


# PFCC Acknowledgment record

Version:

<b>FRS</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Police and Crime Commissioner</b>	Ben Adams
<b>Chief Fire Officer</b>	Rob Barber
<b>Title of inspection</b>	<a href="#">State of Fire &amp; Rescue – The Annual Assessment of Fire &amp; Rescue Services in England 2023</a>
<b>Inspectorate</b>	 <p>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire &amp; Rescue Services</p>
<b>Summary of inspection</b>	<p>This year's report contains my assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of Fire &amp; Rescue services in England, based on the inspection reports we published between 20 January 2023 and 31 March 2024. There were six recommendations issued in 2018 which broadly covered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Removing unjustifiable variation, including in how the sector defines risk.</li> <li>2. Making sure the sector has sufficient capacity and capability to bring about change.</li> <li>3. Precisely determining the roles of Fire &amp; Rescue services and their staff, to remove any ambiguity.</li> <li>4. Reviewing and reforming the systems for determining pay and conditions.</li> <li>5. Giving Chief Fire Officers operational independence.</li> <li>6. Establishing a code of ethics.</li> </ol>
<b>Grade</b>	N/A
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>Recommendation 1,2 and 6 are now complete. The remaining three national recommendations are a matter for the Government. Slow progress made against these recommendations has been noted in my last three 'State of Fire &amp; Rescue' reports.</p> <p><b>National recommendation 7</b></p> <p>By 1 March 2025, the Home Secretary should introduce amendments to Parliament concerning the Inspectors of Fire &amp; Rescue that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• place a requirement on Fire &amp; Rescue authorities to publish comments, within 56 days, in response to HMICFRS inspection reports on their Fire &amp; Rescue services; and</li> </ul>

- allow Fire & Rescue authorities, as well as mayors, county councils and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners, to request that HMICFRS inspects the Fire & Rescue services in their areas.

## Areas for improvement

### Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's Initial Response

I welcome the latest HMICFRS State of Fire report and I'm keen to see the pace of fire reform increase significantly. The delay in implementing the White Paper is frustrating and a constraint on our ambitions to deliver improved services for the communities of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Although I apply the same principle of giving the same operational independence to the Chief Fire Officer to that which sits with the Chief Constable, this needs to be enshrined in legislation. I agree that leaders need to take a more strategic approach to service improvement and transformation, and the introduction of an independent College of Fire & Rescue will play a vital part in this by supporting the development of senior leaders.

A key element of reform is the overhaul of outdated pay negotiation processes, including clarifying the core role of the firefighter and enabling flexibility to address local risks, however, progress in this area is also slower than expected.

I recognise the important work of the inspectorate in identifying examples of poor values, culture and behaviour in the sector. Although Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service have implemented a number of measures to understand its culture, improve standards and encourage reporting of inappropriate behaviour, I will maintain a relentless focus on driving further improvements.

In response to the new recommendation 7, I already publish responses to HMICFRS Fire & Rescue inspections for Staffordshire within 56 days as part of our commitment to public scrutiny and holding to account of the Fire & Rescue service. Chief Fire Officer responses are sought as part of this process and recent responses are published on the [Staffordshire PFCC website](#). I would support the formalisation of this process and to further include allowing PFCCs to request specific inspections of our Fire & Rescue service if significant concerns are identified.

### Chief Fire Officer Response

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service welcomes the HMICFRS State of Fire report and acknowledges the requirement for continued focus on how we meet the needs of communities and promoting a culture within the organisation where our people feel valued and supported.

Over the past two years, we have invested heavily in our approaches to better understand the needs of Staffordshire and Stoke-On-Trent. We have improved our risk-based inspection programme to help us identify our most vulnerable people and places to provide better support, and have increased our focus on creating community engagement opportunities at a local level. We will continue this important work as we develop our new Community Risk Management Plan for the next 4 years.

Our commitment to ensuring we create inclusive working environments that welcome and support diversity will continue. We have issued a Statement of Intent which reinforces our position that a zero-tolerance approach will be taken against inappropriate behaviours; it is vitally important that our people feel safe to come to work and understand they have a number of platforms to report concerns. The Core Code of Ethics is now fully embedded within the service, and the five ethical principles underpin our purpose and expectations of all staff. We will be continuing our focus on staff wellbeing, professional standards and increasing the diversity of our workforce.

I acknowledge and welcome the PFCC's comments to expediate progress in implementing the recommendations of the White Paper. Investment into establishing a College of Fire & Rescue will further support services in building strong leadership for the future to achieve effective and efficient service delivery to communities in an inclusive environment.

### **Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's Final Response**

I look forward to working closely with Staffordshire Fire & Rescue. building on progress already made to ensure the service is fit for the future. To enable this, I remain fully supportive of HMICFRS' efforts to accelerate the pace of reform of the sector.