

Progress to date

The Project Board met twice during the autumn to review and consider the progress made by the team in relation to the establishment of a professional standards body. Approval was also given to consult the wider sector on the options around governance and role of the body through stakeholder events.

This briefing note aims to provide our stakeholders with an understanding of the progress made to date and to inform you of our plans for the last phase of the project and our consultation on the final proposal.

Workstreams

The project team have completed the three agreed work streams; an update on each of these is included below.

1. Establishing the current **standards landscape**, identifying the professional standards and qualifications in use now, against the business functions of an FRS.
2. Options for a **standard-setting process** which includes scrutiny and approval.
3. Options for **operating models** for the proposed body - including options for funding and staffing.

1. Standards Landscape

The standards survey which commenced earlier in the year is now complete. Through our network of Single Points of Contacts (SPoCs) the team has shared the initial results - allowing each service the opportunity to check and verify the information they provided. This verification process was completed in November and the database has now been updated by our colleagues in the LFB Business Intelligence Team. This should ensure that we accurately reflect the professional standards currently in use within the sector, as defined by you.

The team have collated professional standards both from an organisational perspective (what does the organisation need to attain and maintain adherence to) and individual perspective (what does an individual need to attain and maintain adherence to).

This combination of both organisational and individual professional standards will contribute to the creation of a new **professional standards framework**. This framework will have the potential to act as a form of benchmark, complementing the inspection framework, and informing the inspection criteria. The aim will be to link the professional standards to the four pillars of inspection from the HMICFRS (Prevention, Protection, Response and Resilience).

The framework should be an important tool for the professional standards body, the inspectorate and for the sector. Learning outcomes from the inspection results will help us review, revise and refine the professional standards we use in the sector. The body will have a role in supporting

services by identifying best practice and sharing learning contributing to the continuous improvement of how fire and rescue services operate and deliver their services to the public.

The team have conducted an initial analysis of the survey data and the findings confirm there are a multitude of professional standards in use, across the country. However, the volume of those standards, how and why they have been selected, and whether they are fit for purpose has yet to be verified.

We will liaise with the HMICFRS as they complete their initial inspections. It will be learning from this process which in turn helps us as a sector define what is required to achieve “good” or “outstanding” in terms of fire and rescue service performance.

2. Standards Setting Process

The research has concluded that there is a clear role for a central body to provide overall governance and coordination of the professional standards and qualifications used by the fire and rescue services.

It has also concluded the importance of the separation of roles; from those who “set” the professional standards to those who apply and adhere to them (the services). However, the role of subject matter expertise to support any standards development work is also key. The team were keen to respond to feedback from stakeholders about utilising existing resources where they exist and avoiding complex hierarchical structures that may lead to duplication.

The proposed process for the development of a standard was covered in detailed within the last project brief. However, in summary the process is based on the BSI internationally recognised process for this purpose. Many sectors use the process with minor modifications to suit the sector. The basic six stages of the process are shown below:



The team have explored a number of options for how best to deliver this process, drawing on feedback from stakeholders. It is proposed the body will have the responsibility for overseeing and managing this process which will be triggered when the requirement to develop a new standard or review an existing one is identified.

It is also proposed that in order to deliver this process - the body will have a small core team, and will seek to draw on existing structures and resources; commissioning work from within the sector, when relevant. The body will aim to work closely with the new NFCC Fire Central Programme Office (once established) for support with the standard setting process

This approach is aligned with the NFCCs desire to enhance the visibility of how its national processes, work programmes and learning programmes are linked; ensuring the most appropriate solutions are found, when issues are raised. This approach also aims to avoid duplication and ensure that the appropriate stakeholders are included in, and involved with professional standards development.

Further details will be provided as part of the consultation and the team will welcome feedback from all stakeholders.

3. Operating Model

The Project Board previously considered a number of options for how the body may operate. They also considered the role, remit and scope of the body.

Based on the feedback from the board and from stakeholders - through ongoing engagement, the team were tasked to fully research the potential of collaboration between the body and other relevant organisations and consider utilising existing structures within the sector.

In addition the board have been keen to understand and explore the possibilities for the body to have an expanded role in supporting the further development of the fire profession. They have also tasked the team to look at any potential collaboration opportunities on professional standards that may exist with the police and other blue light partners, in light of the duty to collaborate.

In particular the board have been keen to explore opportunities to support the workforce reform and the career pathway for the fire and rescue services, supporting the continual improvement of the fire and rescue service.

On that basis, the team have been liaising with a number of key partners and organisations including:

- the NFCC
- a number of NFCC coordination committee chairs and programme leads
- national leads for the emerging NFCC Fire Central Programme Office & the Fire Professional Framework
- the Occupational Committee and the NOS and Qualifications Working Group

- the College of Policing
- the Institute of Fire Engineers

The team have drawn together a proposal for the operation, governance, staffing and indicative costings for a new body.

Full details of the proposed role and remit for the body along with the operating model will be shared with stakeholders through the consultation period; when all stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide comment and feedback on the outlined proposals.

4. Consultation

Following feedback from the latest board in November, the team are now preparing the business case for consultation.

In order to ensure all stakeholders have the opportunity to understand and comment on the proposals being made the team are planning a series of regional workshops, meetings and attendance at other sector events over the coming weeks.

Subject to board approval, a formal online consultation will run for six weeks from December through to January 2018. Further details of the regional workshops and the consultation will be circulated to stakeholders, in early December. We would encourage you to share the consultation information widely in order for the team to collate and review as much feedback as possible.

The team would welcome the opportunity to share information with stakeholders whenever possible. Whilst the team will be organising a number of workshops, if you are involved in a national event over the coming weeks and could accommodate an engagement slot within your agenda please let the team know.

Following the formal consultation, the team will collate the responses for the Project Board to consider any final amendments. The final business case will then be submitted to the board in March 2018 after which it will be presented to the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service for approval.

If Ministerial approval is received, it is envisaged work to start implementing the body will start in April 2018.

If you have any questions or required further details, please do contact the team via the dedicated email address: PSBProject@ukfrs.com