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Publications



Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge Toolkit

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1. Introduction

Aims and Objectives

The Fire and Rescue sector has a strong and long standing commitment to sector led improvement. As part of this, the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) developed the concept of Operational Assessment (OpA) in 2009, in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Fire & Rescue Adviser (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 Fire & Rescue Authority (FRA) leads, prioritises and delivers the interrelated functions of prevention, protection 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 and development of all Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) staff.

The OpA process is designed to:

- form a structured and consistent basis to drive continuous improvement within the FRS, and
- provide elected members on FRAs and Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust.

The OpA will:

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

In addition to undertaking OpA self assessment the sector led peer challenge process has also been updated in line with 'Taking the Lead', the LGAs approach to self-regulation and improvement which aims to help councils and FRAs strengthen local accountability and revolutionise the way they evaluate and improve services.

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 FRAs and CFOs with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust.

One part of the 'Taking the Lead' support is the offer to each FRS to have a peer challenge at a time of its choosing up to March 2014. 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.

This guidance manual is designed for FRSs which are considering an OpA and/or Fire Peer Challenge. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but to impart the benefit of five 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.

Background

Since 2009, the LGA, in partnership with CFOA, has successfully delivered peer challenge in more than 30 FRSs throughout the UK, taking as a starting point self assessments carried out using the OpA Toolkit. Following this, CFOA commissioned a mid term review of the process to evaluate how the sector viewed its usefulness; this found that OpA:

- is broadly fit for purpose
- has formed a sound basis to underpin sector led improvement (the operational focus which deals with the outcomes of how an organisation is run, being seen as the best starting point for any corporate review)
- should be perpetuated with suitable amendments/modifications

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

To reflect this CFOA has revised the OpA Toolkit and this will remain the 'industry standard' improvement tool. It aims to provide elected members on FRAs and CFOs with information that allows them to ensure their operational service delivery is efficient, effective and robust.

This document presents the revised 'Operational Assessment Toolkit and Fire Peer Challenge'. The Toolkit has been updated and modernised, with input from across CFOA as well as from the LGA; it includes a greater focus on political and managerial leadership, community engagement and medium to long term planning to support financial resilience in these challenging times. However it maintains the 'whole system' approach and the seven themes which form the backbone of the self assessment.

The OpA is set out in section 2.

The LGAs Fire Peer Challenge provides 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.

In addition to reviewing the FRS Operational Self Assessment, 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.

The Fire Peer Challenge will not cover all areas of the OpA Self Assessment but will focus on specific areas and will be worked up with each FRS based on the outcome of their self assessment. In addition to the areas of focus the peer team will also consider three core questions under the theme of Leadership and Corporate Capacity:

How well are outcomes for local citizens being achieved?

How effective is the leadership and governance?

How effective is the organisational capacity to meet current requirements and future needs?

The Fire Peer Challenge approach is flexible in terms of timing in that FRSs 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 focus on specific areas as identified through the outcome of the OpA Self Assessment.

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

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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2. The Operational Assessment Toolkit

Overview

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 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.

Undertaking self assessment against the toolkit is recommended at least every three years, and is a prerequisite for authorities wishing to undertake a peer review.

The Key Assessment Areas (KAA) are:

1. Community Risk Management

How well is the authority identifying and prioritising the risks faced by the community?

2. Prevention

How well is the authority delivering its community safety strategy?

3. Protection

How well is the authority delivering its regulatory fire safety strategy?

4. Response

How well is the authority delivering its response activities?

5. Health and Safety

How well is the authority ensuring its responsibilities for health, safety and welfare are met?

6. Training and Development

How well is the authority ensuring its responsibilities for training, development and assessment of its staff are met?

7. Call Management and Incident Support

How well is the authority delivering its call management and incident support activities?

Using the Toolkit

The emphasis of OpA is on the outcome and impact of activities. Each 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 Assessment Areas

1. Community Risk Management

How well is the Authority identifying and prioritising the risks faced by the community?

1.1 Does the FRA have an effective 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)?

Focus

The organisation:

- has a strong, clear leadership focus on reducing community risk
- understands local risk and has established arrangements to gather and use statistical evidence and other relevant information to assess risk to the community and develop appropriate prevention, protection and response options
- uses the FSEC toolkit or alternative approach
- understands the diverse nature of the community it serves
- considers the future planning of partner agencies (e.g. in terms of planning, transport and regeneration) that potentially change community risk
- has taken statutory responsibilities and national guidance into account when developing plans.

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<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>

Community Risk Management (Continued)

1.2 Does the FRA use the outcomes of its risk analysis effectively and efficiently to plan 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 prevention, protection and response options
- 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.

Community Risk Management (Continued)

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

- 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
- The speed and weight of response of both emergency appliances and operational personnel have been considered within the process
- Data used with the risk analysis process are current 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

Civil Contingencies

- The Civil Contingencies Act and the requirements for joint agency community risk profiling have been considered within the risk analysis process
- Risk profiles from relevant Resilience Forums have been considered within the risk analysis process.

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.

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.

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.

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.

2. Prevention

How well is the Authority delivering its Community Safety Strategy?

2.1 Has the FRA clearly defined, planned and implemented a prevention strategy linked to its IRMP?

Focus

The organisation:

- has documented and published its plans for delivering its prevention work
- recognises the diverse nature of its community and has targeted its prevention work at areas of priority
- has assigned clear responsibility for the delivery of its Community Safety Strategy
- conducts a range of effective prevention activity.

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>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.</p>	<p>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>	<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>

Prevention (Continued)

2.2 Does the FRA 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

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.	<p>There is evidence of staff and stakeholder consultation and involvement in policy, planning, design, delivery and evaluation of community safety initiatives.</p> <p>Local collaboration takes place for the efficient and effective delivery of agreed local priorities including prevention activities.</p>	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.

Prevention (Continued)

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.

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 process includes the opportunity to signpost vulnerable individuals to other agencies.

Prevention Campaigns

- The FRA creates and delivers local campaigns and strategies 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 e.g. registers, toolkits utilised
- There are clearly defined aims and objectives
- Evaluation of effectiveness is undertaken

Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- The FRA has a strategy for engagement with young people to help improve the safety and quality of young people's lives.
- Effective policy and training are in place for FRA engagement with young people and vulnerable adults to ensure their protection and safety.

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.

3. Protection

How well is the Authority delivering its regulatory fire safety strategy?

3.1 Has the FRA clearly defined, planned and implemented a regulatory fire safety strategy linked to its IRMP?

Focus

The organisation:

- has documented and published its plans for delivering its protection work
- has targeted its protection work at areas of priority in the community
- has implemented a risk based audit programme and published its enforcement policy
- has assigned clear responsibilities for delivering its protection strategy.

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<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>

Protection (Continued)

3.2 Does the FRA 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.

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Effective engagement and consultation of staff and stakeholders in protection activities is being developed. Increased liaison arrangements with other agencies are being introduced.</p>	<p>Consultation and engagement arrangements with staff and stakeholders in the policy, planning and delivery of fire protection activity are effective.</p> <p>Suitable arrangements are in place for liaising with other relevant agencies.</p> <p>Consultation meets statutory requirements and responds to stakeholders' requests.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Protection (Continued)

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, and 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 the results of any audit and evaluation with relevant stakeholders.

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Developing 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 FRAs 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 works with other enforcement agencies, such as local authority Licensing Officers, to share information on risk
- Working arrangements are in place with other agencies to deliver effective services and reduce the burden of inspections.

Engagement with Business and the Third Sector

- There is FRA engagement in national partnerships such as Lead Authority Partnerships
- 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.

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.

4. Response

How well is the Authority delivering its response activities?

4.1 Has the FRA clearly defined, planned and implemented a response strategy linked to its IRMP?

Focus

The organisation:

- has documented and published its risk based response standards and arrangements
- has flexible response standards and arrangements appropriate to risk
- has assigned clear responsibility for the development, improvement and delivery of response strategy.

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
A response strategy to meet organisational needs is being developed, based on the community risk profile and linked to the IRMP.	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.	The response strategy demonstrates flexible, timely, safe, effective and efficient arrangements based on collaboration, co-operation and sharing of resources. The strategy ensures operational procedures are comprehensively underpinned by risk assessment.

Response (Continued)

4.2 Does the FRA 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

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>

Response (Continued)

4.3 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, 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.

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>

Response Briefing Sheet

Emergency Response Arrangements

- Emergency response arrangements are delivering the FRAs 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. Policies have been updated accordingly
- 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.

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.

5. Health & Safety

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

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

Focus

The organisation:

- has clearly defined Health, Safety and Welfare policies to support its plans and Strategies based on HS(G)65 methodology and aligned to IRMP
- takes into account all relevant statutory provisions including Health and Safety legislation and guidance (such as Generic Risk Assessments) when developing policies has policies founded on risk assessment that are commensurate with the role of the FRS and take into account the services primary function
- has effective plans, procedures and practices in place to ensure Health, Safety and Welfare.

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>

Health & Safety (Continued)

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

Focus

The organisation:

- has an appropriate structure to ensure the promotion of Health, Safety and Welfare within the organisation is effective
- ensures clear responsibility exists for the planning, development, improvement and maintenance of Health, Safety and Welfare activities
- ensures that responsibility for co-ordinating, monitoring and implementing Health, Safety and Welfare arrangements rests with a nominated senior manager
- ensures that Health, Safety and Welfare responsibilities are allocated to line managers, with competent specialists appointed to act as advisers, and all individuals are aware of and competent in their health and safety responsibilities as detailed within their relevant job description

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>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>	<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>

Health & Safety (Continued)

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

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.

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 Briefing Sheet

Policy

- A clear Health and Safety policy is in place which effectively communicates senior management's commitment to H&S
- 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, co-operation, communication and competence necessary for the development of a positive health and safety culture
- Operational policies take account of the overriding H&S policy e.g. training for operational incidents.

Active Monitoring

- Comprehensive procedures are in place for active monitoring, e.g. 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 assignation 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, e.g. 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, e.g. 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.

6. Training and Development

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

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

Focus

The organisation:

- Has clearly defined training, development and assessment policies to deliver the outcomes of its plans and strategies, aligned to the IRMP
- Takes statutory & sector guidance, good practice and health & safety requirements into account when developing training, development and assessment policies.

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>

Training and Development (Continued)

6.2 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 in delivering the IRMP
- has an appropriate structure to ensure training, development and assessment is effective
- 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
- trains operational personnel to identify environments, activities and circumstances that may affect operational safety, to enable them to control risks consistently
- has in place a suitable management system to mitigate risk.

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>For operational staff, effective training activities ensure sufficient realistic training opportunities are in place to encompass all aspects of risk management.</p>	<p>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. Systematic arrangements ensure that active monitoring of incidents informs the training and development of operational staff.</p> <p>Effective arrangements are in place for cross agency training which ensures effective incident management and operational delivery at multi-agency incidents.</p>

Training and Development (Continued)

6.3 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.

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 FRAs 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 issues
- The Strategy will encompass all personnel at all levels in the organisation regardless of structure and duty system
- 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 such as prevention, protection, intervention and civil resilience.

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 FRS
- 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 FRS, 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 e.g. 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.

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 multi-agency response
- The programme will be based on a training need analysis which takes into account local, regional and national risks.

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 Bronze, Silver and Gold Command levels

- Mechanisms have been established to verify incident command capability e.g. a monitoring process that includes a mechanism to feedback into policies and processes, such as training
- The FRA collaborates with other FRSs to ensure effective and efficient interoperability in accordance with Section 13 and 16 of the Fire Rescue Services Act 2004.

Operational Incident and Exercise Debriefing

- The FRS 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.

Firefighter Selection Tests and Promotion Process

- The FRS has effective selection processes for the recruitment of Firefighters regardless of duty system
- The FRS has effective processes for the promotion and recruitment of personnel to supervisory and managerial positions, within the organisation.

Personal Development and Performance Reviews

- There is an annual review of each person's development and performance which also includes any interim reviews
- The review will be based on 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.

Elected Member Training and Development

Suitable and sufficient training and development programmes exist for Elected Members who have responsibilities for the FRS.

7. Call Management and Incident Support

How well is the Authority delivering its call management and incident support activities?

7.1 How well is the Authority delivering its call management and incident support activities?

Focus

The organisation:

- has clearly defined policies for call management and incident support, developed in collaboration with other agencies as appropriate and linked to the IRMP
- has assigned clear responsibility for the development improvement and delivery of call management and incident support.

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
The FRAs call management and incident support policy is being developed to provide a clear approach including contingency (fall back) policies.	Call management and incident support policies have been developed. Clear responsibility for implementation of the policy, including contingency arrangements and spate conditions policies.	Call management and incident support policies have been developed in collaboration with other agencies and are fully integrated with all relevant policies of partner agencies.

Call Management and Incident Support (Continued)

7.2 Does the FRA have in place effective arrangements for delivering the call management and incident support activities?

Focus

The organisation:

- has effective call management arrangements
- has effective contingency (fallback) arrangements in place
- has appropriate staffing arrangements that support call management and incident support activities
- has effective communications in place to support the command and control of incidents.

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Arrangements to provide efficient and effective call management communications and incident support activities including contingency (fall back) call management and incident support services are being developed.</p>	<p>The FRA has reviewed and implemented efficient and effective arrangements for call management communications and incident support activities for spate conditions which include recall arrangements for staff and other services.</p>	<p>Arrangements to accurately forecast demand is enhancing standards of operational response. The implementation of effective procedures has resulted in significant reduction in appliance mobilising through call challenge and revised pre-determined attendances (PDAs). Effective communications are in place with other FRS and appropriate agencies to ensure interoperability.</p>

Call Management and Incident Support (Continued)

7.3 Does the FRA have a robust process for evaluating the effectiveness, and improving performance of its call management and incident support activities?

Focus

The organisation:

- measures and evaluates the effectiveness of its call management and incident support activities and addresses areas of under performance
- has a sound understanding of performance
- has arrangements in place for auditing and reviewing its call management and incident support activities on a planned basis
- shares the results of any audit and evaluation with relevant stakeholders
- Learns from other FRAs which have experienced extreme operational activity (e.g. incidents such as spate flooding, major COMAH site incidents etc).

Descriptors

Developing	Established	Advanced
<p>Performance management arrangements for call management and incident support activities need to be developed to effectively identify strengths and areas for improvement.</p> <p>Extended arrangements for auditing and reviewing call management and incident support activities are being introduced.</p>	<p>Planned audits, reviews and evaluations of call management and incident support activities identify areas of strengths and areas for improvement which are shared with relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Outcomes of evaluation and review result in actions to improve performance.</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 who have experienced extreme operational activity, and incorporated lessons learnt into its procedures.</p>

Call Management Briefing Sheet

Call Management and Incident Support Policies

- Clear policies are in place for call management and incident support, and these are fully documented and accessible to all staff
- Collaboration takes place with other emergency services and agencies in defining and reviewing the policies, including learning lessons from major events
- Regular reviews of the policies are undertaken to ensure best practice is maintained
- Quality assurance is undertaken to ensure the policies are adhered to
- An effective change control process is in place for implementing new policies and for amending the existing policies.

Call Management and Incident Support Training

- Quality assurance is undertaken to ensure the training is consistently provided
- Procedures are in place to ensure the training principles are correctly applied
- Procedures are in place to identify training needs of individuals
- The training needs of operational and control staff are considered to ensure better understanding and effective co-operation
- Training includes information of how the other emergency services and agencies work, in order to support effective co-ordinated working

Planning for Anticipated Increase in Volume of Operational Activity

Processes are in place for:

- Receipt of early warning of adverse weather conditions
- Liaison with other emergency services and agencies for intelligence gathering
- Recall policy for off-duty staff and redeployment of on-duty staff
- Information gathering with other FRAs who have experience in specific activities.

Acquiring Guidance from Specialists

- Procedures are in place for obtaining information for specific types of incident from specialist agencies
- Specialists are used, where appropriate, to assist in the provision of training and in formulating policies.

Business Continuity

- Resilient technology and procedures are available
- Procedures encompass failures of technology, processes and deficiencies in staffing
- Collaboration is undertaken with other Controls
- Regular testing is undertaken of the fallback arrangements.

Analysis of Data

- Data is used pro-actively to support reviews of policies and to assure levels of service are appropriate
- Trends are identified in relation to call volumes, incident types, incident locations and the cause of incidents
- Close liaison is established with FRA departments and other agencies when trends are identified to formulate FRA campaigns, changes in existing policy etc.

Forecasting Resource Availability

- Systems or procedures are in place to identify future deficiencies in respect of all duty systems utilised by the FRA
- The ability exists to implement recall to duty plans etc.

Availability of Supporting Documentation in the Form of Plans, Standard Operating Procedures etc.

- Standard formats are used
- Information is updated regularly in a timely manner
- Information is available where necessary e.g. in control rooms, in operational command rooms, at incidents etc
- Information is shared with other agencies as appropriate.

3. 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 FRSs on more than 30 occasions.

Complementing self assessment with external challenge by undertaking a 'sector delivered' peer challenge once every three years provides CFOs 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 FRSs 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 FRSs 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 three core questions under the theme of Leadership and Corporate Capacity:

How well are outcomes for local citizens being achieved?

How effective is the leadership and governance?

How effective is the organisational capacity to meet current requirements and future needs?

How a Peer Challenge Works

1. FRS confirms it wishes to have a peer challenge, having undertaken or a plan to undertake a self assessment using the OpA Toolkit
2. Peer Challenge Manager visits the FRS to discuss the key areas of focus, background and practical arrangements and produces a Memorandum of Understanding for agreement
3. The LGA sources proposed team, in consultation with Peer Challenge Manager. FRS consulted and team agreed
4. The FRS supplies its self assessment, key documents and draft interview programme six weeks before the onsite work
5. Peer Challenge Manager, circulates to the team for electronic discussion. Peer challenge team role allocations agreed
6. Lead CFO Peer undertakes telephone call with the receiving CFO to identify the main issues, any points for clarification and if necessary challenge the self assessment
7. Final peer challenge programme agreed two weeks before onsite work
8. Team meets evening before the peer challenge
9. Collects evidence throughout first, second and third days onsite
10. Fourth day onsite team puts together a presentation outlining findings, against the Leadership and Corporate Capacity and OpA Toolkit focus areas then presents findings to FRS
11. Peer Challenge Manager produces report, consults team and sends draft report to FRS for comment within four weeks after the peer challenge concludes
12. Report issued to FRS, signed off by FRA and published alongside the FRS own action plan

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 three 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
- A 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 FRAs 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 is 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 co-ordinating activity and priorities and providing evidence to support ideas.

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 3)

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 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 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.

Initial Visit to the FRS

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 co-ordinator. 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. 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 should devote sufficient resources and priority to have the timetable finalised within the two week deadline.

A sample schedule of what the peer challenge might look like is included with this guidance at Appendix 2.

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 3.

Transparency

CFOA and the LGA encourages all FRAs 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 & Rescue Authority.

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
- At least two computers - one with access to the Internet and the FRSs Intranet and e-mail system
- 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 e-mail/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. A box of biro pens and some blue tack, plus access to a nearby photocopier should also be available.

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.

The On-site 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 them to look at current strengths or progress any areas that the FRS may want to explore further. The process is a dynamic one and requires a high degree of flexibility throughout the peer challenge.

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 co-ordinator 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.

An introductory meeting and a presentation delivered by the CFO follows this. Other key Officers and the Chairman or portfolio holder usually attend this meeting.

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

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:

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
- 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 FRSs

Focus Groups:

- Firefighters – this can be combined with a station visit
- Retained firefighters – 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 e.g. 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 should 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 e.g. 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 FRAs 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 & Rescue Authority.

Appendix 1: Example List of Supporting Documents

This is just a suggested list and we do not require all documents.

It is appreciated that the name of some of these documents may be different in various FRSs. 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
- Management and FRA structure chart
- Previous OpA Peer Challenge report and action plan (if relevant)

Optional Documents

- 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 Timetable

Day One –

Peer Challenge Timetable – Example Fire & Rescue Service

Time	Stream 1	Stream 2	Stream 3	Additional Meetings
0830-0930	Team Arrival, room set up, capturing of main issues, preparation			
0930-1030	Presentation by Example FRS on Leadership & Corporate Capacity and Key Areas of Focus from the self assessment. <i>The presentation should be led by the CFO and provide information on the key issues and challenges and the focus for the peer challenge team</i>			
1030-1045	Break			
1045-1145	Interview CE/CFO	Interview Call Centre Manager	Interview with Area Manager Learning & Development	
1145-1245	Interview Lead Member/Chair of FRA	Interview ACFO HR	Interview ACFO Corporate Services	
1245-1330	Team Lunch			
1330-1430	Interview DCFO	Interview Vice Chair of the FRA	Break	
1430-1445	Break			
1445-1545	Break	Interview with head of Protection	Interview with head of Response	
1545-1600	Break			
1700	Break			
1700-1800	Day 1 – Debrief with CE/CFO (May only need 30 minutes)			

Day Two –

Peer Challenge Timetable – Example Fire & Rescue Service

Time	Stream 1	Stream 2	Stream 3	Additional Meetings
0830-0930	Team Meeting			
0900-1000	Interview Operational Manager responsible for Prevention	Interview Operational Manager responsible for Protection	Interview Operational Manager Response/ Operational Assurance	
1000-1100	Break	Meet with Area Ops Assurance Teams	Interview Operational Manager responsible for Learning & Development	
1100-1115	Break			
1115-1245	Focus Group - Area Managers	Break	Break	
1245-1345	Lunch			
1345-1445	Focus Group with Overview & Scrutiny Members	Interview with Strategic Level Police (Tel Call)	Interview with CE/CFO – Neighbouring FRS (Tel Call)	
1445-1500	Break			
1500-1600	Interview with Officer's Representative Bodies (FBU etc)	Break	Break	
1600-1700	Team Meeting			Day 2 - Debrief with CE/CFO
1700-1830		Focus Group WT	Focus Group with RDS	

Day Three –**Peer Challenge Timetable – Example Fire & Rescue Service**

Time	Stream 1	Stream 2	Stream 3	Additional Meetings
0830-0930	Team Meeting			
0900-1000	Visit to Command Management Interview with Command Management Trainer	Break	Break	
1000-1100	Break	Interview with head of Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare	Interview Command & Control Management Team	
1100-1115	Break			
1115-1245	Focus Group – Staff from range of departments – HR, H&S, CFS, Training		Break	
1245-1345	Break			
1345-1445	Focus Group community delivery partners/ voluntary sector (e.g. Age Concern/Police/Road Safety/Adult Social Care)		Break	
1445-1500	Break			
1500-1600	Focus Group – Partners in prevention – (LA building control/Environmental health/licensing/trading standards & business reps)		Break	
1600-1700	Team Meeting			
1700-1800	Day 3 - Debrief with CE/CFO	Break	Break	

Day Four –

Peer Challenge Timetable – Example Fire & Rescue Service

Time	Stream 1	Stream 2	Stream 3	Additional Meetings
0830-1100	Review Team prepare feedback session			
1130-1300	Review Team final presentation preparation and report drafting			

Appendix 3: Example Leaflet

Fire Peer Challenge Dates 2011

Between the XXth and XXth month 201X
Example Fire & Rescue Service is hosting a visit
by a Fire & Rescue fire peer challenge team. The
team will be here at the invitation of Example Fire
& Rescue Service.

The members of the team are:

XXXXXX
Chief Fire Officer

XXXX FRS

XXXXXX
Deputy Chief Fire Officer

XXXX FRS

XXXX
Group Manager

XXXX FRS

Councillor XXXXX
Title

Council

XXXXX
Peer Challenge Manager, LGA

Why?

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.

The fire and rescue sector has a strong and long standing
commitment to sector led improvement with OpA self
assessment and peer challenge at it's heart.

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 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.

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 FRAs and chief
officers with information that allows them to challenge their
operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective
and robust.

How?

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.

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.

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 FRS 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, FRSs. 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 and the peer challenge process is a key part of 'Taking the Lead', the LGAs approach to self-regulation and improvement which aims to help FRAs strengthen local accountability and revolutionise the way they evaluate and improve services.

Contact for more information?

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

XXXXXX
Peer Challenge Manager, LGA

tel: XXXXXX
email: XXXXXX

XXXXXX
Example FRS

tel: XXXXXX
email: XXXXXX

Find out more at www.local.gov.uk

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