



HM Fire Service Inspectorate: arrangements to secure and demonstrate continuous improvement in user focus

ARRANGEMENTS TO SECURE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN USER FOCUS

1. Section 112 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010

The *Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010* imposes a duty on scrutiny authorities, such as HM Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland (HMFSI), to secure continuous improvement in user focus.

The purpose of this document is to outline our arrangements for improving user focus.

The following outlines the actions we will undertake during the lifetime of The Chief Inspector's Plan 2021-2024 to comply with our duty of user focus, and how we will measure our success.

2. Involving users in scrutiny governance: our User Involvement Strategy 2021-2024

Identification of our role: HMFSI exists to provide independent, risk-based and proportionate professional inspection of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The Inspectorate also provides independent, professional advice to Scottish Ministers, and the Chief Inspector has certain functions in relation to non-domestic fire safety.

Identifying users: 'users' in the context of HMFSI's scrutiny work includes all persons and organisations with a professional and community interest in the SFRS and extends to all members of the Scottish community.

Our commitment to involve users at all levels and in scrutiny activities: The nature of HMFSI's work involves applying professional judgment to the way in which the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) delivers its functions. We recognise the importance of aligning our work to the needs of users and involving them so far as practicable in the planning and delivery of our activities.

How users can expect to engage with HMFSI: We consult with users who have a professional interest in the SFRS. The primary way in which we engage with the wider category of user is through our website. We publish details of our business planning and our scrutiny activity online. We provide contact details on our website, including postal and telephone contact details, to facilitate user engagement.

How we promote opportunities to become involved to service users: Again our primary point of contact with users is through our website. Where our staff or inspectors interact directly with users, for example in the course of an inquiry, we will take steps to make users aware of the facility to have input into HMFSI's work via the contact arrangements set out there.

Direct user involvement in governance: HM Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is appointed by Her Majesty by Order in Council. The Chief Inspector operates independently of Scottish Government and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. There is no Board or similar governance arrangement and therefore no direct user involvement in governance. Any user feedback relating to strategic or corporate issues will be considered by HM Chief Inspector in setting forward priorities.

3. Involving users in the design of scrutiny

In designing our inspection programme we consult with stakeholders, including the members of the SFRS's Board and the Scottish Government. We also review evidence from previous HMFSI inspections, and other intelligence collected by HMFSI, to highlight areas of risk, which in turn informs our inspection programme.

We will consider any comments and feedback we receive from any users regarding the design of scrutiny.

As the local governance arrangements intended to provide input into the SFRS's activities at a local level take shape, we will consider if there is scope to expand our consultation arrangements to reflect the priorities of service users in our programme of scrutiny of the Service.

4. Use feedback from users to inform scrutiny

We will consider feedback we receive from users, members of the public, and from any other sources to inform our scrutiny activities. This may take the form of aggregating comments or concerns expressed to us over time to highlight possible new areas for us to inquire into, or, in a sufficiently serious case, we might undertake scrutiny activity in response to a given complaint. We cooperate and coordinate our work with a small number of key partners and have established relationships with other inspectorates and agencies across the public sector to share specific expertise. There is a complementary relationship between the Inspectorate and the Auditor General supported by a Memorandum of Understanding with Audit Scotland.

HMFSI is committed to proportionate and risk-based scrutiny and therefore, we will only investigate any given set of circumstances when we consider that scrutiny activity is appropriate and proportionate.

5. Involve users in carrying out scrutiny

HMFSI conducts Local Area Inspections, Thematic Inspections and other Self-identified Inspections. Our thematic work is based on an assessment of a range of issues relating to the provision of fire and rescue services, and generally requires the exercise of professional and technical expertise in relation to both fact-finding and analytical processes. In planning our activities, we will consider on a case by case basis whether any user involvement would add value to the activities. Our Local Area Inspections, which are outlined in further detail within 'our approach to local area inspection' section' of our website, focus on scrutiny of local service delivery by the SFRS.

As part of our routine scrutiny work we actively involve users by engaging with elected members of the local community and with community councils, as part of our local area inspections. We also engage with trade unions and representative bodies.

HMFSI consults with the Scottish Government in relation to its scrutiny work, and involves quality assurance by suitably qualified persons in the preparation of its formal reports.

6. Make reports on scrutiny clear and accessible

We ensure that service users and others with an interest in the SFRS and its scrutiny can understand assessments and reports. We use common language and common reporting methods for scrutiny findings in order to simplify the outputs of scrutiny for the public, for service users and for the SFRS.

We make reports clear and accessible. Reports are written in plain language in a style which is appropriate for service users, recognising that some reports need to include technical or complex sections. Reports and findings are accessible in accordance with our 'Guide to Information' and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

We also make use of social media to disseminate information about reports and our work in general.

7. Involve users in improvement activity

Generally, the fire and rescue service in Scotland has a long tradition of community engagement and consideration of the needs of users in its day to day service delivery activities.

The SFRS will have a service user perspective at the forefront of its strategic considerations and the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland, issued by Scottish Ministers, requires this.

The way in which the SFRS takes account of its service users is taken into account during our scrutiny work and we will continue to support the SFRS in its close attention to the service user perspective.

ARRANGEMENTS TO DEMONSTRATE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN USER FOCUS

We will measure our success in securing improvement in user focus by assessing the amount of user feedback received and the extent to which it is possible to incorporate this into our scrutiny activities.

Where possible we will provide timely feedback to all users who contribute to our work.

We may include information about user involvement on our website and may consider the publication of case studies in suitable circumstances.

HM Fire Service Inspectorate

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