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# Fire and Rescue National Framework 2016

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# FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR WALES 2016

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Powers**

Under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (“the 2004 Act”) the Welsh Ministers must prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework.

The section provides that the Framework—

- (a) must set out priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in connection with the discharge of their functions;
- (b) may contain guidance to FRAs in connection with the discharge of any of their functions;
- (c) may contain any other matter relating to FRAs or their functions that the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate.

In preparing the Framework the Welsh Ministers are required to consult FRAs, persons representing employees of FRAs, and any other persons they consider appropriate. This requirement has been discharged by undertaking a full public consultation prior to the publication of this document.

In this Framework the term ‘FRAs’ refers to the three statutory bodies responsible for providing fire and rescue services in Wales, i.e. the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

## VISION AND KEY PRIORITIES

The Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Welsh Government's vision and priorities for FRAs in Wales. It describes what the Welsh Government expects of the FRAs and creates the foundation on which to build and promote improvement, efficiency and innovation.

FRAs have a critical and highly-valued role in making and keeping people safe. Their capability and expertise has contributed to a significant and sustained reduction in both the incidence of fires in Wales and their severity in terms of deaths and injuries. But that same success has meant the role of FRAs is changing. Its resources can be, and increasingly are, diverted to deal with other incidents, and to improve fire safety and fire prevention. It is no longer appropriate to see FRAs as simply a means of responding to and fighting fires when they arise, although that is, of course, still essential. The overriding aim of FRAs should be broader than that. It should be:

**To keep people, communities, businesses and the environment in Wales safe from fires and other hazards as effectively and efficiently as possible.**

This Framework expands on this overriding aim and sets out how FRAs should pursue it. Doing so will entail a process of change in what FRAs do and how they do it. To a certain extent that process is already under way, led by the FRAs themselves. While the Welsh Government welcomes that, we believe the direction of travel needs to be more clearly structured and articulated at an all-Wales level. The Framework fulfils that need.

### **The changing context of fire and rescue services**

A need for organisations to change is often interpreted solely as a criticism of how they have operated in the past. That is not the case here. The contribution which FRAs have made to improving safety is clear. This Framework does not advocate change as a response to under-performance, mismanagement or inefficiency. Rather, it does so because the context in which FRAs operate and the challenges they face are themselves changing.

There are three main aspects of that:

- **An effective balance between response and prevention.** As noted above, there has been a long-term decline in the incidence of fire. This reflects FRAs' work in promoting fire safety. While a reduction in fires clearly cannot and should not yield an equivalent increase in available capacity, this trend does free up some further firefighting resources to be diverted to such work. This is a significant achievement. It improves both the safety of people and communities and the efficiency of the Service: it is far more cost-effective to prevent a fire than to fight one. However, achieving and sustaining that balance will mean changes in responsibilities, capabilities, structures, skills and cultures – and how these are managed, monitored and improved;

- **Austerity.** While FRAs are in the unique position of determining their own budgets, they need to do so in a context of severe medium to long-term pressure on public finances. That in turn calls for sustained maximum effort in identifying and realising efficiencies, in maintaining high standards of governance, and in accounting transparently for delivery. It also reinforces the need to reduce costs by preventing, rather than responding to fires;
- **An aging population.** The population of Wales is growing older, with particularly marked increases in the number of people who are aged over 80. At the same time, there is a sustained shift from residential to home-based care for all vulnerable groups. These trends will tend to increase the number of people who are at severe risk of fire, and disperse those risks more widely across the community. That increases both the need to focus on prevention and to collaborate with other agencies in doing so.

These challenges are clearly interlinked. Both austerity and aging call for a greater focus on prevention, which improves the safety of vulnerable people. Meeting these challenges calls for clear and coherent leadership and action by the FRAs, by the Welsh Government and by partner agencies. This Framework sets out what that should entail. In particular, it specifies the following key objectives for FRAs:

- **Continually and sustainably reducing risk and enhancing the safety of citizens and communities** (chapter 1);
- **Responding swiftly and effectively to incidents** (chapter 2);
- **Being clearly and publicly accountable for delivery and funding, manifesting the highest standards of governance** (chapter 3);
- **Maintaining downward pressure on costs and taking all opportunities to realise efficiencies** (chapter 4);
- **Working effectively with partners to improve efficiency and citizen and community well-being** (chapter 5);
- **Valuing and developing the workforce to the highest standards** (chapter 6).

## **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

The National Assembly for Wales passed the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in March 2015. It specifies seven well-being goals, requires most devolved public bodies to set objectives for meeting those goals, and to pursue those objectives in accordance with the sustainable development principle.

This Framework has been designed so that following it will support compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. For instance, reducing the risk and incidence of fire will contribute directly to the goals of *A Healthier Wales* and *A Wales of Cohesive Communities*; action to minimise the risk and incidence of fire in respect of the natural environment and heritage assets will likewise contribute to the goals of *A resilient Wales* and *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language*.

Equally, the approaches which this guidance sets out are designed to be wholly consistent with the sustainable development principle. Effectively balancing responsive and preventative services is at the heart of that: it squarely supports the 'long term' and 'prevention' aspects of that principle. Other elements of this Framework also support the 'integration', 'collaboration' and 'involvement' aspects.

### **Status of this Framework**

This Framework is prepared by the Welsh Ministers under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, and brought into effect by the Fire and Rescue Services (National Framework) (Wales) Order 2015. FRAs must, under section 21(7) of the 2004 Act, therefore have regard to it in exercising their functions. That applies to the whole Framework, but for ease of reference, the key priorities of the Framework have been summarised throughout in a 'box' in bold font against a pale red background, as on page 5 above. These will also be used as the basis for the Welsh Government's monitoring and reporting of progress against the Framework, as required by section 25 of the 2004 Act, and as described further in the final chapter.

The Framework refers to several activities of an FRA where there is no specific statutory duty on FRAs to deliver them – for example, provision of programmes relating to driver education and anti-social behaviour. Where this is the case, the activities referred to in the Framework are covered by FRAs' powers within the 2004 Act, for instance in sections 5A, 11 and 12. It is, however, still incumbent on an FRA, before embarking on activities which do not clearly fall within the FRA's specific statutory functions, to seek their own legal advice. That is an important feature of good governance.

This document also sets out how the Welsh Government will contribute to these overall aims and support FRAs to do so, through clear commitments and statements of intent. However, the statutory purpose of the Framework is to give guidance to FRAs; so such commitments are, strictly, non-statutory.

## **CHAPTER 1: CONTINUALLY AND SUSTAINABLY REDUCING RISK AND ENHANCING THE SAFETY OF CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES**

- 1.1. Promoting fire safety is a core statutory function for FRAs. Section 6 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires a FRA to make provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in its area (including providing advice, information, publicity and encouragement to prevent fires and death or injury from fires and to reduce losses).
- 1.2. The long-term decline in the incidence of fire reflects FRAs' work in preventing fires, improving fire safety and tackling fire-related crime. Social trends such as reduced rates of smoking, especially indoors; the use of non-flammable building and furnishing materials; and fitting sprinklers to new domestic premises have also contributed.
- 1.3. This reduction in the incidence of fire has allowed FRAs to re-balance their response and prevention work. While this reduction is a major success, it now needs to be sustained and embedded, in a context where resources are scarce and where the number of people at serious risk of fire may well increase significantly. Doing so is among the key challenges facing FRAs.
- 1.4. The Welsh Government has provided financial support for some such activities through its Community Fire Safety grant. Whether, and to what extent, that continues is beyond the scope of this Framework. In any event though, prevention is clearly not an optional extra to be delivered if external support allows. It is, and must remain, at the heart of the Service's work; and FRAs should support it accordingly.

### **Identifying risk and targeting interventions**

- 1.5. Risks of fire vary considerably across the areas and communities which FRAs serve. For instance, people at greatest risk of accidental fire may include those who are frail, who have a disability, who smoke, who live alone, or who have substance misuse problems. This means that those who are at greatest risk can also be subject to deprivation; and may be particularly ill-placed to deal with the aftermath of a fire. Reducing those risks may make a significant contribution to tackling poverty in our more deprived communities.
- 1.6. Some of these risks will invariably increase as our population gets older. Furthermore, the greater emphasis on supporting older, and other vulnerable people to remain in their own homes may increase the risk still further.
- 1.7. Evidence demonstrates that most fire deaths and injuries are preventable. Research indicates the risk of dying or being injured in a property without a smoke alarm is significantly greater than in a property with a smoke alarm. The fitting of smoke alarms in both private and rented properties is therefore critical. Having working smoke alarms in all rented homes in Wales has clear potential to prevent death and injury to tenants, and damage to their property and that of landlords.

- 1.8. The Welsh Housing Quality Standard, which applies to existing social housing, requires regular electrical safety checks to be undertaken and smoke detectors installed. Development Quality Requirements, which apply to new-build social housing, dictate the need to meet all statutory building and safety regulations.
- 1.9. The Renting Homes (Wales) Bill places an obligation on all landlords to ensure a rented dwelling is fit for human habitation and includes a power for the Welsh Ministers to prescribe in regulations specific requirements to meet this obligation. The Welsh Government intends to prescribe requirements in relation to the installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors as well as the carrying out of periodic electrical safety tests.
- 1.10. FRAs need to prioritise their home safety activity on the most vulnerable parts of the population, where they will have the greatest benefit. To do so, they need to identify those most at risk consistently and effectively. That in turn will depend on effective sharing of data and intelligence with other public and third-sector agencies which provide services to such groups. This will help ensure delivery of more efficient, valuable and effective services to keep our citizens safe.
- 1.11. A similar approach is also needed in respect of deliberate fire-setting and fire-related crime. The FRAs' work with young people to reduce deliberately-set fires and anti-social behaviour is already well established. Targeting those who have offended, or are known to be at risk of offending, has achieved some significant successes. Again, this work relies heavily on collaboration with other agencies, such as the police, youth justice teams and social services departments. The Welsh Government will integrate its support for this work in ways which foster a collaborative approach.
- 1.12. FRAs have also developed programmes to improve road safety and minimise the risk of road traffic collisions. While FRAs are under no duty to do so, the Welsh Government welcomes such initiatives on the same basis as fire safety programmes: they can both keep people safe and reduce the need to provide responsive services FRAs should continue to provide such programmes where they prove to be effective.

### **Business Fire Safety**

- 1.13. FRAs have clearly defined roles in relation to fire safety enforcement as set out in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. FRAs should continue to focus their efforts on higher risk non domestic premises, providing fire safety advice and support to businesses and, where necessary, using their regulatory powers to continue to drive down the risk of fires.
- 1.14. Fires in non domestic properties can have a devastating effect on local communities and a continued effort to reduce the number of fires at business premises will clearly have a positive impact, protecting local employment, and strengthening local commerce.

## **Primary Authority for Fire Safety**

- 1.15. Since 2014 FRAs have been able to enter into Primary Authority partnerships with businesses, charities or other organisations which operate across more than one Local Authority fire enforcement area - becoming the single point of contact for fire safety regulation advice.
- 1.16. The aim of the Primary Authority Partnership Scheme is to enable FRAs to develop effective partnerships with businesses that achieve a consistency for delivering fire safety enforcement advice and creating a more efficient and effective approach to fire safety enforcement.
- 1.17. Since the scope of Primary Authority was extended to cover fire safety regulation advice, its benefits elsewhere in the UK have been significant. FRAs in Wales should actively explore Primary Authority partnerships where it is feasible to do so, ensuring efficient arrangements are in place for providing fire safety regulation advice and enforcement.

## **Designing and evaluating programmes**

- 1.18. A wide range of fire prevention and fire safety programmes already exist, some of which have operated for many years. While some of these are demonstrably successful, FRAs should seek always to ensure that their programmes make the greatest possible contribution to reducing risk. They should avoid continuing programmes and interventions which cannot be shown to make a positive contribution.
- 1.19. Prevention programmes should be tailored to address the greatest risks, and to the circumstances of the individuals and communities concerned. A bespoke and intensive intervention in the home of someone at very high risk of fire may ultimately have greater impact than a more widespread and low-level approach. Equally, programmes which aim to reduce fire-related crime should be based on an understanding of what motivates young people in particular, to set fires deliberately. FRAs should identify programmes which will maximise the improvement to fire safety, are designed to change people's behaviour and perception of fire and offer the best value for money. Programmes should be regularly reviewed and effectively targeted, based on intelligence and robust qualitative and quantitative evaluations.
- 1.20. Doing so is often difficult. It can be impossible to accurately quantify the impact of interventions which seek to prevent fires and reduce risks, as one cannot measure, or understand the causes of, events which did not occur. Instead, evaluation will often need to be based on robust qualitative assessments of levels of risk, and of the extent to which people change their behaviour to make themselves safer, and/or feel safer.

## **Engaging people and communities**

- 1.21. This last point is crucial. Reducing the risk of fire often entails influencing people to act in safer ways, rather than simply putting in place technical fire safety measures.

Doing so means effective engagement with individuals, families and communities to convey the dangers of fire and how to mitigate them; and building awareness and support within communities to tackle risks of fire directly. It also means that those delivering prevention programmes need to have the necessary “softer” influencing skills to effect behaviour change.

### **Diversifying programmes**

- 1.22. At present, FRAs’ safety and prevention programmes focus on reducing fires and road traffic collisions. This Framework does not formally seek to extend that remit. However, there is a credible case for building on FRAs’ domestic fire safety work in particular to embrace other hazards people may face in their own homes. For instance, elderly fallers account for 10% of all 999 calls to the Welsh Ambulance Service<sup>1</sup>. Many of these could be prevented by providing simple advice and basic modifications. In 2014, there were 26 deaths<sup>2</sup> as a direct result of carbon monoxide poisoning in England and Wales. While other organisations such as local authorities and housing associations clearly have responsibilities here, FRAs are well placed to provide awareness advice and have already done so in the past. Equally, FRAs could also provide advice on flood mitigation measures to those who live in homes at risk. While this would go beyond FRAs’ statutory duties as they stand, the Welsh Government supports the case for change in principle, and will look to develop a trial of this wider approach, in agreement with FRAs.

### **Collaboration and prevention**

- 1.23. All relevant fire safety programmes should be delivered in collaboration with other public bodies and third-sector organisations which also have a role in keeping people safe. This could include the Police Services, Ambulance Service, Local Health Boards, Local Authorities and Third Sector organisations. Collaboration should include working collectively and sharing information and intelligence about risks and how to mitigate them.
- 1.24. Local Authorities have the legal responsibility to provide road safety education and FRAs should actively seek to collaborate with Local Authorities, Police and the Welsh Ambulance Service to contribute to the delivery of the multi-agency road safety agenda. Working in isolation on this area will not have the same impact as a multi-agency approach whereby each agency can, in many cases, offer real life experiences and hard hitting messages with a view to educating and informing high risk individuals and changing mind sets.
- 1.25. FRAs’ success in reducing offending rates among participants in its programmes is undoubted. However, maximising the impact on fire-related crime requires a broader range of participation at a community level and beyond. Both preventing and responding to grassland fires requires a partnership approach. Strengthening partnership working as well as community engagement will make for safer and stronger communities. Educational school visits by the FRAs, as part of the school curriculum, ensure our young people are influenced with the right messages early

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ambulance.wales.nhs.uk/Default.aspx?pagelD=205&lan=en>

<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/business-transparency/freedom-of-information/what-can-i-request/published-ad-hoc-data/health/september-2015/index.html>). Reference number: 004612

on. Further opportunities of promoting these messages through the education system should be explored. FRAs should work with partners and put in place joint strategic communication plans to reduce the incidence and severity of deliberate fires, including provision of clear and consistent public messages.

**FRAs should therefore:**

- **Sustainably embed safety and prevention programmes into their core activities, and support such programmes accordingly;**
- **Identify those most at risk of fire and of fire-related offending, in collaboration with other partners;**
- **Work with other partners to help to identify those most at risk of experiencing a road traffic collision:**
- **Design and deliver programmes which consistently and effectively address these risks, including in particular changing people's behaviour and perception towards fires, and building community engagement to that end;**
- **Promote business fire safety in ways which minimise risk both to employees and to profitability. This includes entering into Primary Authority partnerships where appropriate.**
- **Ensure the workforce is able to develop and maintain the engagement and influencing skills needed to promote fire safety and change behaviour effectively, especially as regards more vulnerable people;**
- **Evaluate their programmes robustly, using relevant quantitative and qualitative evidence, including evidence about perceptions and behaviours, and act on the results.**

**To support this, the Welsh Government will:**

- **Identify and pursue opportunities to legislate in the interests of fire safety, for instance by requiring the installation of smoke alarms in privately-rented dwellings and in social housing;**
- **Promote collaboration between FRAs and other agencies in the interests of improving safety;**
- **In particular, promote the sharing of data between public bodies about people and communities at risk, and aim to resolve any difficulties and obstacles to this;**

- **Initiate a trial programme of engaging the FRAs to address other domestic hazards, with a view to reducing emergency admissions to hospital;**
- **Fund this and other innovative approaches to fire safety, subject to budgetary constraints;**
- **Support proposed primary authority partnerships, in discussion with the Better Regulation Delivery Office.**

## **CHAPTER 2: RESPONDING SWIFTLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO INCIDENTS**

**Providing a swift and effective emergency response to fires and other incidents remains unavoidably at the heart of the Fire Service's purpose. However successful fire safety and fire prevention is, that will remain the case.**

- 2.1. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires FRAs to make provision for responding to fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies as conferred by order by Welsh Ministers. The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies)(Wales) Order 2007 requires FRAs to provide services for removing chemical, biological or radioactive contaminants from people in the event of an emergency and rescuing people from collapsed buildings, trains, trams or aircraft. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 also places requirements on FRAs as Category 1 responders.
- 2.2. FRAs also respond to other emergency incidents, such as flooding, on a non statutory basis; in some areas they also provide an emergency medical response.

### **Assessing and responding to changing risk**

- 2.3. There has been a consistent reduction in emergency attendances to fires in the last 10-15 years. Chapter 1 highlights the need to focus on community safety prevention programmes and interventions, to maintain this trend. As the margins for further improvement become tighter and risk increases as a result of, for instance, an aging population, maintaining this reduction will require sustained effort to effectively balance response and prevention. Responding to incidents, along with prevention, will continue to be the cornerstone of the FRAs role in keeping citizens and communities safe. Prevention will never eliminate the need for effective response to incidents but ensuring an effective balance between both will be key to ensuring citizen safety and well-being.
- 2.4. FRAs should ensure that their community risk assessments reflect the focus on prevention, while maintaining capability to provide an effective response to a range of emergencies. FRAs need to clearly articulate the changing risk to communities, the resulting changing role of their fire and rescue service, and the resultant response that individuals can expect to receive, both in terms of fire emergencies, wider emergency response and prevention support. FRAs will need to report to the public how well they have delivered against these plans for effective response. This can be done through improvement planning reporting mechanisms.
- 2.5. Both public and firefighter safety must be the key priority. Within this, however, FRAs should explore where falling attendances at fires have created capacity; and all opportunities for maximising redeployment opportunities and expanding the roles of operational firefighters should be considered. This could and should include the wider forms of safety work described in the previous chapter.
- 2.6. Firefighter resources are clearly key to any effective response, and FRAs should ensure that crewing systems for firefighters reflect local risk profiles. While the detail of this is rightly for FRAs to manage, there is a clear need to balance the efficiency of the Service with the capability to provide an effective and swift

emergency response, and an extended community safety provision. Sharing operational resources across geographical boundaries can also contribute to this.

- 2.7. The reduction in fires clearly cannot equate to an equal percentage of time and resource that can be diverted to other response or prevention activities. FRAs must maintain the capability to respond to any fire at any time; and additional training requirements, the constraints of the retained duty system, and other existing activities undertaken all limit the capacity available. Nonetheless, there will be at least some capacity available for non-firefighting activities.

**FRAs should :**

- **Continue to provide a swift and effective response to all relevant incidents in all parts of their areas, at all times;**
- **Ensure that communities are aware of the response they can expect to receive and the performance of FRAs in achieving this;**
- **Ensure that crewing systems for firefighters are reflective of local risk profiles, and that they maximise the efficient use of resources;**
- **Share resources, and in particular specialised skills and assets, across boundaries.**

**Safe and effective responses**

- 2.8. The need to ensure operational command procedures, guidance and training are appropriate and effective is key to maintaining safe systems of work.
- 2.9. All emergency response arrangements should be managed in accordance with standard operating procedures which are authorised by each FRA. In developing local standard operating procedures, FRAs should ensure that the new national operational guidance is considered and implemented in ways which fit local arrangements and priorities.
- 2.10. Maintaining firefighter and public safety calls for learning from serious incidents to minimise the risk of recurrence. FRAs should ensure they have systems in place to ensure lessons from incidents within and outside Wales are identified, considered in the context of their own practices and procedures, and necessary changes are implemented where it is considered appropriate to do so.
- 2.11. There will be incidents and events which require a systematic approach to investigation. Incidents of a serious nature which involve death or serious injury may be subject to investigation by Coroners, the Police or the Health and Safety Executive. However, such investigations are often rightly limited only to the immediate facts of each case and any organisational or individual culpability. The

Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor has, in conjunction with the FRAs and other investigatory bodies, developed a protocol for independent, objective and learning-focused investigation of serious incidents, and clear dissemination of lessons learned.

- 2.12. Advances in technology mean that new and innovative solutions are being developed which greatly improve fire fighting and rescue operations. FRAs should continually explore, and where feasible, introduce new technology where doing so improves fire fighter safety and/or provides greater value than conventional methods.
- 2.13. For instance, the Emergency Services Network (ESN) will feature mission critical voice and data services on a 4G network and will replace the operational communication services currently supplied by Airwave Solutions Ltd and other commercial providers. ESN will be more cost-effective to address budget pressures, operationally-efficient with integrated broadband data services and demand-led so users only pay for the features they require. The FRAs, working collaboratively with the Joint Emergencies Services Group, will assess the strategic, operational and technical implications of ESN and evaluate ways in which transition to the new system can be collaborative and efficient. The Welsh Government is working with the UK Government to establish the extent of transitional support which may be made available to support FRAs.

**FRAs should therefore :**

- **consider and implement the new national operational guidance;**
- **ensure lessons from incidents within and outside Wales are identified and where appropriate implement changes to practices and procedures locally and/or across Wales;**
- **explore and introduce new technology to support improved efficiency and effectiveness.**

**Non-mandatory functions**

- 2.14. This chapter covers FRAs' current response activities, some of which are discretionary activities which they are not required to deliver by law. These include water rescue and responding to flooding incidents, to which all FRAs respond despite the absence of any legal duty to do so. However, the long-term effects of climate change may increase the incidence of severe flooding. This creates a sound case for formalising the basis on which flood response is provided, and co-ordinating the work of all relevant agencies. The Welsh Government will therefore consider extending the statutory functions of FRAs to cover specifically flooding and water rescue. Any such decision would follow full consultation with FRAs, firefighters' unions and other interested parties.

2.15. In some parts of Wales, FRA staff provide some forms of emergency medical response and/or support the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (“WAST”) to do so. This has demonstrated the potential to provide a better service to patients and to relieve burdens on WAST. FRAs should continue to work with WAST and other NHS bodies to develop and implement such programmes, and the Welsh Government will support this at the strategic level. As noted in Chapter 1, there is also a case for FRAs’ safety work diversifying into these areas by helping to prevent domestic accidents other than fires. It is not proposed however that such provisions should become statutory duties for FRAs.

**To support this, the Welsh Government will :-**

- **Maintain dialogue with firefighters’ representatives regarding diversifying the role of firefighters;**
- **Support national arrangements for the development of operational guidance;**
- **Support the development and delivery of the Serious Incident Protocol;**
- **Support the development of a single mobile communications system for the emergency services;**
- **Consider extending the statutory functions of FRAs to cover such matters as flooding and water rescue.**

## **CHAPTER 3: BEING CLEARLY AND PUBLICLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR DELIVERY AND FUNDING, MANIFESTING IN THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF GOVERNANCE**

**In January 2014, the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery (the “Williams Commission”) published its final report. While it complimented the level of performance in the Fire and Rescue Service, it also noted the pressing need across the public sector for clear and robust accountability mechanisms to drive improvement.**

- 3.1. This need applies equally to FRAs, but it may not be straightforward to implement. Unlike most public bodies, FRAs are neither directly elected nor formally accountable to the Welsh Government or the National Assembly for Wales. That means FRAs need to establish and sustain accountability mechanisms themselves.

### **Public accountability**

- 3.2. To be as accountable as possible to the public FRAs will need to ensure communities understand the risks in their area, what the FRAs are responsible for delivering individually and through partnership arrangements, and how they plan to do this. FRAs should give citizens the opportunity to contribute to these plans in an informed way. This means citizens need to understand the objectives their FRA is pursuing, the success it has had in achieving these objectives, and the scope for (and constraints on) further progress. This can be done via the mechanisms in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

#### **FRAs should therefore clearly communicate to local citizens and communities:**

- **The scope of their work** (eg firefighting, fire safety, fire crime prevention, road traffic collisions and responding to other incidents) **and the relative volume and cost of each;**
- **Their objectives, the progress they have made in delivering them, and any constraints on further progress.**

### **Medium to Long Term Planning**

- 3.3. The Framework sets out a vision of change for FRAs to meet new and developing financial and societal challenges. FRAs’ reform agendas will need to be developed and delivered on an incremental basis. However it is important that FRAs have a clear long term vision which will be achieved by these incremental steps. Citizen input into this long term vision, and its delivery through annual improvement plans, is crucial. FRAs will need to ensure that fair and balanced proposals and options are presented as part of their consultation and engagement with communities, in a form which members of the public can understand.

**FRAs should therefore undertake effective medium to long term planning which takes account of :-**

- **the key messages set out in this Framework;**
- **the changing risk profiles of communities;**
- **continued financial challenges;**
- **their contribution to the Well-being Goals;**
- **delivery of wider Local Well-being Plans;**
- **the role for FRAs in delivering wider services to communities; and**
- **the views of citizens and communities based on fair and balanced consultation and engagement.**

### **Links to Improvement Planning**

- 3.4. FRAs are currently required, under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, to set annual improvement objectives based on sound evidence, and to report on their performance annually.
- 3.5. The Welsh Government issued revised Improvement Planning Guidance in October 2015. This Guidance clearly articulates the relationship between the National Framework, FRAs' strategic planning and their improvement obligations, and the reporting duties placed on FRAs by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This Framework establishes priorities for FRAs to which they must have regard in the development of their medium to long term planning, as required by section 4(3)(c) of the 2009 Measure. Annual improvement planning arrangements should be grounded in developing improvement objectives which support the longer-term strategic vision of FRAs and the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 3.6. Honest and objective self assessment, and FRAs' willingness to share performance information openly, will add integrity to FRAs' proposals for the future, and a stronger sense of public understanding and ownership. This approach should be supported by clear reference to findings from peer assessments which raise appropriately strategic issues, and any reports produced by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser. This will add credibility by providing a level of impartiality and independence.
- 3.7. The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser will review available data and information on FRAs and undertake specific reviews which s/he and Welsh Ministers deem are required.

**FRA's should therefore:**

- **ensure there are clear and transparent links between this Framework, FRA's longer term planning and improvement objectives;**
- **ensure arrangements are in place to undertake peer assessment (both of corporate and operational functions);**
- **provide open and honest reporting on their performance. This includes reporting on appropriate findings of peer assessments and Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser reports.**

**FRA Members**

- 3.8. Members of an FRA are ultimately and collectively responsible and accountable for all the decisions that it makes, and for its performance. In practice, of course, many such decisions are made by officers, who provide and seek to improve services. Nonetheless, FRA members have critical roles to play in terms of leadership and challenge. They also naturally bring an understanding of the needs and concerns of local people and communities.
- 3.9. Unlike in local government, there is no formal separation between executive and scrutiny functions within an FRA: all decisions are formally taken in the name of the Authority as a corporate entity. However, the roles of setting strategic direction, and reviewing and challenging levels of performance, are equally vital. They are also distinctive and demand different skills and approaches. FRA's have sought to accommodate this by creating separate scrutiny committees or similar, albeit there can be no formal distinction as there is in local government. Members need to be equipped to carry out both roles consistently and effectively.

**FRA's should therefore:-**

- **Establish and maintain internal structures which clearly separate members' leadership and scrutiny roles;**
- **Support members effectively in those roles, including through training or other development opportunities.**

**Role of Local Authorities**

- 3.10. FRA's are funded by requiring Local Authorities to pay contributions towards their full net expenses (as set out in each Fire and Rescue Services Combination Orders). Their functions are closely connected with several services which Local Authorities provide, such as housing, social services and education. It is therefore important that an FRA's constituent authorities fully understand the FRA's objectives and performance; and have the opportunity to scrutinise them.

**FRAs should therefore:**

- **Forward their Improvement Plans to the scrutiny committees of their constituent Local Authorities for consideration;**
- **Give formal evidence about those plans if requested to do so by such committees;**
- **Contribute to other scrutiny committee inquiries as requested.**

**Future of FRA governance**

- 3.11. The Commission for Public Service Governance and Delivery also made recommendations which would fundamentally change the structure and governance arrangements of FRAs. Those are outside the scope of this Framework, which deals only with FRAs as constituted under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Any proposed changes in this area will be the subject of a full and separate Welsh Government consultation.
- 3.12. Likewise, the Welsh Government has proposed dis-applying Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 in respect of Local Authorities as part of its wider programme of local government reform. If this proposal proceeds, the Welsh Government will consider and consult separately on an appropriate corporate planning and performance management mechanism for FRAs.

**The Welsh Government will :-**

- **Invite the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser to review available data and information on FRAs, and undertake specific reviews which Welsh Ministers deem are required;**
- **Consult fully on any possible changes to the governance, and corporate planning and performance management mechanisms for FRAs, including the future of Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 as it applies to FRAs.**

## CHAPTER 4: MAINTAINING DOWNWARD PRESSURE ON COSTS AND TAKING ALL OPPORTUNITIES TO REALISE EFFICIENCIES

**The severe pressure on public finances will continue to affect all public sector organisations for at least the next ten years. FRAs should manage their budgets and their expenditure accordingly. They should pursue all feasible opportunities to keep costs down while also discharging their core duties effectively.**

- 4.1. There are well-documented and long-term severe pressures on public finances in Wales and the rest of the UK. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has estimated that public spending in Wales will not return to 2011 levels before around 2024-2025. This has, of course, created a pressing need to identify efficiencies, and to cut service provision, across the public sector.
- 4.2. The Fire Service must naturally maintain comprehensive emergency response cover at all times. That creates particular funding needs, but clearly cannot make the Service immune from these financial pressures.
- 4.3. Efficiencies achieved to date are commendable, but progress needs to be sustained. Doing so in ways which continue to maintain public safety may be challenging, but opportunities nonetheless exist.

### **Benchmarking**

- 4.4. Overall, the cost per capita of the Fire Service in Wales is higher than in England. There may be good reasons for some of this difference: for instance, the cost of sustaining comprehensive cover in sparsely-populated rural areas and coastal areas of Wales may be proportionately higher than in the major conurbations of England. However, accurate comparisons are clearly valuable in illustrating the scope for efficiencies, and identifying comparator FRAs which may have developed good practice which merits further exploration.

#### **FRAs should therefore:**

- **Identify FRAs in England which serve similar areas and face similar risks.** Comparisons with Scotland and Northern Ireland, which each have a single service covering the whole jurisdiction, are unlikely to be useful. Nor are comparisons with fire services overseas, which may have significantly different roles, duties and funding models;
- **Compare their unit costs (whether overall costs per capita, costs of particular items such as salaries and appliances, or costs per incident attended) with those FRAs;**
- **Use these comparisons to identify and pursue possible opportunities for efficiency savings which comparator FRAs may have adopted,** if and to the extent that comparisons reveal significantly lower costs elsewhere, and taking into account the local contexts both there and in the FRA concerned.

## **Funding and budget-setting**

- 4.5. The means by which FRAs obtain their funding is highly distinctive. The contributions which they require their constituent Local Authorities to make are not formally subject to any approval. While the level of charges is open to consultation and discussion, Local Authorities must ultimately pay the contributions which FRAs require. FRAs are unique among public bodies in Wales in not having their main source of funding subject to determination or approval by another tier of government, nor (despite their members being nominated by Local Authorities) being directly accountable to the electorate for the funding decisions they make. Unlike other parts of the devolved public sector, FRAs do not receive significant funding directly from the Welsh Government, and are thus not directly subject to changes in the level of funding allocated to Wales by the Barnett Formula.
- 4.6. This process allows FRAs to secure funding levels and set budgets which ensure comprehensive cover is maintained. However, this right needs to be exercised prudently and responsibly. Budget-setting is unavoidably zero-sum: allocating more money to one service (or protecting it from cuts) means that correspondingly less money must be allocated to other services. In times of austerity, maintaining or increasing an FRA's Local Authority contributions necessarily means those Local Authorities' own services must bear greater reductions in funding than would otherwise be the case.
- 4.7. Such a position may be more than inequitable; it may also be counter-productive. Local Authority services such as education, social care, housing and waste management make important contributions to reducing fire and the risk of fire. For instance, around three-quarters of rubbish fires occur in loose accumulations of rubbish rather than bins or skips. So Local Authorities dealing effectively with fly-tipping may help reduce the incidence of such fires. On the other hand, excessive cuts in the budgets for these services may increase the demand for fire services.
- 4.8. That does not mean changes in an FRA's funding should exactly mirror those for its constituent Local Authorities. The drivers of cost and the potential for savings in the Fire Service are not the same as those for Local Authority services. However, in setting budgets and contribution levels, FRAs should explain their decisions carefully to Local Authorities, and should be fully aware of the impact of their decisions on Local Authorities and their services.

### **FRAs should therefore:**

- **Seek as far as possible to avoid requiring Local Authority services to bear greater reductions in funding in order to support increases in FRA funding;**
- **Consult their constituent Local Authorities and their audit committees on their proposed funding contribution levels well in advance of them being set, and explain clearly why any change in contribution is justified;**
- **In particular, seek to understand the effect any change in fee levels would**

**have on services which help mitigate fire and the risk of fire;**

- **Demonstrably take into full account all responses received from Local Authorities before setting final contributions and budgets.**

### **Opportunities for efficiency**

- 4.9. This Framework is not and cannot be a comprehensive guide to possible sources of efficiency savings. All three FRAs already have programmes in place, individually and collectively, for identifying and realising such savings and those should continue. They should, in particular, reflect on local demands, risks and operating models, and aim to identify potential savings in that context which would maintain public safety.
- 4.10. However, the Welsh Government has published two recent reports on potential savings to which FRAs should have regard, produced by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and the Assistant Adviser.
- 4.11. The first, which is available at <http://gov.wales/newsroom/people-and-communities/2015/fire-service-efficiency-report/?lang=en> deals with corporate efficiencies. It recommends that FRAs should consider securing savings by, for instance:
- Continuing to reduce demand by retaining a focus on prevention activities (see chapter 1 of this Framework).
  - Considering different approaches to crewing which maintain comprehensive cover for less cost (see chapter 2 of this Framework).
  - Adopting different financial modelling approaches such as zero base budgeting, as well as process improvement techniques, such as Lean. While such approaches may not be universally applicable, FRAs should avoid maintaining current models and patterns of provision for their own sake.
  - Reviewing the potential for savings as revealed by effective financial and performance benchmarking (see above).
  - Continuing to collaborate through the National Issues Committee (NIC) to realise further savings in back-office and support services. While the NIC has made good progress in this area, comparisons with other parts of the public sector suggest there is potential to go further.
- 4.12. The second report, which is available at <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/fire/?lang=en> deals with false alarms. Responding to false alarms incurs significant financial and opportunity costs, both for FRAs and building occupiers, while yielding no benefit whatsoever. The report shows that the number of false alarms in Wales has fallen in recent years, but there are still more false alarms than actual fires; and evidence from elsewhere shows scope to go much further. Some of the responsibility for false alarms lies with building owners and occupiers, and many of those are in the public sector, especially educational and health premises. Nonetheless, there is also a clear role for FRAs in reviewing their approach to false alarms with a view to securing a

marked reduction in attendances. Such a reduction could release significant resources for deployment on more productive tasks, including the broader range of prevention and safety work which Chapter 1 outlines.

4.13. This Framework endorses and adopts the recommendations in these reports.

**FRA's should therefore:**

- **Identify, pursue and realise corporate efficiency savings through reviewing their own structures, processes and crewing arrangements;**
- **Continue to work together to realise shared efficiency savings through the National Issues Committee;**
- **Identify the main sources of false alarms and take all reasonable and practical steps to reduce their incidence;**
- **Redeploy human and other resources released by these measures to more productive tasks.**

**To support this, the Welsh Government will:**

- **Continue to commission reports from the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, and others, to identify good practice and possible scope for securing savings;**
- **Support effective benchmarking by collating and publishing standardised operational, financial and performance data, and helping to identify comparable FRA's;**
- **Raise the profile of the need to tackle false alarms, and push directly for action to do so in public sector buildings such as schools and hospitals.**

## **CHAPTER 5: WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH PARTNERS TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND CITIZEN AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING**

**Effective collaboration and engagement with key partners is crucial to providing joined up, accessible, effective services to citizens and supporting the FRAs' drive to make their services as efficient and cost effective as possible. Services to citizens will be more effective if these are planned and delivered with the best information available, and using the most appropriate resources. This is true for those areas where the Fire Service has lead responsibility for delivery, and also for areas where FRAs have a valuable contribution to make to citizen services for which they are not directly responsible.**

- 5.1. It is important that collaboration and partnerships arrangements are an integral element of FRAs' activities at all levels in the organisation. Statutory improvement planning guidance for FRAs, issued under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, sets out the role of collaboration in terms of improvement. The themes established in that Guidance are developed and expanded further here.
- 5.2. FRAs already have a role at a strategic level as statutory partners on formally constituted boards and partnerships. However, this does not mean that these statutory partnerships fulfil the need for strategic planning on a collaborative basis or for strategic planning to deliver collaboration, and FRAs will need to ensure they have arrangements in place to engage with each other and all relevant public sector and third sector organisations in order to achieve this.
- 5.3. Whilst operational incidents have seen a significant decline overall during the previous decade, FRAs must have arrangements in place to receive calls for assistance, deploying appropriate resources and dealing with emergency situations using their personnel and equipment. FRAs should consider how best to respond to these incidents, using the skills and knowledge and, in some cases, sharing of assets with other FRAs and other emergency services where it is feasible to do so.
- 5.4. When dealing with emergency incidents, incident commanders require relevant and timely information with which they can make decisions. FRAs should continue to work with other responders, such as Police and Ambulance, to ensure suitable arrangements are in place to facilitate the exchange of information that could assist one or more agencies in decision making. The benefits of sharing operational information amongst emergency responders, especially in real time, should not be underestimated. Failure to engage this trust amongst the blue light responders could lead to information becoming guarded and ultimately place responders and citizens at greater risk.
- 5.5. There are known barriers to collaboration. Sometimes these are endemic and reflect conflicting mandates, roles or priorities; these often can, and should be, addressed by national-level policy mechanisms. Other barriers may arise from more local or personalised misunderstandings or differences of view, and are best addressed at that level. Therefore, strong leadership is needed to ensure FRAs work closely with each other and other agencies to ensure that services are

streamlined and any duplication of activity is minimised. However, collaboration should not take place for the sake of collaborating and where collaborative initiatives are implemented, they must add value. The Welsh Government recognises that there is no 'one model'; it works on an area by area basis reflective of local needs.

Areas which FRAs should focus on include :-

### **Collaboration to achieve efficiency**

- 5.6. Severe medium to long-term pressure on public finances calls for maximum effort in identifying efficiencies. This is set out in more detail in Chapter 4. Collaboration/partnership arrangements are of course a key contributory factor in achieving efficiency.
- 5.7. The three FRAs established the National Issues Committee (NIC) to pursue collaborative arrangements across the three FRAs in Wales, with a view to improving service performance and efficiency. Based on the findings of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser's Efficiency Report 2014, FRAs should continue to actively seek opportunities for further harmonisation through the NIC (for example, in back-office functions), using intelligence from successful collaborations elsewhere, and balancing potential savings against development costs.

### **Collaboration with each other and with Fire and Rescue Services outside Wales**

- 5.8. FRAs have a responsibility to continue identifying and pursuing all realistic opportunities for collaboration with each other, whether or not this is taken forward through the NIC. FRAs will need to consider where collaboration with each other will lead to more effective arrangements being introduced. For example, building on existing arrangements under local reinforcement schemes and mutual aid arrangements.
- 5.9. Some incidents require high levels of skills and training but are so infrequent that maintaining full arrangements within one FRA is not an efficient or effective use of resources. In such instances, FRAs in Wales should work together, and with FRAs elsewhere, to provide joined up and mutual support arrangements.
- 5.10. The procurement of consistent equipment, development of joint, or at least consistent, guidance and consistent approaches to service delivery will support the further development of inter-operable systems, thereby extending opportunities for such arrangements. Service quality and innovation can, and should, be progressed by adopting best practice from elsewhere.
- 5.11. In addition FRAs will need to ensure that they fully embed joint programmes aimed at ensuring blue light services work more effectively at both national and local level, for example embedding the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP), with the development of joint doctrine, training, and organisational learning.

## **Collaboration to support the wider public service**

- 5.12. The introduction to this document clearly identifies the changing climate in which the Fire and Rescue Service must deliver its services. Whilst capacity needs to be maintained to respond to incidents at any time, the long-term decline in the incidence of fire means that some of this capacity is often unused.
- 5.13. When exploring how best to use this latent capacity, consideration should be given to both internal and external factors. For instance as stated earlier, there is clear evidence that the population will grow markedly older in the next 30 years. There are a broad number of risks linked with growing older, for example the increase in mental health issues and becoming more prone to serious injury through accidents such as trips or falls in the home, as well as fires. It is widely accepted that this is likely to increase pressure on the NHS and the potential therefore exists for the Fire & Rescue Service to contribute in certain areas to alleviate this increased pressure. Chapters 1 and 2 propose several possibilities in this area. FRAs should also explore, implement and evaluate other approaches which contribute to outcomes which are shared with other agencies (for instance, working to improve road safety).

## **Information Sharing**

- 5.14. Many of the activities the FRAs undertake, whether in prevention, protection or responding, rely on access to up to date, timely and accurate information from other agencies. If organisations fail to share information, that risk increases. For example, in the prevention context, an agency which is aware of a vulnerable person, who is at risk of injury or death, needs to pass this information on to other agencies to prevent that person from being placed at an increased level of risk. It is also important though that members of the public are reassured that information about them is well protected, and used appropriately.
- 5.15. FRAs should make every effort to ensure staff appropriately share information within the spirit of the Wales Accord for Sharing Personal Information and should take the necessary action to address blockages to information sharing. It is not acceptable for senior leaders to sign up to the principles of the Accord without ensuring those operating at the point of delivery feel able and supported about sharing personal information with other agencies. When strategic arrangements are in place to facilitate information sharing, and it is in the interests of the well-being of citizens, those charged with physical exchange or using this data should feel supported by their organisations. Without this confidence, barriers to sharing information at the practitioner level will continue to inhibit the FRAs' ability to deliver safety messages to the most vulnerable in society. The Welsh Government is committed to addressing this problem.

## **Review arrangements**

- 5.16. Collaboration should not be undertaken for its own sake. Opportunities should be explored, and where benefits can be achieved, collaborations should be considered. It is important that FRAs provide evidence and transparency regarding their plans and considerations, including use of notable practice elsewhere.

However, collaboration can be time consuming and, if no benefit is being derived, can be a drain on precious resources. FRAs should ensure that effective and timely review arrangements are in place so that they can make clear assessments of the benefits being achieved, and take appropriate action as a result.

**FRAs should therefore :**

- **Review their arrangements for planning collaboration at a strategic level to ensure these are comprehensive and cover the range of an FRAs functions and activities;**
- **Continue to identify and pursue all realistic opportunities for collaboration at strategic, corporate or operational levels;**
- **Continue to actively seek opportunities for further and more radical harmonisation through the NIC;**
- **Ensure that notable practice elsewhere is built into their plans and considerations;**
- **Work with other agencies to ensure services are streamlined and duplication of activity is minimised;**
- **Seek opportunities to work in collaboration to support the wider public sector both in terms of prevention and emergency response;**
- **Ensure data sharing arrangements are in place and work in practice at all levels and with all relevant partners;**
- **Ensure effective review arrangements are in place to measure the benefits of partnership working so that appropriate action can be taken.**

**To support this, the Welsh Government will:**

- **Promote collaboration between FRAs and other agencies to realise efficiencies and attain shared outcomes;**
- **In particular, promote the sharing of data between public bodies about people and communities at risk, and aim to resolve any difficulties and obstacles to this;**
- **Look to place similar expectations on other public bodies within devolved competence, and subject to the statutory frameworks and governance arrangements which apply to them.**

## **CHAPTER 6: VALUING AND DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS**

**As identified throughout this Framework, the Welsh Government's vision and priorities for FRAs in Wales focus on an effective balance between response and prevention. FRAs must ensure their workforce is able to diversify to continue to respond to this organisational change and should ensure their workforce is rebalanced to meet the changing emphasis in terms of structure, skills and culture, whilst still ensuring firefighter safety.**

**To achieve this effective balance, there will be challenges to maintaining consistently effective leadership, particularly in times of austerity, for both succession planning and maintaining morale and performance of the workforce.**

### **Firefighter Fitness**

- 6.1. Firefighters across Wales perform similar firefighting activities and should, therefore, have the same high level of fitness to ensure they can undertake their duties without putting themselves, colleagues and the public at risk. During 2014, all FRAs confirmed the adoption of the single fitness standard for Wales, through the People and Organisational Development Group, with formal adoption of the standard monitoring protocol through the NIC.
- 6.2. All FRAs should provide support to firefighters to maintain and regain operational fitness in line with their capability plans or relevant Health and Fitness policy. This may be a particular concern for older firefighters in light of the recent increase in normal pension age to 60. FRAs are responsible for decisions about individual members of staff, and naturally need to treat each case on its merits. Nonetheless, where employees cannot maintain operational fitness, FRAs should adopt a supportive and sympathetic approach, and should explore all other options before considering the possibility of dismissal. The Firefighters' Pension Scheme Advisory Board for Wales will consider workforce issues where there is a link to pension policy.

### **Health and well-being**

- 6.3. As the FRAs' role in community safety grows, FRAs must develop competence in wider skills, including prevention and should work to ensure that their staff are supported to do so. Engagement with the public and the role that firefighters can undertake in the delivery of health and well-being advice and support for vulnerable people is key. These are softer skills than those conventionally required for providing an emergency response. As well as providing formal training, FRAs should consider how far their structures, cultures and values support and sustain such skills across the workforce, and should initiate programmes of organisational development as appropriate.
- 6.4. The Welsh Government has made considerable progress in taking forward the National Training Framework for Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence which will provide consistent training for all key public sector and

specialist service provider professionals, including FRAs, across Wales. The Framework will be organised by level to ensure training is offered appropriately and proportionately and training will support professionals to provide effective responses to victims; and it will use multiagency care pathways and improve the overall standard of service provision in ways which are relevant to their particular profession.

- 6.5. Every FRA has a workplace policy for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence which outlines the support offered to those at risk and addresses behaviours of staff perpetrating these issues.
- 6.6. FRAs should ensure their employment practices universally support staff who disclose abuse by acting to keep staff safe at work and supporting them to stay safe outside<sup>3</sup> work. Staff should be briefed on this and this message should be repeated to staff regularly.

### **Training**

- 6.7. FRAs should take account of national work streams which either directly or indirectly impact on the role of firefighters, and their subsequent training and development requirements. This could include work undertaken through representative bodies which includes:
  - Emergency Medical Response (including co-responding)
  - Environmental impacts (including flooding)
  - Multi-agency working
  - Youth and Social Engagement
  - Inspection and Enforcement (Business Fire Safety).
- 6.8. Diversifying the composition and capability of the workforce therefore must be the key driver for all FRAs moving forward, although this should not be at the expense of maintaining responsive capability. The Welsh Government recognises that the delivery of risk critical training by FRAs is essential to ensuring that firefighters have the skills and experience required to work safely and provide the best service to communities.

### **Review**

- 6.9. FRAs should continue to learn from and undertake reviews of fires and other emergencies, locally and nationally. This includes individual reports from, for instance, inquests and the Health and Safety Executive; as well as collated investigations and lessons learned which the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor may produce under the protocol described in Chapter 2. Strategic planning and

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<sup>3</sup> For example: *Responding to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse: Practical guidance for line managers Human Resources and Employee Assistance Programmes*, and a joint publication by the Department of Health and CAADA. There is a linked publication for staff called: *Responding to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse: Practical guidance for employees experiencing domestic abuse*. Both are in the Resources section at [www.caada.org.uk](http://www.caada.org.uk)

improvement planning processes also need to include clear links to associated organisational development, workforce and training and development plans.

**FRAs should therefore:**

- **Continue to give the highest priority to the safety, health and well-being of staff and those they serve and protect;**
- **Continue to operate an agreed single fitness standard, and support firefighters, especially older firefighters, who may struggle to meet it;**
- **Ensure that the workforce continues to develop in ways which support and sustain the changing role of the Service;**
- **Ensure that strategic, improvement and operational plans take full account of the workforce's capability to deliver them.**

**To support this, the Welsh Government will:**

- **Manage firefighters' pension schemes, through the Pension Scheme Advisory Board;**
- **Maintain continual dialogue with FRAs and firefighters' representatives on workforce matters, including diversification;**
- **As described in chapter 2, facilitate learning from serious incidents to ensure firefighter safety is maximised;**
- **Encourage employers, as appropriate, to allow staff to serve as retained firefighters.**

## **CHAPTER 7: IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REPORTING**

- 7.1. As noted in the introduction, section 21 (7) of the 2004 Act requires FRAs to have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions. In practice, this means FRAs should consider the terms of the Framework and act in accordance with it unless there are justifiable, reasonable and evidenced grounds for not doing so. FRAs should seek their own legal advice in cases of doubt.
- 7.2. This Framework sets out long-term priorities for FRAs. FRAs should use these priorities as the basis for their shorter-term improvement planning under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. In particular, they should take those priorities into account when setting improvement objectives, and should monitor and report on their delivery in line with the other terms of that Measure.
- 7.3. Section 25 of the 2004 Act requires the Welsh Ministers to report to the National Assembly for Wales on the extent to which FRAs have acted in accordance with this Framework, and on any steps the Welsh Government has taken for the purpose of securing this.
- 7.4. To discharge this duty, the Welsh Government needs comprehensive evidence about FRA capability, capacity and delivery, both from FRAs themselves and from other relevant sources. Such evidence will include:-
- data about the performance of FRAs, taken from statutory and sector performance indicators, and other relevant sources (such as comparable data for FRAs outside Wales);
  - any thematic reviews undertaken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, and resulting recommendations;
  - any improvements being implemented by FRAs as a result of previous and current peer assessments and thematic reviews, and the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser's view on the extent of these and other improvement objectives linked to operational/service delivery functions of the FRAs;
  - reports by the Auditor General for Wales.
- 7.5. The 2004 Act requires the Welsh Ministers to report to the Assembly at least every two years. The Welsh Government reserves the right to report more often, in particular on annual performance data and their implications.

### **Intervention**

- 7.6. The Welsh Ministers have powers of intervention under section 22 of the 2004 Act if they consider that a FRA is failing, or likely to fail, to act in accordance with the Framework.
- 7.7. Under section 23 of the 2004 Act, the Welsh Ministers must prepare and maintain an intervention protocol regarding the exercise of their powers under section 22. This requirement has been discharged through the publication of a Support and Intervention protocol under the FRS Act 2004 and the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. This protocol emphasises that intervention is an absolute last resort. It commits the Welsh Government and FRAs to identifying and addressing

potential problems well in advance, so as to minimise any need for intervention.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

7.8. FRAs are autonomous bodies. Within the terms of the law and of this Framework, it is a matter for them how services are designed, managed and delivered to meet the needs of communities.

7.9. However, there is a clear role for Welsh Government in setting the legislative and policy framework within which FRAs deliver their functions. To deliver such policy it is important Welsh Government fully understands the needs of citizens and the impetus, and conversely, barriers to development, delivery and change locally. Similarly FRAs need to be able to understand the basis on which strategic decisions are being made, and contribute local and professional knowledge to support such developments. Communication and dialogue are key to achieving this, as are clear and definitive lines of responsibility.

7.10. FRAs are responsible for:

- delivering their core functions, as set out in legislation, in an efficient and effective manner, and based on a sound analysis of risk;
- having regard to the Fire and Rescue National Framework in carrying out their functions;
- making arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions;
- having regard to the safety, welfare and development of their staff;
- providing information, reports and returns to the Welsh Government on their functions as required.

7.11. The Welsh Government is responsible for:

- maintaining dialogue with FRAs and organisations representing staff;
- Managing and developing legislation and policy on the basis of sound evidence;
- preparing a Fire and Rescue National Framework and keeping it under review;
- reporting on the extent to which FRAs are acting in accordance with the Framework and any steps taken by the Welsh Government for securing this.

7.12. **The Fire and Rescue Adviser** has inspector status under Section 28 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Under this provision the Fire and Rescue Adviser can obtain information as to:-

- the manner in which fire and rescue authorities are discharging their functions;
- technical matters relating to those functions.

7.13. In practice, the Fire and Rescue Adviser will:-

- provide advice and support to FRAs on technical aspects of service planning and delivery, including advice on notable practice elsewhere;
- review available data and information, including FRAs' Improvement Plans, Reports from the Auditor General for Wales, and benchmarking data;
- consider whether evidence indicates the need for further/more detailed review;
- undertake such reviews and provide information and findings to Welsh Ministers, Fire and Rescue Authorities and Auditor General for Wales.

## **Relationships**

7.14. The Welsh Government will maintain continual dialogue with the FRAs and other interested parties. The principal formal means for this will be the Fire and Rescue Consultative Forum and the Improvement Planning Steering Group, both of which will aim to meet 3 times per year. Other meetings, including with Ministers, will be arranged by mutual agreement.

7.15. In any event, FRAs may raise any issue with Welsh Government officials at any time. This includes, in particular, instances where co-ordination with other areas of Welsh Government policy would assist FRAs in discharging their functions and in attaining the outcomes which this Framework specifies.