



HM Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland

Annual Report 2020-21

HM Chief Inspector Simon Routh-Jones CBE, QFSM



Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

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Simon Routh-Jones CBE, QFSM
HM Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

1. Introduction

- 1.1. It gives me pleasure to present my 2020-21 Annual Report which looks at our current inspection programme and reflects on work which has concluded within the past 12 months. The work undertaken within the year of 2020-21 was set out in our Scrutiny Plan 2016-2021. However, in light of the impact of Covid-19, it has been necessary to revise our inspection programme for that year to reflect the new priorities and issues we all face.
- 1.2. This has been a challenging year, but with the innovative ways of working by the staff of the Inspectorate and the flexibility and accommodation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), together with those who work alongside the Service and our Partners, we have maintained a comprehensive work programme and delivered support to the SFRS and Scottish Government.
- 1.3. 2020-21 has seen the departure of one Assistant Inspector and the appointment of two new Assistant Inspectors and one Inspection Support Manager within the Inspectorate. This increase in establishment, although having been a challenge for the individuals to integrate within the Inspectorate Team due to the remote working requirements placed on us, has already, and will for the future, greatly assist HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) in discharging its duties.

2. Our Purpose

- 2.1. HMFSI exists to provide independent, risk-based and proportionate professional inspection of the SFRS. Our purpose is to give assurance to the Scottish public and Scottish Ministers that the SFRS is working in an efficient and effective way, and to promote improvement in the SFRS. We also provide independent, professional advice to Scottish Ministers and have functions in relation to non-domestic fire safety.
- 2.2. Although our work is self-determined by myself as Chief Inspector, if necessary, we can be directed by Scottish Ministers to inquire into issues relating to the SFRS.

3. Our values are Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness

- 3.1. HMFSI is a body that operates within, but independently of, the Scottish Government. Inspectors have the scrutiny powers specified in section 43B of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. These include inquiring into the state and efficiency of the SFRS, its compliance with Best Value, and the manner in which it is carrying out its functions.
- 3.2. Our scrutiny principles are that our Inspection Work is proportionate, accountable and transparent. There is a complementary relationship between the Inspectorate and Audit Scotland and with other Inspectorates and agencies across the public sector to share specific expertise, or jointly examine important areas where the SFRS works in partnership, and contributes to shared outcomes. We co-ordinate our activities to reduce the burden of inspection and avoid unnecessary duplication. Through our inspection work of the SFRS we offer professional challenge, highlight positive practice and make recommendations to support improvement of the Service.
- 3.3. We primarily carry out three categories of inspections which are; Local Area Inspections, Thematic Inspections and other Self-identified Inspections together with additional work to give assurance to the communities of Scotland and the Scottish Parliament.
- 3.4. HMFSI Inspectors may, in carrying out inspections, assess whether the SFRS is complying with its duty to secure Best Value and continuous improvement.
- 3.5. HMFSI has the responsibility to decide on matters which are referred to HM Chief Inspector for the determination of fire safety disputes, in the event that any fire safety enforcing authority, which includes the SFRS as the major enforcing authority, considers that there has been a failure to comply with fire safety duties, but there is a difference of opinion in respect of the action required to be taken to rectify this by a duty holder.
- 3.6. We also have an established role in providing professional advice and guidance on the emergency response, legislation and education in relation to the Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland.

4. Local Area Inspections

- 4.1. Local Area Inspections (LAIs) look at the SFRS delivery in local areas and how the Service collaborates with external organisations in delivery of their mutual priorities. A report of our inspection with recommendations is produced and shared with the Local Senior Officer (LSO).
- 4.2. Following a LAI, HMFSI carries out a 6 monthly follow-up review to establish that suitable progress is being made by the SFRS on the recommendations within the inspection report.

5. Thematic Inspections

- 5.1. Thematic Inspections are a more comprehensive inspection which involves specific themes across the whole of Scotland.
- 5.2. Thematic Inspections identify areas for development and provide a mechanism for addressing such areas, they seek to support and enhance the Service's learning experience and make recommendations on areas of improvement and good practice. These Reports are laid before the Scottish Parliament.
- 5.3. There are occasions when more detailed analysis is required which may be borne out of findings from LAIs or from national events such as the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower.
- 5.4. Similar to the LAIs, a structured follow-up review of Thematic Inspections is undertaken. The timescale will vary and be influenced by the complexity of a report's recommendations.

5.5. The diagrams below depict the elements we consider in arriving at the themes for our inspections and some of the areas that may form the basis for Thematic Reviews of the future.

Safe Firefighter Concept



Governance



6. Inspection programme 2020-21

6.1. Local Area Inspections

- 6.1.1. Due to the significant impact of Covid-19 restrictions in 2020, our programme of inspection of the SFRS local service delivery across local authority areas of Scotland was restricted. We were able to complete, in early 2020, the inspection of the City of Edinburgh and published the report in June 2020.

❖ City of Edinburgh	Report published June 2020
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- 6.1.2. We commenced the inspections of Midlothian and Argyll & Bute using desk-top analysis and also carried out some fieldwork, however, the Argyll & Bute inspection has not been completed during the prescribed timeframe within the Annual Plan 2019-20, due to further Covid-19 restrictions. As an interim measure, we arranged a series of remote meetings and these will be followed up in more detail by recommencing our fieldwork when circumstances allow. It is likely that this will take place post publication of an interim report. The Midlothian inspection has been completed remotely with the report due to be published.

❖ Midlothian	Report to be published in May 2021
❖ Argyll & Bute	Interim Report to be published between April – June 2021

6.2. Thematic Inspections

- 6.2.1. During 2020-21, HMFSI completed the following Thematic Inspections.

❖ RDS Training	Report published in April 2020
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- 6.2.2. The inspection of 'The Training of Retained Duty System Personnel' which was initially programmed within the Scrutiny Plan 2016-21, was delayed, as the SFRS undertook an internal review of Operational Training throughout the whole Service. Following the completion of that review, we recommenced this Inspection in 2019. This report was laid in Parliament in April 2020.
- 6.2.3. The Outline for this Inspection was to review the efficiency and effectiveness of RDS training systems and consider any potential risk to the Service.

6.2.4. Contained within the report are 22 recommendations for the SFRS to consider. A follow-up review with the SFRS to discuss progress on these recommendations will be undertaken in May/June 2021.

❖ Command and Control	Report published in August 2020
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6.2.5. The Command and Control inspection assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of areas within the SFRS Incident Command (IC) System, Organisational Learning and IC Training, with particular focus on the Command and Control of Operational Incidents within the SFRS.

6.2.6. Elements of Command and Control specific to incidents in high rise buildings were excluded from this inspection. However, this will form the focus of a separate thematic inspection, namely ‘Firefighting in High Rise Buildings’, which will commence during the business year 2021-22.

6.2.7. In the Command and Control Report, HMFSI made 21 recommendations. A follow-up review with the SFRS to discuss progress on these recommendations will be undertaken in November/December 2021.

❖ Assessing the Effectiveness of Inspection activity	Report published in March 2021
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6.2.8. Our Thematic Inspection ‘Assessing the Effectiveness of Inspection Activity’ was designed to identify improvements and examine the way in which the SFRS receives and implements recommendations from our thematic inspections and national recommendations from our LAI reports.

6.2.9. The results of this Inspection will provide an insight into the effectiveness of our thematic scrutiny activity and the SFRS management of the external scrutiny process.

6.2.10. Fieldwork for this inspection commenced in March 2020 and was placed on hold due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, however the outstanding fieldwork was finally completed through the use of virtual interviews.

6.2.11. The report will be published and laid before Parliament in March 2021.

6.3. Other Self-identified Inspections

- 6.3.1. Two reports were presented to the Director of Safer Communities within Scottish Government in December 2020, these follow-up reports tracked the SFRS preparedness and planning throughout 2020, of Covid-19 and Exiting the European Union. The follow-up reports contained a series of key findings that were designed to assist SFRS organisational learning and assess the adequacy of preparations.
- 6.3.2. The formulation of the reports involved analysis of relevant data and virtual engagement from a broad stakeholder group that consisted of all levels of the SFRS management, Representative Bodies and Resilience Partnership leads.
- 6.3.3. Our reports can be accessed via our website www.gov.scot/fireinspectorate

6.4. Follow-up reviews of our Inspections

- 6.4.1. We undertook reviews of the following LAIs:

❖ Dumfries & Galloway	Inspection follow-up in November 2020
❖ City of Edinburgh	Inspection follow-up in December 2020

- 6.4.2. The following Thematic reviews were completed or are due to be undertaken on:

❖ Operational Risk Information	Inspection follow-up completed September 2020
❖ Fleet	Inspection follow-up currently being undertaken, due for completion March 2021
❖ Retained Duty System	Inspection follow-up to be undertaken May/June 2021
❖ Command and Control	Inspection follow-up to be undertaken November/December 2021

7. Inspection Programme 2021-22

7.1 Local Area Inspections

7.1.1. During the next phase of our LAIs we intend to undertake the following inspections:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Argyll and Bute (finalising outstanding inspection work) ❖ Angus

7.1.2. We recognise that the impact of the current pandemic may impact on our aspiration to complete three LAIs per year, therefore for this year, only two areas will be inspected. The detailed fieldwork of our LAI of Argyll and Bute will continue once circumstances permit, and a final report will follow between April and June of 2021.

7.2. Thematic Inspections

❖ Review of Operational and Protective Equipment	Commencing in January – March 2021
❖ Health & Safety – An Operational Focus	Commencing in January – March 2021
❖ Firefighting in High Rise Buildings	Commencing in April – June 2021

Review of Operational and Protective Equipment

7.2.1. The aim of this inspection is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service’s governance, procurement policy, management, training, routine testing, maintenance and disposal of its operational and protective equipment.

7.2.2. In particular we will consider the processes which the SFRS applies to:

- The design of and implementation of the operational and protective equipment Asset Management Strategy.
- The relationship between equipment manufacturers, suppliers and the SFRS’s management strategy.
- The rationale for the choice of the overall package in the procurement of equipment.

Health & Safety – An Operational focus

- 7.2.3. We will look at the organisational culture towards Health, Safety and Welfare, whether Health and Safety is centred on firefighter safety and that operational staff understand, and can demonstrate, how the ‘firefighter safety maxim’ is being applied in the SFRS. We will also consider how the Service is using national learning, data and other information to reduce risk and improve the overall safety and welfare of its staff.
- 7.2.4. The aim of this inspection is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service’s Health, Safety and Welfare with an Operational Focus. We will be looking at the governance and management, policy and planning, training and recording arrangements.

Firefighting in High Rise Buildings

- 7.2.5. We propose to conduct an inspection into the SFRS by examining how the Service prepares for and carries out firefighting in high rise buildings. In line with building standards, we use 18 metres as the threshold for high rise. While the main thrust of our inspection will be high rise domestic buildings due to the life risk, we will also examine high rise commercial buildings.
- 7.2.6. We anticipate that the inspection shall consider:
- Preplanning and information gathering;
 - Operational procedures;
 - Training and awareness of staff;
 - Operations Control procedures including fire survival guidance;
 - Building checks and familiarisation visits by the Service;
 - How the SFRS dealt with or is dealing with the recommendations from the phase 1 report of the Grenfell Inquiry; and
 - How the SFRS is adapting to developments in high rise fire safety.

7.3. Other Self-identified Inspections

❖ UN Climate Change Conference - COP26	Commencing in July – September 2021
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- 7.3.1. HMFSI will carry out a reassurance exercise in autumn 2021 on the SFRS’s plans and preparedness for the COP26 Climate Change Conference.
- 7.3.2. This inspection will follow similar lines to that of exiting the EU and Covid-19 inspections in order to give assurance that there is good evidence to support the SFRS strategic planning to deal with the event and manage any foreseeable issues which will arise from the Conference, and at the same time deliver its statutory duties.



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