peer challenge at its heart.</p> <p>The Local Government Association (LGA) is working in partnership with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) to deliver Fire Peer Challenge with the aim of providing external challenge and improvement support. In addition to reviewing the OpA self assessment the Fire Peer Challenge will focus on organisational effectiveness and ability to improve, thrive and innovate in challenging times.</p> <p>Peer Challenge is a voluntary process that is managed by and delivered for the sector. It is NOT a form of sector-led inspection and is a mechanism to provide fire authorities and chief officers with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust.</p> <p><b>How?</b></p> <p>The key part of the review process is the self assessment that Example FRS have produced. Through this process Example FRS is driving its own improvement. The self assessment is open and honest and involves a range of staff and partners in its drafting in order to gain the maximum benefit from the peer challenge process. The self assessment will guide the peer challenge team on areas to focus on in the on site activity.</p> <p>The peer challenge involves the gathering of information by the team from a range of key sources, such as the self assessment, documents, interviews and focus groups, which is then assessed against the OpA toolkit.</p>
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## Example Fire & Rescue Service

### What will happen?

The team will undertake a four day peer challenge. This is not an inspection. Through peer challenge the fire and rescue service is taking responsibility for its own improvement. The team will be seeking to help Example FRS recognise and celebrate its strengths as much as identifying areas to explore. Members of the team are knowledgeable about, and experienced in, fire and rescue services. They are visiting as friends, albeit 'critical friends' and this allows for an open and honest exchange to drive improvements forward that are owned by Example FRS.

During the four day visit members of the challenge team will meet and talk with a cross-section of staff within Example FRS, elected members and representatives of partner organisations. The team will feed back their conclusions and recommendations on the fourth day. This is followed by a written report that Example FRS will have the opportunity to consider and respond to.

The OpA toolkit has been developed as the fire and rescue sectors industry standard by CFOA. The peer challenge process is a key part of the LGA's approach to sector-led improvement, based on the underlying principles that local authorities are:

- responsible for their own performance
- accountable locally not nationally
- there is a sense of collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole
- the role of the LGA is to provide tools and support.

Contact for more information?

If you would like more information or the opportunity to speak to the peer challenge team, please contact:

XXXXX

Peer Challenge Manager, LGA  
tel: XXXXX  
email: XXXXX

XXXXXX

Example FRS  
tel: XXXXX  
email: XXXXX

find out more at [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)



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please contact us on 020 7664 3000.  
We consider requests on an individual basis.