



# Inspection Outline Local Area Inspections

*Integrity, objectivity and fairness*

## 1. Introduction

HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) publishes a Business Plan under the provisions of the *Fire (Scotland) Act 2005*, which sets out Inspectors' priorities for inspection of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The current version of the Business Plan contains a twin approach to inspections. HMFSI will from time to time carry out thematic inspections of issues that have been risk-assessed as being particularly significant. Additionally, HMFSI has a rolling programme of inspections of local fire and rescue service delivery, based on the 32 local fire and rescue plans across Scotland. This Inspection Outline sets out the reasons for undertaking the local area programme and the way in which Inspectors go about that work.

By undertaking inspections of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) service delivery within local authority areas, HMFSI:

- can provide assurance to Scottish Ministers and the public that the SFRS is making adequate provision for local service delivery;
- can take a detailed look at the nature and quality of service provision, including working with partner organisations, within local areas and can draw attention to significant matters and areas of good practice;
- maintains a good level of awareness of the Service's functions and builds a record of information gathered; and
- can gather intelligence that may inform, or cause to be undertaken, more strategic, thematic inspections of the SFRS.

The Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016 sets out how Scottish Ministers expect the SFRS to operate and contains strategic priorities for the Service. We take the Framework as the starting point for structuring and prioritising our inspection programme.

Our local area inspections are carried out under the authority of s43B(1) and (3)(c) of the *Fire (Scotland) Act 2005* and aim to examine the manner in which the SFRS is carrying out its function of delivering fire and rescue services within the local authority area in question.

The reporting provisions of s43C of the *Fire (Scotland) Act 2005* require the Chief Inspector to publish a report of any inspection of matters falling within s43B(3)(c). He may also give a copy to Scottish Ministers. The SFRS is required to have regard to any published report and, having had regard to it, to take such action as it thinks fit.

Because the reports of our local service delivery inspections will generally be relevant only to a limited geographical area of the SFRS, we consider that the primary audience for the report within the SFRS will be the Local Senior Officer (LSO) and the Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO) who is that LSO's line manager. We would expect that the LSO and DACO will consider the content of the

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report as it affects their area and will arrange for any necessary action in response to it – including engagement with the relevant local authority and other local partner bodies. We think that it is reasonable to expect that the Local Senior Officer will formally discuss our report with their local partner bodies.

If we decide to flag up any broader issue arising from a local area inspection, we may produce an annual summary of our local area inspections (which could be laid before Parliament), or in the case of a one-off issue, we may write formally to the Chief Officer, copying to the Board. In that case, we might expect consideration of the report at national level.

After our local area inspection report has been issued, and at a timescale influenced by the content of the report, we will carry out a follow-up meeting with the LSO and the DACO to review the report and find out what action has been taken by the SFRS in response to the report.

## **2. Areas of interest**

Our local area inspections are intended to be closely tied to the Fire and Rescue Framework. For this reason we have adopted an approach to inspection work which aligns with the strategic priorities in the Framework, which cover:

- Performance measures
- Safety, well-being and prevention
- Response and resilience
- Partnership
- Service transformation
- Modernising response
- Unwanted fire alarm signals
- Effective governance and performance
- People

We will look at a broad range of matters relevant to fire and rescue service delivery within the area being inspected, including any issues arising from thematic work carried out in that area.

When we come to prepare our report it will be set out so as to give an opinion on the manner in which the SFRS is carrying out its functions.

## **3. Who we would like to talk to and documents we would like to review**

In carrying out our local area inspections it is our aim, broadly speaking, to look at the same issues in each area we visit. This provides a measure of transparency about what it is we intend to look at, and at the same time makes it possible for our reports

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on different local authority areas to be directly compared. While we may choose to look more closely at a particular issue if it appears to be of special significance in a given locality, in general we will carry out our inspection using the following methodology.

- Review and comment on local fire and rescue plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) for the local authority area in question (to the extent that the LOIP is relevant to the work of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service).
- Obtain current year and trend line data for performance indicators and targets.
- Meeting with LSO, to cover general background and issues relating to the local plan;
- Meeting with relevant managerial and front-line staff working in the Prevention and Protection, Response and Resilience, and other business areas as required to obtain a comprehensive picture of SFRS service delivery in the area.
- Station visits in the area: where possible we will aim to visit every fire station in the area although for larger areas we may have to take a representative sample. We will not only look at the state of the buildings and equipment, and the integrity of records kept locally, but will also wish to meet with as many members of staff as practicable. We will discuss with them a list of issues which will include general satisfaction with the services provided by them, management support, training and development opportunities and understanding of and availability of information about risk within the area.
- Meet with representatives of the local Community Planning Partnership at strategic and operational levels.
- Understand local scrutiny arrangements and meet with representatives of the local scrutiny and engagement committee (to include elected representatives) as nominated by the local authority Chief Executive.

## 4. Timetable

The outline timetable for a typical local area inspection is as follows. An inspection should take around three months to complete with publication of a report in month 4. This allows up to four inspections per year if only one inspection is being carried out at any one time.

2 months before start	Notify DACO, LSO and local authority of our intention to inspect the area
Month 1	Pre-planning of the inspection including planning of interviews and visits
Month 1	Inspection team request for documents and data
Month 2	Inspection team on-site visits and review of documents and data

Month 3	Report drafting and consultation
Month 4/5	Report submission to SFRS/publication

## 5. The inspection team

The inspection team members are drawn from HMFSI's permanent staff and secondees from the SFRS. We will avoid a situation arising where a secondee is inspecting service delivery in an area for which they are directly responsible in their role in the SFRS. Whether a member of the inspection team or not, the Chief Inspector takes sole responsibility for the inspection report, its contents and conclusions.

The team receives communications support from the Scottish Government media centre.

HMFSI's local area inspection work is reviewed externally for quality assurance. A peer reviewer will be selected as appropriate.

## 6. Responding to this inspection outline document

This inspection outline document has been prepared to describe why we are carrying out an inspection and how we will go about the work. It is also intended to support our consultation with Ministers, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, management team and representative bodies. If you wish to make any comments or observations, these should be submitted to the Chief Inspector by emailing [HMFSI@gov.scot](mailto:HMFSI@gov.scot)

The team members can also provide clarification on any of the content and can be contacted through the same email address.