

### Overview

At the last meeting, the Board approved the proposed approach to pilot the Fire Standards development and the second area selected was operational response, based on the suite of National Operational Guidance (NOG).

This appendix provides the Board with a proposal for the development of Fire Standards in that area of activity following initial scoping work. This will be part of the phase one delivery plan as detailed in item 4 – paper 2 on this agenda.

### Current status of operational guidance

In 2012, in terms of response, a lack of national consistency in operational guidance was having an effect on the outcomes of incidents and on firefighter safety. As well as there being significant concern within the service, HM Coroners were levelling criticism at the service for the poor state of its national guidance. This led to the creation of a programme of work to deliver new National Operational Guidance (NOG) that could be used to deliver their response services to a consistent high-quality standard.

The NOG programme was delivered by a team that was governed by professionals, LGA and central government all seeking to achieve an agreed improvement. A suite of 21 pieces of interactive guidance, accompanied by a range of tools to assist its implementation were developed and are now maintained in an online portal ([ukfrs.com](http://ukfrs.com)).

The recommendations of the first phase of the Grenfell Tower Incident (GTI) inquiry and the findings of HMICFRS inspections all clearly point to concerns about the implementation of NOG. This includes the degree to which it is being used by fire and rescue services at strategic level and tactically by firefighters at incidents. This is a key area that can deliver key service improvements and is an ideal area for early Fire Standards development.

### Work to Date

There have been a series of discussions with the NOG team within the NFCC CPO about the approach. The intent is to promote an approach that uses operational guidance to drive improvement in the way services approaches incident management and decision making. In the context of the GTI, the LFB Commissioner has described the need for a “cultural change” in the way that decision makers act at incidents. It is hoped that Fire Standards can support the achievement of that goal.

In the light of this, the discussion within the NFCC CPO so far has been around three main standards for NOG.

1. **Operational preparedness** – this will set an expectation that the strategic actions that are defined within NOG to support competent incident management have been completed by a service. In other words that the service has done everything it can to equip, provide systems, policies and communications to support incident management. The NFCC provides a gap analysis tool on [ukfrs.com](http://ukfrs.com) to assist services with this.

2. **Operational Competence** – this will set an expectation that the hazards and control measures at tactical level in NOG appropriate to the roles of firefighters, have been adopted within each service; and that they are understood and are being used in a way that is tailored to the circumstances of each incident. The expectation will be of decision makers at incidents (who are not just incident commanders) assessing the hazards at an incident and identifying and implementing the appropriate control measures. This represents a significant step forward from the traditional approach of using standard operating procedures and prescriptive policies to try to cover every eventuality at every incident. What will be at question will be the quality of the assessment made by decision makers and the decisions taken, not whether a standard checklist or policy has been followed.
3. **Operational Learning** – this will set an expectation that every service should be embedding learning in its operational response. This will strengthen the national approach to operational learning and drive better use of the National Operational Learning (NOL) system. The NFCC has produced a good practice guide relating to this. The outcome of this Fire Standard will be to achieve a “closed loop” of learning through debriefing and other feedback; consideration of outputs; analysis; feedback into services for them to act on and then collating evidence of that learning driving change and improvement. This should all be surrounded by a good governance model in each service to make it all happen. Learning needs to feed in and out from national level within the service and from joint operations.

If this approach is supported by the FSB, Fire Standards covering one and three (above) will be demanding, but uncontroversial. Fire Standard covering two (above) represents a change in the way that many fire and rescue services expect their staff to respond to incidents. A move from prescription and rigid procedures, to intelligent risk assessment and risk management based on the individual circumstances and features of each incident. This will be challenging but is clearly the direction that the service needs to take.

There will need to be a managed change process with implications for competence expectations, recruitment, selection, training and performance management.

### **Future expectations**

It is understood that the FSB are seeking to make Fire Standards achievable but not simply a compliance checklist. It is acknowledged that the speed at which services will be able to align themselves to Fire Standards as they are approved and published will vary.

Operational response is a vital and key area of activity for all fire and rescue services but it is clear their local policies and procedures that underpin their operational response are different.

As Fire Standards for these areas of activity are published, there will need to be time allowed for services to work towards achieving them. Positive results may take time to be evident, however, in many cases the outcomes included in any Fire Standard seek to set a national benchmark that has been missing for some time but which will, in time, result in an improvement in a more consistent approach.

### **Next Steps**

Assuming the endorsement of the Board, we will progress through stage 1 – scoping and timetable phase of development.

It is proposed that a paper will be developed by the NFCC CPO to be taken to the NFCC Operations Committee, outlining these proposals. If those discussions are successful and the approach is endorsed, work

to draft Fire Standards to reflect each of these areas will be brought to the next Board meeting, along with a detailed delivery plan.

This is reflected in the overall Fire Standards delivery plan in item 4 – paper 2 on this agenda.