



**Hampshire
& Isle of Wight**
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

HIWFRA Full Authority

Purpose: Approval

Date: **6 DECEMBER 2022**

Title: **EMBEDDING NATIONAL GUIDANCE IN OPERATIONAL RESPONSE**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. As a fire service, we must ensure the safety and effectiveness of our teams. We do this by assessing the theoretical risk from an incident we may attend and mitigating it in a reasonable and proportionate way (through procedures, policy, equipment, and training).
2. In assessing any risk, we look to approved codes of practice (ACOP) and apply them if they are appropriate to the role being carried out. We seek Fire Authority approval to update our processes to align with the current approved code of practice for our sector: National Operational Guidance (NOG) and embed within the Service. This will bring many benefits including to the organisation, our firefighters, the communities we serve, as well meeting the requirement of the Operational Preparedness Fire standard and HMICFRS expectations.
3. This report seeks HIWFRA commitment to fully embedding this code of practice across our organisation. It also seeks HIWFRA approval for funding from the Transformation Reserve to form a small team for two years to execute this approach. HIWFRA endorsement of the report's recommendations will enable us to best mitigate risks to firefighters and the public.

NATIONAL OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE AS AN APPROVED CODE OF PRACTICE

4. The Service has consistently sought to update its training and procedures with new and updated guidance to ensure that our risk assessments remain as current as possible. NOG is the most recent of these.
5. However, recently the expectations on a fire service to demonstrate how procedures are fully risk assessed against approved guidance has increased. The Operations Preparedness Standard says fire services **must** align to both strategic and tactical NOG. The public inquiries following on from the Grenfell Tower Fire (GTF) and Manchester Arena Attacks (MENA) have also highlighted the need for services to use approved codes of practice consistently to resolve complex incidents as effectively and safely as possible, and by taking this approach, adopting a defensible position.
6. This paper proposes that HIWFRS will align with the approved practice and guidance articulated within strategic and tactical NOG where it is appropriate to role and environment and embed it within the Service's training and procedures.
7. There are several ways that this can be embedded in our Service. We have looked at how neighbouring and similar FRSs have approached this to ensure that our approach is cost effective, efficient in use of our own resources and importantly, gives assurance of achieving a fully risk assessed position aligned to ACOP as pragmatically as we can.
8. Recognising that successful embedding of new guidance will require shifts in behaviour and a changed operational culture, we are approaching this as a holistic change opportunity with full alignment to our Change Management Framework.

ALIGNMENT WORK PROGRAMME

9. Previous sections give contemporary examples (GTF and MENA) on how any Service will be judged against how it has used current best practice to inform its operational procedures. Furthermore, our duties as an employer with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and Management of Health and Safety Regulations (1999) require that we are assured of the safest of practices to those we are responsible for, our people, our partners, and the public. As stated previously, the ability to show compliance with approved codes of practice is achieved through the development of risk assessments looking at our operational activity from every angle, before and during the activity itself. Where we seek to deviate away from national guidance, we will have an evidence based, fully risk assessed position.

10. Therefore, we propose full alignment to NOG where it relates to our operating environment and where there is no need to seek alignment to another code of practice. Each of our current operational procedures will then need to be reviewed and either revised or withdrawn to reflect this new approach. For us to align with each of the 21 NOGs, we will need to produce a product pack comprising tactical guidance, a training package and an operational assurance mechanism to evidence learning from the incident ground.
11. The first and most important area to address are our operational procedures. To align with the NOG 'all hazard approach' methodology, our existing procedures will be superseded, in most cases by a combination of training packages and tactical guidance. A full suite of tactical guidance has been developed through the Network Fire Services Partnership, but this cannot currently be utilised until commanders have been trained on all the elements within them.
12. We will also need to ensure that our incident commanders are trained and assessed in these new terms. Most of the current range of skills taught and assessed in the Maintenance of Competency (MOC) framework will still be appropriate. However, our methods of training and assessment will require updating to reflect the hierarchy system of NOG as control measures may span across multiple hazard areas.
13. Currently training is divided up in to two main areas: training to a "script" and technical skills. These technical skills will still be fit for purpose as a skills gap analysis has been carried out. However, the training material and the MOC for the new hazard recognition approach will need to be adapted, otherwise we cannot be certain that our incident commanders have been trained and assessed to recognise and apply safe schemes of work to all the hazards that are detailed within this ACOP.
14. All relevant training packages must be updated alongside revised procedures (comprising tactical guidance and operational procedures). The Service already has resources in place to review procedures and guidance, create and facilitate the assurance mechanism and within L&D to train incident commanders. The outstanding gap is appropriately trained and skilled resource to produce the necessary training packages. Under the proposed approach and team structure, we anticipate that the programme of work to align will take two years. A description of how this work will be completed is outlined in Appendix A. Areas of least compliance and greatest organisational risk were used to identify this programme of work. For example, timber frame buildings has been prioritised as we had low

alignment and were subject to a National Operational Learning notice which we were required to comply with.

15. The work will take place across the organisation, principally within People and Organisational Development (POD) and Policy, Planning and Assurance (PPA), therefore the Directors accountable for the progression of this work will be the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Director POD.

SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

16. Fully embedding a risk assessed and evidence-based approach to operational response underpins our Safety Plan and our ability to make Hampshire and the Isle of Wight safer. The outcome of which are safer communities, equipped employees, a high performing organisation that continually seeks to improve.
17. This report pays due regards to the responsibilities placed on the Fire Authority and delegated authority to the Chief Fire Officer by the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

CONSULTATION

18. Consultation has taken place between colleagues within POD and PPA as well as across the Executive Group. The detailed overview of the alignment process above shows how consultation with other FRSs, subject matter experts and Representative Bodies is a pre-requisite for launch of each product.
19. Representative bodies have previously been engaged through Brown Book conditions on both the risk assessments and the development of tactical guidance. We will look to continue this engagement, co-producing material wherever possible. This will be done through their designated Health and Safety representatives.

COLLABORATION

20. Where collaborative partnerships can assist with swift progress to achieving alignment with NOG they will be used. However, where approaches to NOG of other FRSs we routinely partner with are significantly different and will not aid our advance, we will operate alone. The suite of tactical guidance has been produced through the Network Fire Services Partnership.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

21. A number of posts are already funded to carry out this work, this includes aligning policy and procedures, providing training and overseeing operational assurance. However, we need a small team to produce the specific training material. This team needs to have expertise in specific NOGs, as well as operational expertise, to produce relevant training packages, supported by developers to design and create the material. We propose a team of seven (1 x Station Manager, 2 x Watch Managers, 2 x Crew Managers and 2 x F Grade developers. The annual cost is £350,000 (not including any pay awards). We believe the project will take two years to complete. The team requires operational expertise, so it needs to be made up of pre-dominantly Grey book staff. Furthermore, the rank structure is not for management purposes but to provide appropriate operational experience.
22. Any support this team needs (e.g. that of subject matter experts) will be absorbed within additional capacity. We seek £50,000 to fund contingencies to ensure the successful implementation of the project, including making the necessary changes to our electronic training records.
23. We therefore seek Fire Authority approval for the funding: a maximum of £750,000. This will fund the team for two years up until winter 2024. It is proposed the funding is provided by the Transformation Reserve. It is proposed that the funding is released in stages following updates to the Executive Group about the progress of the NOG work. We will also keep the Fire Authority informed of progress.
24. On completion of this programme, some ongoing maintenance will be needed, as well as responding to any future changes to NOG products. We anticipate that this will become business as usual activity and absorbed into an existing base post.
25. Depending on the success of this work, we may be able to sell these products to other services. This is something which we will explore and will pursue opportunities should they arise.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTSS

26. We will complete the required impact assessments during the implementation of every NOG product. This will be done in concert with Subject Matter Leads (SML) where required.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

27. The legal implications are clear. HIWFRS must advance to a position of full alignment with National Operational Guidance as an Approved Code of Practice to be carrying out its duties as an Employer with due regard to the authority delegated to the Chief Fire Officer from the Fire Authority.

BENEFITS

28. Benefits of aligning with approved codes of practice are:

- (a) **Organisation** – alignment to Fire Standards, a defensible position under scrutiny, uniformity and consistency of approach, mitigation of financial, legal and health and safety risks.
- (b) **Community Outcomes** – safer communities that are better served by a competent and organised operational response.
- (c) **Firefighters** – safer firefighters, outstanding decision makers and risk assessors. The all-hazard approach will enable incident commanders to identify hazards, the context they find them in and apply appropriate control measures they have available. This is a significant change in culture, however, aligns with risk management and NOG best practice, which will put them in a far safer position should they be required to justify their decisions.
- (d) **Internal and External Standards** – assurance to HMICFRS of FRS ability to be effective and look after its people, assurance to Health and Safety Executive of safe and compliant activity, internal assurance and decreased organisational risks.

OPTIONS

29. As outlined above, we need to update our approach to reflect the sector's current ACOP and so options are limited. We have discussed with other Services how they have adopted NOG and whether there is scope for any collaboration. With the need to produce bespoke training material to reflect the specific circumstances of our Service, we are content that the approach outlined in this paper is the most effective and efficient one to fully align HIWFRS with NOG.

RISK ANALYSIS

30. The Service must ensure the safety and effectiveness of our teams. We do this by assessing the theoretical risk from an incident we may attend and

mitigating it in a reasonable and proportionate way through procedures, policy, equipment, and training, reaching the outcome of the safe person concept. In assessing any risk, we look to approved codes of practice (ACOP) and apply them if they are appropriate to the role being carried out.

31. By aligning our procedures to the ACOP of National Operational Guidance the Service will be demonstrating its commitment to firefighter and public safety. To move to an organisational position where every operational procedure is underpinned by an ACOP, resource is needed to be invested.
32. In addition, by using national guidance as an ACOP, there will be consistency in standards across FRS. Where we consciously decide not to align with this practice, it may create problems in relation to effectiveness and/or efficiency with the approach used by other Services. All previous national guidance (DCOLs (“Dear Chief Officer Letter”, technical bulletins, manuals & generic risk assessments) has now been withdrawn. Therefore, failure to align to NOG as a ACOP poses a health and safety risk as well as a litigation one.
33. Should this funding not be approved to bring us to a safer organisational position, it could expose the organisation and individuals to increased risk of harm, and/or liability, as well as be reputational damaging to the Service and Fire Authority. We can also reasonably expect HMICFRS to negatively report on our progress to date.

EVALUATION

34. As new and updated procedure is embedded within the Service because of alignment with national guidance or approved codes of practice, review and evaluation will be a key component of assurance.

CONCLUSION

35. This paper lists the many benefits from fully aligning the Service with the current sector’s ACOP. The Fire Authority is asked to endorse the approach in this paper and put on public record our commitment to fully align ourselves with National Operational Guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

36. That the approach outlined in this paper, namely that the Service fully aligns itself with National Operational Guidance, and that up to £750,000

from the Transformation Reserve be provided for this work, be approved by the HIWFRA Full Authority.

Contact: Shantha Dickinson, Deputy Chief Fire Officer,
Shantha.dickinson@hantsfire.gov.uk

Appendix A: Proposed implementation process

APPENDIX A: PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

- i. Conduct risk assessment of each Hazard (co-produce with representative bodies in line with the Brown Book wherever possible). On a NOG-by-NOG basis, review the Network Fire Services Partnership's (NFSP) documentation that records if the hazard exists within HIWFRS. If yes, Strategic and Tactical NOG actions are applicable (if not, exemption statement required)
- ii. Through a gap analysis, identify the areas of non-compliance. Activity will need be prioritised in areas with greatest organisational risk and timeline of work produced and agreed
- iii. Consider whether there is a suitable Operational Procedure or Tactical Guidance already produced by the NFSP collaboration which we could use.
- iv. Develop training package content. Cross reference package with NOG to ensure alignment. Liaise with Subject Matter Lead(s) (as well as other parts of the Service) to produce package, and capture HIWFRS organisational learning and best practice throughout
- v. Consult with others (e.g. stakeholder groups and representative bodies) where required, with established escalation routes
- vi. Produce necessary e-learning package and associated materials
- vii. Discuss and confirm with Learning and Development the required assessment type and frequency (this may require changes to the Maintenance of Competence scheme)
- viii. Seek sign off of product through agreed HIWFRS governance route. Discussion and output to be recorded
- ix. Once package is ready for launch, engage with NFSP partners to ensure that teams are aware of potential impacts from launch
- x. In conjunction with stakeholder group, launch product pack
- xi. Review and evaluate
- xii. Ongoing maintenance to ensure any future changes to national products are identified and appropriate changes implemented locally