



HM Fire Service Inspectorate Inspection Outline

Operational Assurance Provision In the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

This Inspection Outline document has been prepared to describe why we are carrying out an inspection and how we will go about the work. It is also intended to support our engagement with Ministers, the SFRS management team, representative bodies and Service users.

Background

Inspectors within HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) have scrutiny powers as specified in section 43B of The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. These include inquiring into the state and efficiency of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), its compliance with its duty to secure Best Value, and the way it is carrying out its functions.

HMFSI operates within, but independently of, the Scottish Government. Our approach is to support the SFRS to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs. An inspection by the Inspectorate can be self-directed or can be subject to direction by Scottish Ministers. This inspection is self-directed by the Chief Inspector.

Terms of Reference and the purpose of this inspection

This document sets out the terms of reference in respect of a Thematic Inspection into the SFRS's Operational Assurance (OA) policy, which provides a framework for the provision of OA and sets out the SFRS position in relation to the information gathering and assurance of operational activities. The inspection will also consider the application and operation of this policy and related procedures.

The purpose of having suitable OA processes in place is to provide effective feedback and review of performance at operational incidents and training events to influence future practice, enhance performance and improve firefighter safety. These processes should also support the concept of a learning organisation and support the SFRS's commitment to the continuous improvement of operational response and Health & Safety performance standards within the context of operational activity.

There is also a need to ensure that there is a suitable OA safety management system, underpinned by the key 'Safe Person Principles', which aims to support the delivery of a safe, effective and efficient operational response using planned and systematic processes to minimise organisational risk. This system should assure the effectiveness of SFRS arrangements for the implementation of the guidance contained within generic hazard and risk statements, Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs), incident command systems, operational training and the maintenance of operational competence. Robust OA processes, such as pre-incident audits, during incident monitoring and post-incident reviews, should support the concept and ethos of a learning organisation focused on continuous improvement.

Methodology

When undertaking this inspection, we will follow established practice utilised in previous Service Delivery Area Inspections and Thematic Inspections. This inspection framework will provide a structure to our work, which will be risk-based, proportionate and focussed on the provision of OA throughout the Service. We will have early engagement with the Service and establish the normal single point of contact (SPOC). During the course of this Inspection and taking particular account of our stated purpose, we will be focusing in general on the following areas:

- Organisational policy, arrangements, model, systems and procedures for OA that are currently in place within the SFRS.
- Governance and the structures in place to ensure appropriate oversight of OA.
- Responsibilities for ensuring OA and the discharge of legal obligations.
- Audit, monitoring and measuring performance of OA to ensure internal compliance and continuous improvement.
- Review and analysis of SFRS data which should support audit and monitoring.
- Consideration of the SFRS as a learning organisation, including National Operational Learning (NOL) and Joint Operational Learning (JOL).
- Staff Development processes, which support the application, understanding and implementation of OA.

This list is not exhaustive and as our inspection fieldwork develops, we may include other related areas.

The inspection process will seek to:

- Provide independent assurance as to the efficiency and effectiveness of the OA provision within the SFRS.
- Highlight areas of good practice, areas for improvement and make recommendations.

The inspection will be delivered in four stages:

1. Desk top analysis

We will request information from the SFRS relative to the subjects set out in the Methodology section and carry out a comprehensive desktop analysis and literature review.

2. Interviews and Fieldwork

We shall speak with SFRS staff who are involved with formulation of policy, gathering of information, implementation of policy, and research and development. Questions for interviews will be structured around our inspection framework. During the fieldwork, there may be a need to interview other people to explore themes that may emerge.

3. Analysis of Evidence

During this stage, we will review and evaluate the information and evidence collated during the inspection, and where necessary expand the area of enquiry to address developing themes. We may seek support of sector specific professional advisors in this process.

4. Publication and Reporting

We will compile an Inspection report on the conclusions of our inspection. The Inspection report will be subject to consultation and reviewed for quality assurance purposes before its finalisation.

The report will outline our methodology and approach and will contain the Chief Inspector's key findings, conclusions and recommendations based on identified themes throughout the inspection.

A copy of the final report will be provided to the SFRS Board, the SFRS Chief Officer and laid before the Scottish Parliament. A copy will also be made publically available on the HMFSI website.

Inspection Timetable

Our proposed revised timetable is:

Date	Inspection Stage
May 2024 to June 2024	Desktop Analysis and Literature Review of Key Documents
July 2024 to October 2024	Inspection Team Interviews and Fieldwork
November 2024 to December 2024	Analysis of Evidence and Report Drafting
January 2025 to March 2025	Consultation, Report Finalisation and Publication

The inspection team members will comprise of HMFSI staff, together with other subject matter specialists as deemed appropriate. The HMFSI point of contact for this inspection is David Young – Assistant Inspector David.Young2@gov.scot

Responding to this Inspection Outline

Should you wish to make any comment or observation regarding this Inspection Outline, these can be submitted to the Chief Inspector by emailing HMFSI@gov.scot. Inspection team members can also provide clarifications should this be required and can be contacted using the same email address.