



OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Our Fire and Rescue Service





Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Our Fire and Rescue Service

Presented to Parliament by
The Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State
by Command of Her Majesty
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Foreword by the Deputy Prime Minister

The fire and rescue service is a vital public service. It is part of the fabric of all our communities. The service it provides is essential in preventing fires starting in the first place and in responding quickly and effectively to those incidents with which it has to deal. Increasingly, it is now developing a wider role. That role involves tackling new threats which we are now facing, including terrorism, and threats such as flooding and other environmental disasters.

This Government is committed to improving all our public services. The fire service is in need of reform. If we are to get the best possible value from our growing investment in the service, and if that service is to be well prepared for the new challenges that we face, then change is essential. That is the purpose of this White Paper.

This White Paper sets out our vision for the fire and rescue service of the future, how we intend to deliver that vision and make the service more efficient and effective, and how we provide public safety. It includes proposals for changes in the structure of the service; in the institutions of the service; and in the working practices and procedures of all those who work in the service. These proposals build on the good practice that can already be found in today's fire service.

We are proposing a package of sensible changes that will make the operation of the fire and rescue service more efficient and the jobs of those people working in the service more rewarding. For example, we want to see greater emphasis on fire prevention, and for fire and rescue service resources to be allocated more effectively

to meet today's risks. We expect democratic fire and rescue authorities, which will increasingly take a regional perspective, to take key strategic decisions about how the service operates within their area, based on expert professional advice and following consultation with their local communities. Within this framework we want to see Chief Fire Officers and managers working with their staff to deliver the most effective service to improve and promote public safety. We want them to have the flexibility to encourage greater use of overtime, where staff wish to work it. We want to encourage the recruitment of a more diverse workforce with greater use of part-time staff, as necessary, and more family friendly arrangements for those who want to take advantage of them. And we want to see changes in the pay and personnel systems that allow staff to progress quickly through the ranks. These are changes that will bring the service into line with best practice elsewhere in the public sector.

I believe the majority of fire and rescue service staff and their families will see the good sense in these proposals. They provide the basis to transform the service and update laws and procedures – some of which date back over half a century. The fire and rescue service of the future, outlined in this White Paper, will continue to be an essential public service, in which the workforce will play as vital a role as ever.

But change is essential. In the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001 and the growing threats to our society, including from chemical, biological or radiological and nuclear attacks, the role of the fire and rescue service is becoming ever more important. We want to work in partnership with all who are part of, or dependent on, that service to ensure it is prepared and ready to respond to whatever challenges we may face.

This White Paper will be of benefit to all of us. It will benefit the public and those businesses who rely on the fire and rescue service to protect them from danger. It will benefit those authorities and managers in the fire community who are committed to, and are working towards, a more efficient and effective service to promote public safety. And it will benefit all those people who work in the service who will now be able to look ahead, with confidence, to a stronger and better service.

I believe that the time is now right for all those who work in or with the fire and rescue service to unite around the vision of this White Paper. A modern thriving fire and rescue service working alongside the public and with the communities that they serve to make them safer and better places to live.



Rt. Hon. John Prescott MP
Deputy Prime Minister

Our Fire and Rescue Service White Paper: summary

Fire kills. Preventing fires saves lives and reduces injuries. We need to refocus the fire service to concentrate on preventing fires in the first place, and on dealing with fires, environmental challenges and the growing threat of terrorism in a flexible and efficient way.

This will mean a new role for the fire service. We will reflect this new role by renaming the service 'The Fire and Rescue Service'.

Fire reform: protecting people

The service will have a much greater community role, building on what has been done so far. In future, the service will form part of the front-line response to the risks from natural disasters, such as flooding, and from any terrorist incidents. We will legislate to put this work on a proper statutory footing. This will involve a modern approach to risk.

Traditionally, the service has organised its staffing and the location of fire fighters, stations and appliances to match nationally prescribed fire standards that were originally set in the 1930s. We will establish a new statutory framework which will place a responsibility on the service to plan for, and respond to, a new range of emergencies on the basis of risk assessment and management.

Integrated Risk Management Planning – the right resources in the right place at the right time – will bring about improved community safety, with services responding to the needs of their communities more flexibly and more efficiently.

Fire reform: national, regional and local responsibilities

The current arrangements for managing the fire service are confused and inefficient. Government has given too little strategic direction and yet has been involved in operations to a remarkable level of detail. We are already changing this by our repeal of Section 19 of the Fire Services Act 1947.

Too many small authorities are struggling to provide a cost-effective service. That can make achieving economies of scale difficult: for example, the cost of fire control rooms handling a fire incident can be anything between £18 and £168.

We will now set national objectives for the fire and rescue service outlining what we expect it to achieve. We believe that a regional perspective is more appropriate for fire authorities. We will establish, as soon as is practicable, regional fire and rescue authorities in those regions that choose to have elected regional assemblies. Elsewhere we want to see regional management

boards for those parts of the service that are best managed regionally. We intend to do this by working closely with local authorities. People in local communities will still have local fire stations and local fire fighters – but there will be better regional liaison.

The responsibility for fire services is already devolved to Scotland and Northern Ireland; in line with this, we will now devolve it to Wales too.

Fire reform: institutions

Institutions governing the service date back to 1947; since that time, the relationship between central and local government has changed radically. We will match that with a radical overhaul of the fire institutions to achieve strategic direction, service improvement and the provision of professional advice. We will establish two Forums to seek the input of practitioners and stakeholders to the development of policy.

Fire reform: management

Fire and rescue authorities should not normally be involved in day-to-day management. Senior service managers must have managerial independence to deliver the authorities' plans as effectively as possible. Managers will decide what crewing arrangements are best for delivering standards.

We will take powers to determine the number and composition of new pay negotiating bodies for England, including a separate body for middle managers. We will also take powers to give guidance to any negotiating body of which it will have to take account, so improving the present unsatisfactory position.

Fire reform: working in the service

Many people want to work as full-time fire fighters with, on average, 40 applicants for every job. But there are real problems.

There are no means by which the best performers can progress quickly. The service does not represent the community, with less than 2% of fire fighters being women or from ethnic communities. And there are problems recruiting 'retained' or on-call fire fighters, which cover around 60% of the country.

We will:

- introduce a new Integrated Personal Development System which will reduce the 12 current ranks to seven roles, bring in multi-level entry and introduce accelerated development schemes – all designed to enhance skills and promote flexibility;
- reform the closed working culture to promote diversity;
- end bullying and harassment;
- reform pensions, discipline and disputes arrangements; and
- improve the conditions of retained fire fighters.

Fire reform: the future

We will modernise and update existing fire law as soon as Parliamentary time permits. And we will work with others to update the service to secure a modern fire and rescue service for the twenty-first century.

The fire and rescue service is an essential public service, helping to make our communities safer places to live. The service should not only concern itself with fighting fire. Preventing fires and responding to the new challenges of environmental disasters and terrorist threats should be the priorities for the fire and rescue service of the future. Our vision is of a modern well-managed fire and rescue service which responds to all these challenges working alongside the public and with the communities they serve.

1: Introduction – the vision

1.1 Fire kills. Preventing fires saves lives and reduces injuries. Preventing fires also saves money. So it makes sense to protect people and to prevent fires from happening in the first place. It also makes sense to ensure that we fight fires safely and in the most efficient way possible. We must also plan for our wider response to other emergencies, such as environmental disasters and the growing threat of terrorism.

1.2 This White Paper sets out our vision for the fire and rescue service in England and Wales, and our strategy for achieving that vision. The recent pay dispute between the fire employers and trade unions has brought matters to a head. But it has long been clear that we need a new definition of the role of the service, and a clear statement of how we should seek to minimise the risk and impact of fire and other emergencies. That vision and its implementation must encompass much more than fire alone.

1.3 Our thinking has been informed by a number of pieces of work over recent years, culminating in the report of the Independent Review of the Fire Service led by Professor Sir George Bain, published in

December 2002. All these studies have pointed to the need to overhaul fire prevention and fire fighting, and to change the culture of the fire and rescue service.

History

Table 1: History of fire service reviews

1970	Report of the Departmental Committee on the Fire Service (Sir Ronald Holroyd).
1971	Report of the Cunningham Inquiry into the Work of the Fire Service.
1980	Home Office review of fire policy.
1985	Report of the Joint Committee on Standards of Fire Cover.
1995	Audit Commission Report <i>In the Line of Fire. Value for Money in the Fire Service.</i>
1998	Fire Service Pensions Review: Home Office.
2002	Independent Review of the Fire Service (Professor Sir George Bain).

1.4 We believe that the service must be refocused on preventing fires occurring in the first place and on tackling other

challenges flexibly and efficiently. In particular, we now face increasing environmental hazards along with new dangers from the growing threat of terrorism and from the risk of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks. This new dimension of risk is likely, at least in our towns and cities, to expand in coming years – constituting a new challenge to society in general, and to the fire and rescue service in particular. Tackling these issues is one of our central objectives. Building strong communities which are safer for everyone and which promote fire safety effectively is a priority.

1.5 One of the most basic functions of government is to protect its people from threats. In particular, where individuals, families and society cannot easily protect themselves, or where the dangers are such that they can spill over and affect others, the state has a duty to protect lives, livelihoods and property. In Britain we have, for many years, seen the good sense in organised fire fighting. Over time, the role of the fire service has grown. It is now a key part of the fabric of local communities. We want to build on that history. We want to ensure that we have a service that works for and with the community it serves by:

- protecting people from fire and its consequences and from a range of other hazards;
- minimising the risks posed by those hazards and by putting prevention ahead of cure; and
- collaborating with the community at all levels, with other public services and with business to tackle these challenges effectively.

The vision

1.6 Our vision is for a public sector fire and rescue service that:

- is proactive in preventing fires and other risks, rather than simply reacting to fires;
- acts in support of the Government's wider agenda of social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and crime reduction;
- has effective institutions that support its role and purpose;
- is well-managed and effective; and
- is committed to developing and adapting to changing circumstances, including the growing threat of terrorism.

1.7 This White Paper also takes account of the Government's wider agenda on the modernisation of public services:

- to set national standards for the public services, within a clear framework of accountability;
- to devolve and delegate to the front line wherever possible, giving local leaders the opportunity, responsibility and accountability for delivery;
- to increase flexibility so that public services are more diverse and more responsive to the public's needs; and
- to ensure that the public benefits from consistently high standards of service, flexibility and choice, which, in turn, help to deliver better value for money.

1.8 These principles have helped us shape our vision for a modern service. The changes we set out in this White Paper will benefit everyone. Communities will be safer. The service will be opened up to more members

of those communities. The public will receive better value for money from its investment in the fire and rescue service. And, in particular, the changes will be of benefit to those who work in the fire and rescue service themselves. There will be more opportunity for fire fighters to do their job more effectively and to use their skills to the full. There will be increased flexibility in terms of pay, promotion and pensions, as well as a wider range of work that they can perform in the service. By changing the culture of the service to one focused firmly on prevention, we will make it more attractive to a wider and more diverse range of people.

1.9 Over the years there has been no shortage of reports and inquiries into the fire service and there have been many recommendations for changes. But there has been shortage of action and tangible progress. That will alter. Following the publication of this White Paper, we will immediately begin a programme of change. We will put in hand the work to prepare legislation to update and modernise existing fire law. We will work with fire authorities and representative organisations to ensure the implementation of necessary improvements in management and personnel systems.

1.10 Not all of the proposals in this White Paper can be implemented overnight. Some will be implemented swiftly, while others may take more time. But doing nothing is not an option. Modern society requires modern public services and modern institutions. The way in which the fire service is organised and managed has, for far too long and in too many respects, stood still while the world around it has moved on.

1.11 This White Paper lays the foundations for the modern fire and rescue service for the twenty-first century. We have a service that can be proud of what it has achieved in the past, but it must extend its role in the future in order to serve even better the communities it is there to protect. We will rename the service 'The Fire and Rescue Service', as that best describes its role. It should not be seen as a service that focuses only on responding to one type of threat. It has a much broader role in preventing fire, responding to a wide range of threats and hazards, and rescuing people from whatever dangers they may face, thereby helping to create safer communities for all.

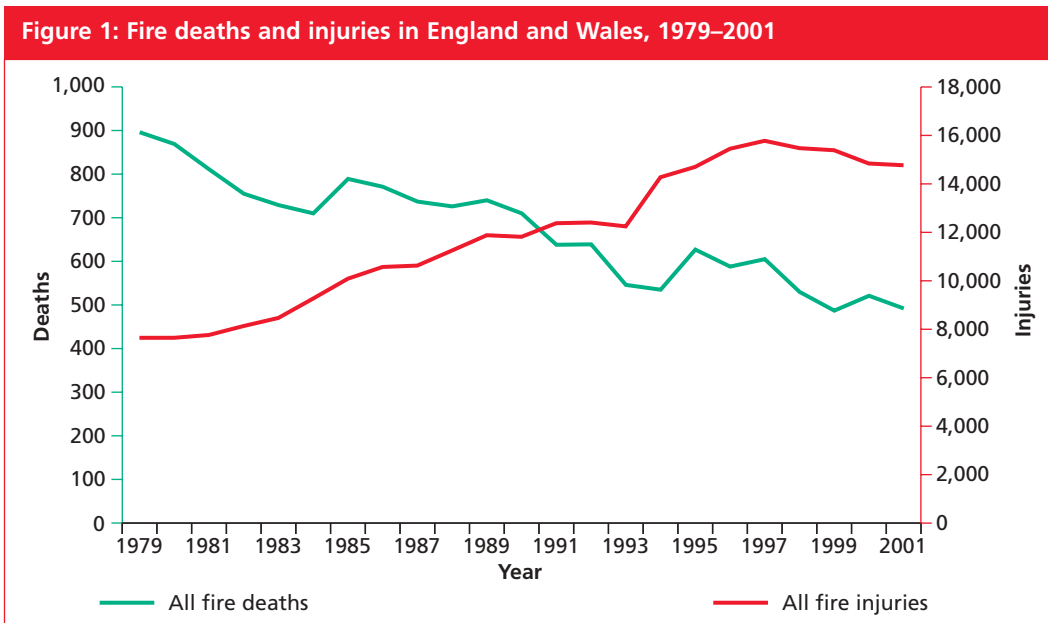
The role of the fire and rescue service has expanded over the years. In addition to fire calls, it rescues people trapped in vehicles, responds to flooding and other environmental disasters, and it is now preparing for a key role in protecting the community from the impact of terrorist attacks. But legislation has not kept pace with that changing role. In addition, the structure of the fire and rescue service, its institutions and management are all in need of reform.

2: Where we are now

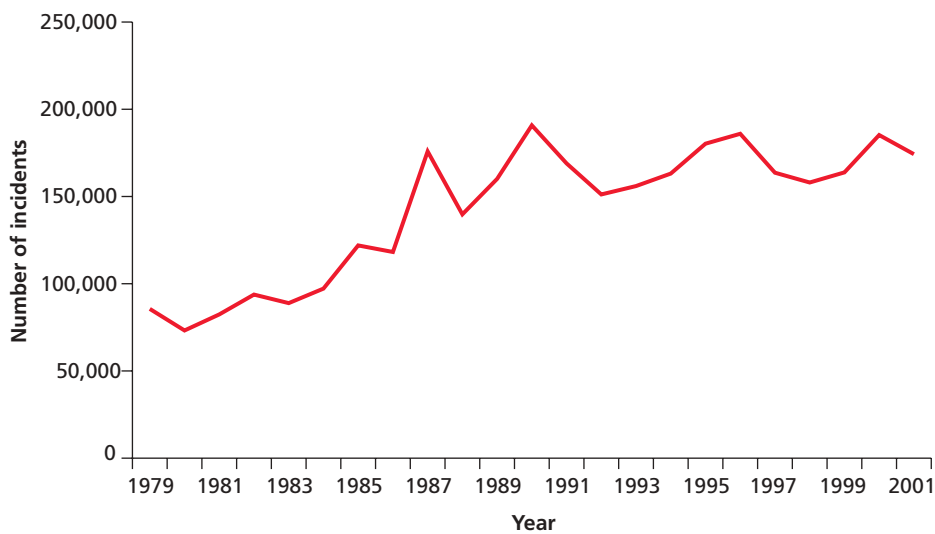
2.1 The fire and rescue service is highly regarded by the public. It has traditionally protected the community by providing fire fighting and rescue intervention as an emergency service. It has been successful in ensuring the fire safety of workplaces, other public buildings and the home, through the enforcement of fire safety legislation, and, more recently, through its community fire safety initiatives. It has also been responsible for ensuring the fire safety of workplaces and other public buildings. Over the last quarter of a century, the number of deaths from fire has come down; in 1979

there were 896 deaths in England and Wales from fire. By 2001, this had fallen to 492 (Figure 1).

2.2 While the overall trend in deaths from fire is going down, the number of injuries has increased; from 7,600 in 1979 to around 14,800 in 2001 (or 10,000 excluding precautionary check-ups – that is, where there was no obvious sign of injury). The overall cost of fire to the economy of England and Wales, estimated at almost £7 billion, is enormous.



Source: ODPM

Figure 2: Non-fire emergencies, 1979–2001

Source: ODPM

2.3 The role of the fire and rescue service has expanded over the past 25 years. In 1979 the fire service responded to around 85,000 non-fire incidents. By March 2001 this figure had increased to 180,000 (Figure 2). This expansion of the role of the fire and rescue service is understandable. It is also right. The fire and rescue service has, over the years, acquired a wide and sophisticated range of equipment to enable it to respond better to such incidents. For example, the fire and rescue service has much expertise in the safe extraction of road traffic accident victims. This

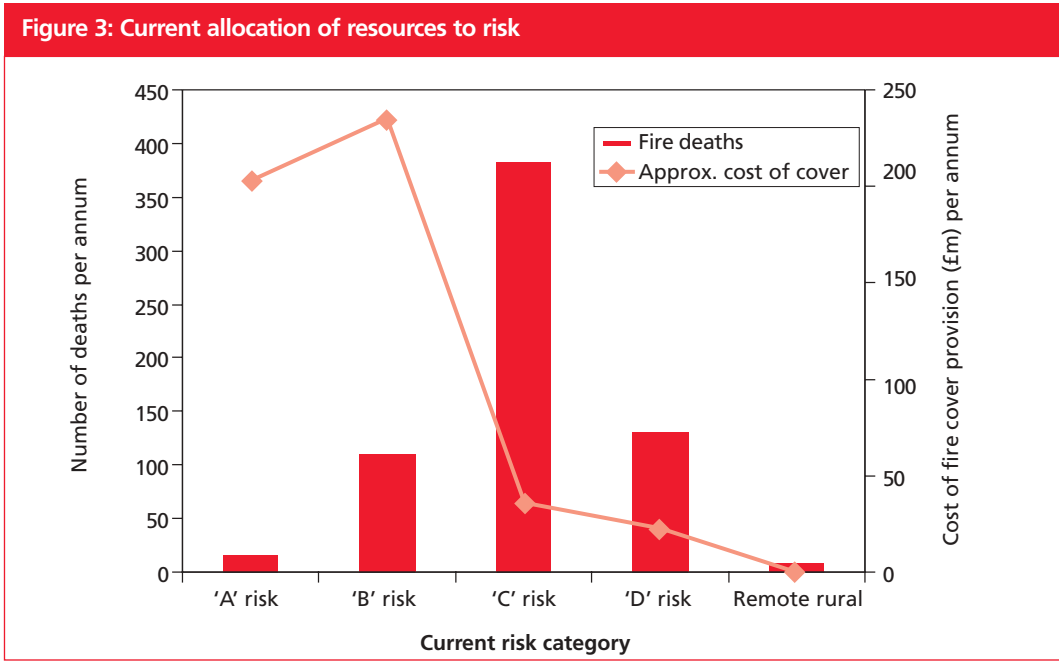
expansion of activity has been recognised and acknowledged. Since April 1997, government and local authority spending on the fire service has increased by more than a quarter (Table 2).

2.4 However, these resources are not always allocated on the basis of need. For example, as Figure 3 shows, at present we devote many more resources to protecting buildings in city centres (where deaths are low) compared to what we devote to residential areas (where deaths are much higher). Response standards and the way

Table 2: Annual increase in spending on the fire service, 1997–98 to 2003–04

Year	Expenditure provision for England (£ million)	Increase on previous year
1997–98	£1237	4.4%
1998–99	£1299	5.0%
1999–2000	£1346	3.6%
2000–01	£1393	3.5%
2001–02	£1463	5.0%
2002–03	£1521	4.0%
2003–04	£1583	4.0%

Source: ODPM



A risk = normally in the largest cities and towns, and including main shopping, business, entertainment or industrial centres

B risk = normally in the larger cities and towns

C risk = normally in the suburbs of the larger towns and in the built-up areas of smaller towns

D risk = all risks other than remote rural

Source: ODPM

resources are organised should vary in accordance with those different levels of risk. At the moment, they do not. This must change. Some areas should have greater cover generally or at particular times; others can meet the threats they are likely to face with less cover. And we also need to plan for non-fire emergencies.

2.5 The public now expects a response to an increasing number of emergency incidents which the fire and rescue service provides or assists in providing, including:

- major transport incidents (road, rail and air);
- chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear exposures;
- severe weather conditions (especially flooding) which endanger life, property and the environment;
- explosions and collapsed structures; and

- the rescue of people trapped in buildings, vehicles, by machinery or in water.

2.6 However, under the existing legislation, the fire and rescue service only has statutory requirements to put arrangements in place for fire fighting and for providing advice on fire safety in buildings and other property. Effectively, responsibilities are shared with those of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and local authorities. The HSE and local authorities have responsibilities for the enforcement of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and its regulations, which place duties on employers and others to protect employees and the public from a range of risks, including fire.

2.7 The statutory basis of the fire and rescue service is outdated, having been framed soon after the Second World War. The main legislation governing the service – the Fire Services Act 1947 – places a duty on fire authorities to make provision for fire fighting

purposes and to make arrangements for rendering mutual assistance to other authorities for the purpose of dealing with fires. Section 3 of the Act gives fire authorities the power to use the fire brigade and its equipment for other purposes, and to charge for any services rendered under this provision. Under this power, fire authorities perform functions such as dealing with flooding, with dangerous leaks and rescuing trapped people. So, there is a distinction between what fire authorities are required to do, and what they actually do. At present, fire authorities are not even under a statutory requirement to respond to terrorist activity, other than activity which causes a fire. In practice, local fire and rescue services have developed and now deliver wide-ranging services that go well beyond their core statutory role.

2.8 In addition, fire authorities have enforcement duties in relation to fire safety under the Fire Precautions Act 1971, the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 (as amended) and more than 100 other different pieces of legislation. This is needlessly complex and confusing. We will therefore rationalise fire safety law. Chapter 3 sets out our proposals for legislative change, prevention and the new roles for the fire and rescue service.

The current structure of the fire service

2.9 The current structure of the fire service has developed piecemeal. After the Second World War and the implementation of the Fire Services Act in 1947, the responsibility for making provision for fire fighting in England and Wales was given to county councils and county borough councils. Successive local government changes and combination arrangements mean that there are now four different types of fire authority with similar functions, but of varying size, with different constitutions and funding

arrangements, and with differing levels of performance. Fire and rescue services are now provided under a number of different arrangements in England and Wales:

- by 16 county councils in those county areas unaffected by the local government reorganisation which took place between 1996 and 1998;
- by six joint Fire and Civil Defence Authorities set up under the Local Government Act 1985 in the former metropolitan authorities;
- in London, by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) under the auspices of the Greater London Authority; and
- by 27 combined fire authorities elsewhere (24 in England, 3 in Wales).

In addition, there are eight Scottish fire authorities and one in Northern Ireland. Each fire authority is under a duty to maintain a fire brigade.

2.10 There are 50 fire authorities in England and Wales, which vary in size from London to the Isles of Scilly (Map 1). They vary significantly in performance and in levels of co-operation. Many of the service's new functions, particularly in relation to responding to terrorism, cannot be carried out properly at local level. There is ample scope for economies of scale. Our proposals, set out in Chapter 4, envisage developing a regional approach to aspects of the fire and rescue services so that authorities can share expertise and resources in order to improve the overall value for money in delivering services to local people. Chapter 5 analyses the current institutional structure of the fire and rescue service, and shows how that might be made more streamlined and efficient with bodies that support the service as a whole and which have much clearer remits, roles and responsibilities than exist at present.

Map 1: Existing fire authorities



Source: ODPM

2.11 The management of the fire and rescue service is outdated. Reform is overdue, both in terms of the relationship between central and local government and the relationship between management and employees. So, in Chapter 6, we set out new performance management arrangements for fire and rescue authorities to introduce more effective performance assessment and quality assurance processes,

utilising learning from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework for local government. Similarly, personnel systems are in urgent need of reform. Terms and conditions are over-rigid and they deny fire and rescue service staff the opportunity to work more flexibly or other than according to traditional set patterns. Chapters 7 and 8 set out our proposals for change.

2.12 This White Paper describes fundamental changes to the way in which the service is structured and run. Together, these changes form a major challenge to everyone working in the fire and rescue service. It must become a service which can better account for itself to the public it serves. It must focus more on prevention. It must improve its performance in every aspect of its work. And it must be better managed and more efficient. That is what the changes we propose will bring about.



‘The Fire Service is an impressive public body, deserving much credit for its performance... But it operates within a system of rigid prescriptions and restrictive practices which mean that resources are not always in the right place at the right time to respond most effectively and efficiently to the community’s needs.’
(Independent Review of the Fire Service, Chapter 3)

The fire and rescue service has a role in protecting the community from a wide range of threats, not just from fire. We will legislate to put that role on a statutory footing. Fire and rescue authorities will work with their communities and the other emergency services to reduce fire risks in their areas and to plan for a more effective response to emergencies.

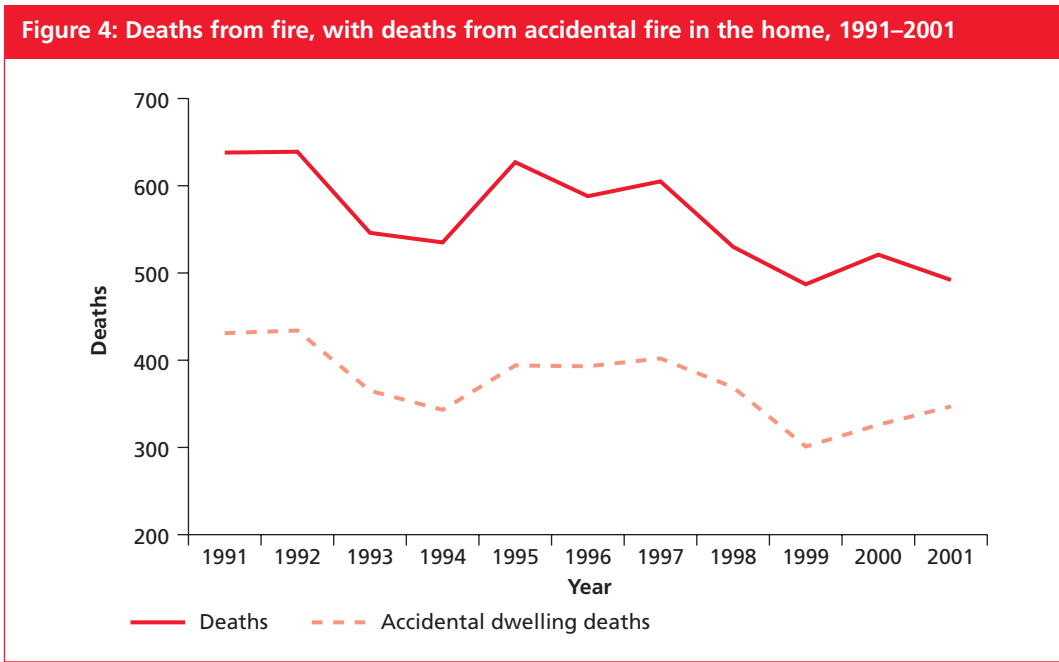
3: Protecting the community

3.1 Although the role of the fire and rescue service has expanded in recent years, its main focus remains that of fighting and preventing fires. The largest single cause of deaths and injuries from fire occur accidentally in the home (see Figures 4 and 5).

3.2 When domestic fires break out, they can spread so quickly that, by the time the fire brigade arrives, even if it arrives within the five minute target set for the highest risk areas under the current standards of fire cover, it can be too late. In addition to

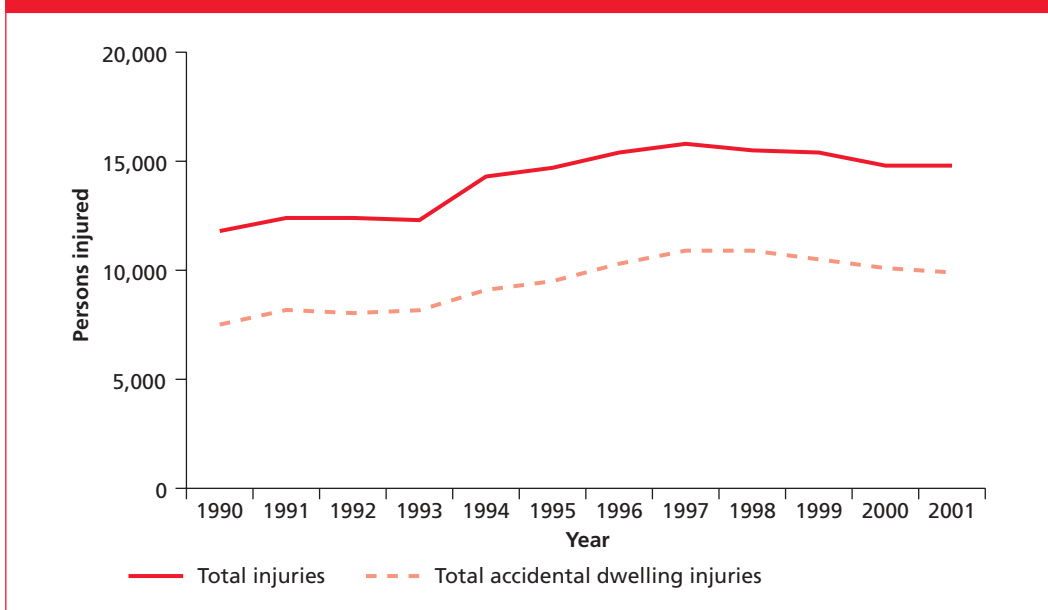
the personal suffering when lives are lost and the painful period of recovery suffered by survivors, the wider impact of fire is profound. In 2000, the estimated cost of domestic fires to the economy of England and Wales was £1.9 billion.

3.3 Equally worrying is the growing trend in deliberate fires. In 1996, the fire service attended 78,000 deliberate fires in England and Wales. By 2001, this figure had risen to 110,000 – an increase of over 40%. The cost of these fires to the economy has been estimated at £2.2 billion – even



Source: ODPM

Figure 5: Injuries from fire with injuries from fire in the home, 1991–2001



Source: ODPM

before taking account of the environmental impact of such fires or the impact on local communities that have to live with burnt-out cars and buildings.

3.4 For local businesses, the impact of fire is equally serious. The cost of fire to business has been estimated at £2.5 billion. Currently, fire safety law enforcement – the process by which business compliance with existing fire safety law is assessed – is spread over 100 different pieces of legislation. This makes compliance difficult and places a considerable burden on business.

3.5 Research shows that those most likely to be at risk from fire, whether accidental or deliberate, are in the lower socio-economic groups. The risk of death from fire is 16 times higher among children in social class 5, compared to children in social class 1. People living in the poorest areas suffer rates of arson over 30 times higher than elsewhere and are over 15 times more likely to die as a result of fire than those who are better off. Findings from the 2001/02 British Crime Survey (*Fires In The Home*) also show there are a number of factors associated with low incomes and an

increase in the risk of a household suffering a domestic fire. For example, those less likely to have smoke alarms are in properties in poor condition, households with one adult living alone and in ethnic minority households. Even if they survive the fire without injury, the impact on them can still be severe, since people with limited incomes are less likely to be insured.

3.6 The Government's work on reducing fire deaths contributes directly to the Department of Health's targets on reducing health inequalities and to wider government targets of regenerating deprived areas and tackling crime. Those living in socially deprived areas are the most likely to be the victims of fire, whether accidental or deliberate.

3.7 The key to avoiding the adverse consequences of fire is to prevent it from happening in the first place. The Government's prevention strategy relies upon three main strands:

- Building Regulations – which ensure that fire safety is designed into new or materially altered homes, offices and other buildings;
- fire safety legislation – which sets out employers’ and others’ responsibilities for providing and maintaining a safe environment; and
- community fire safety – which aims to promote fire-safe behaviour, particularly in the home, and to reduce the incidence of arson.

Building Regulations

3.8 The importance of incorporating fire safety measures in building design is recognised by the Building Regulations 2000 (as amended), which apply to most building work undertaken in England and Wales, typically the construction of new buildings and the extension or alteration of existing buildings. The fire safety requirements of the Regulations are intended to secure reasonable standards of health and safety for people in or around buildings.

3.9 The requirements of the Building Regulations ensure that new buildings, and alterations and extensions to existing buildings, incorporate reasonable measures to protect people from fire, such as, for example, the provision of hard-wired, interlinked smoke alarms in new dwellings.

3.10 The Regulations are regularly reviewed to ensure that they address changing trends and new developments in building design. For example, we are reviewing the potential for domestic sprinklers as a means for tackling fires in the home, and we have commissioned research to consider their effectiveness when used in residential premises. We will consider the results of that research in the forthcoming review of the Building Regulations.

Fire safety legislation

3.11 At present, there are two major pieces of specific fire safety legislation: the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997

‘The prevention of deaths from fire through increased community fire safety measures must be among the highest priorities of the fire service.’

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 5.6)



(as amended). Provisions relating to fire precautions are also contained in many other pieces of legislation which are not principally related to fire safety. This proliferation of different regulatory regimes is confusing and is also a considerable burden to business. It has long been recognised as being in need of reform.

3.12 We have already consulted on proposals to reform fire safety legislation by means of a Regulatory Reform Order. The aim of the reform is to simplify the law and to remove overlapping regimes. The new regime will apply to virtually all non-domestic premises. It will move from a prescriptive regime, where the fire service determines the fire precautions to be provided, to a risk assessment-based approach, where the person responsible for the premises must decide how to address the risks identified, while meeting certain specific requirements. The main focus of the reformed law will continue to be the safety of human life. An initial Regulatory Impact Analysis was published with the consultation document for these proposals (available at www.safety.odpm.gov.uk/fire/consult/legislate/index.htm). It is currently being amended to take account of comments received during consultation. The revised version will be published when the Regulatory Reform Order is laid before Parliament.

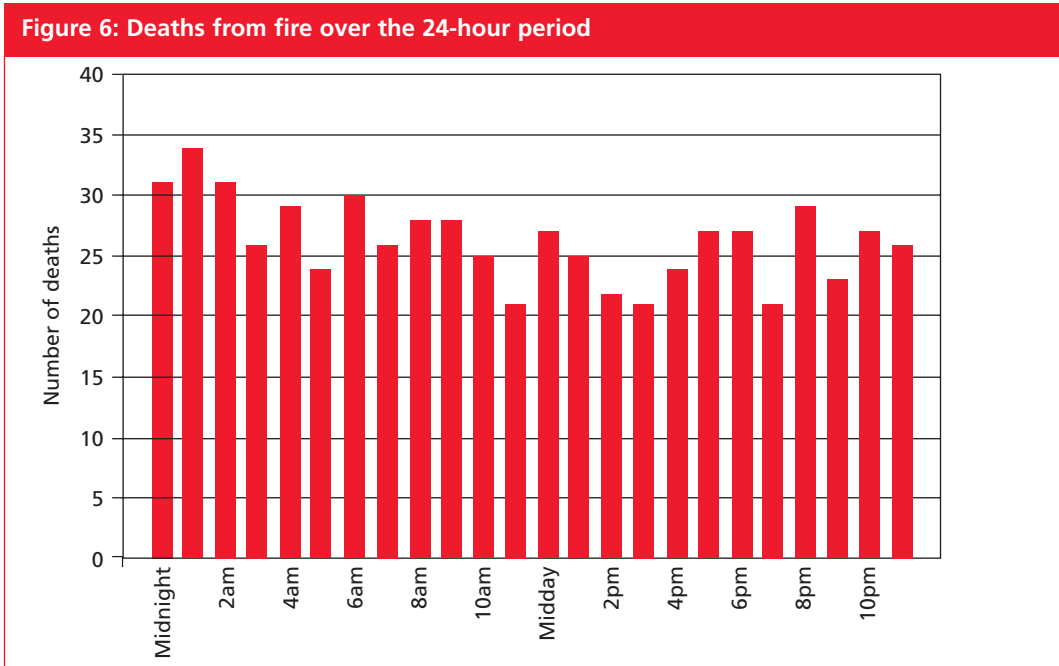
3.13 The new regime will be subject to monitoring and, where appropriate, enforcement action. In most cases, this will be by the fire and rescue service, whose role will change from prescribing specific fire precautions to ensuring the adequacy of the fire safety measures which the person responsible for a place or activity provides.

Community fire safety

3.14 In 1995, an Audit Commission report (*In the Line of Fire*) recommended that the fire service should shift from a reactive culture of fighting fires to a proactive culture of preventing them – a concept which has come to be known as community fire safety.

3.15 Community fire safety involves a range of different initiatives aimed at promoting a fire-safe environment, particularly in the home. Such initiatives can reduce the number of fires in general but, by targeting those areas of greatest social deprivation, can have a disproportionate effect in reducing the overall number of deaths and injuries resulting from fires. Coupled with the drive to reduce arson, they can also help reduce health inequalities. The fire service has a good track record of working closely with many of our deprived communities. We intend to encourage that further still. By focusing on these areas and by working with other stakeholders in community fire safety and arson control, the fire and rescue service will play a critical role in renewing some of our most deprived neighbourhoods.

3.16 More generally, fire fighters are widely seen as contributing much to a positive community ethos. Fire fighters can be seen as positive role models for young people. Some fire authorities have opened up their fire stations as ‘community fire stations’, thereby providing recreational and meeting facilities – as well as functioning fire stations – in areas where these are badly needed. Fire fighters have also taken the lead in local working with young people, either in Young Fire Fighter Associations, Prince’s Trust or similar schemes. They have also been engaged in outreach programmes, taking fire safety lessons to schools and community groups.



Source: Independent Review of the Fire Service 2002

3.17 Prevention is better than cure. So a fundamental goal is to transform the main focus of the fire and rescue service into one of prevention. The service is very effective at putting out fires and at rescuing people once it arrives at an incident. But the figures for deaths and injuries in fires show that this, by itself, is not enough. For instance, the chances of dying in a fire are higher at night than in the day, even though there are usually as many fire fighters available to tackle any fire (Figure 6). This is because when people are asleep or less alert, fires can spread or take hold before anyone is even aware of the threat. People may even be killed by smoke before the alarm is raised. The best way to reduce such deaths is to tackle the root causes: people smoking in bed; people who are tired or have had a drink being less careful than they should be with candles, a chip pan or an electric fire; people not having effective smoke alarms. Taking effective action to minimise such risks is the kind of preventative work which saves lives.

3.18 Many of the forward-looking fire authorities have already embraced the idea and have launched community fire

safety initiatives in their own areas, such as fire safety lectures in schools, chip pan safety demonstrations, smoke alarm installation, advising householders through Home Fire Risk Checks and so on. The Audit Commission’s report recommended that this should be taken further, and two subsequent Home Office reports (*Safe as Houses* and *The Arson Scoping Study*) provide strategies for doing so.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

Throughout the academic year, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) supports the ‘Junior Citizens Scheme’. Each event involves small interactive sessions for children to learn about personal safety. In supporting the scheme the SFRS works with agencies including the police, St John ambulance, the County Council, the local authority, Network Rail, and an internet service provider among others. This partnership scheme shows the importance of personal safety, including what to do in the event of a fire.

Kent Fire Brigade

Kent Fire Brigade runs a day's course for primary children to raise awareness of fire safety issues while laying the foundations of a socially responsible attitude to safety. Classroom based work includes information on smoke detectors, escape plans and fire prevention, particularly in the home.

3.19 We have already taken a number of steps to implement these strategies:

- In 1998, we established the National Community Fire Safety Centre (NCFSC) to develop community fire safety media campaigns and to provide an educational resource for authorities. The Centre's award-winning campaigns have contributed to the fall in deaths from house fires in recent years.
- In 1999, we launched the concept of community fire safety plans, encouraging authorities to raise the awareness of the risk from fire in their areas and to develop strategies to address this. This concept was subsequently integrated with the Best Value plan that fire authorities are required to produce. It will be developed further in the Integrated Risk Management Plans, which are discussed later in this chapter.
- In 2000, we established the Fire Safety Advisory Board to advise ministers on matters pertaining to fire safety. Part of

the role of the Board has been to provide strategic oversight of the work of the NCFSC and of authorities in promoting community fire safety.

- In 2001, we established the Arson Control Forum to lead the fight against arson. Since its founding, the Forum has secured changes in legislation to address the problem of arson. It has also produced a number of best practice guides and has conducted research into the motivation for arson, along with strategies for dealing with it. It has also invested in local arson reduction initiatives with a view to identifying what works best, so that good practice in reducing the number of deliberate fires can be spread.

3.20 We intend to build on the success of these initiatives. Over the next three years we will invest over £43 million in centrally run community fire safety and arson reduction programmes. These programmes will complement and support the work done locally by the fire and rescue service. The outcome of this work should be a reduction in the numbers of deaths from fire in the home – the biggest category of fire deaths. We have set demanding targets to measure our effectiveness on which we will report publicly (see box below).

New threats and new challenges

3.21 The job of the fire and rescue service is increasingly much wider than fighting and preventing fires. It now involves responding

Targets for reducing deaths from fire in the home and the number of deliberate fires

Community Fire Safety and Health Inequalities:	To reduce the number of fire-related deaths in the home by 20% averaged over the 11-year period to 2010 compared with the average recorded in the five-year period to 1999 – with no local authority fire brigade having a fatality rate more than 1.25 times the national average by 2010.
Arson Reduction:	To reduce by 10% the number of deliberate fires by 31 March 2010 from the 2001/02 baseline.

to, and working with, other agencies to cope with a variety of different emergencies, including environmental disasters and terrorist attacks. The events of 11 September 2001 showed, in a tragic and graphic way, the potential scale of major incidents resulting from terrorist action – and how these could produce consequences far beyond those previously imagined. This, in turn, affected public expectations and government policy has been developed in response – in terms of greater resilience to such attacks and improved capacity to handle the consequences.

3.22 Dealing with these new challenges, including the need to deal with very large-scale terrorist incidents, can only be met on the basis of enhanced capabilities and a new strategic focus. We have committed £56 million to introduce new equipment to respond to potential mass decontamination requirements. Within the extra £330 million announced in this year's budget for counter-terrorism measures, we will make provision to acquire more urban search and rescue equipment. We are reinforcing our ability to carry out mass decontamination and search and rescue functions through specialist training at the Fire Service College. We are also funding the construction of a resilient communications infrastructure which allows these services to be deployed effectively. We are investing in the appropriate skills and equipment to enable such events, if and when they occur, to be tackled with speed and efficiency.

3.23 These programmes have been designed nationally through close co-operation between central government and fire authority representatives, and they will be delivered on the ground by means of close working with stakeholders in their communities. In addition, we have also set out our plans to ensure there is a robust legislative framework to increase our national resilience and capability to respond

to terrorist and other threats. These proposals are set out in the Civil Contingencies Bill.

The wider role of the service

3.24 The fire service has traditionally carried out a wider range of tasks than just putting out fires but, in recent years, these activities have come to take up a higher proportion of the time of the service than actual fire-fighting. Therefore, fire fighters have applied their skills and expertise in new and different ways. This demand is likely to grow. Fighting fires typically accounts for only 5–10% of the average fire fighter's working time. The fire and rescue service has the power to charge for the work that it does which is not related to fire or other emergencies. This power will continue, and we will consult more widely if there is any proposal to extend it.

3.25 In future, the service is increasingly likely to be part of the front-line response to the risks posed by natural disasters, such as flooding, and by unnatural disasters, such as terrorist incidents. We believe that the legislation should be clear about what we expect the fire and rescue service to do. So, recognising the service's growing role in preventative work, response to road traffic accidents and in non-fire related emergencies (such as terrorist incidents), we will legislate to put this work on a proper statutory footing. We will also rationalise fire safety legislation, which will remove multiple and overlapping fire safety provisions, on which we consulted last year. We will replace them with a simpler fire safety regime, which will significantly reduce the compliance burden.

A modern approach to risk: Integrated Risk Management Planning

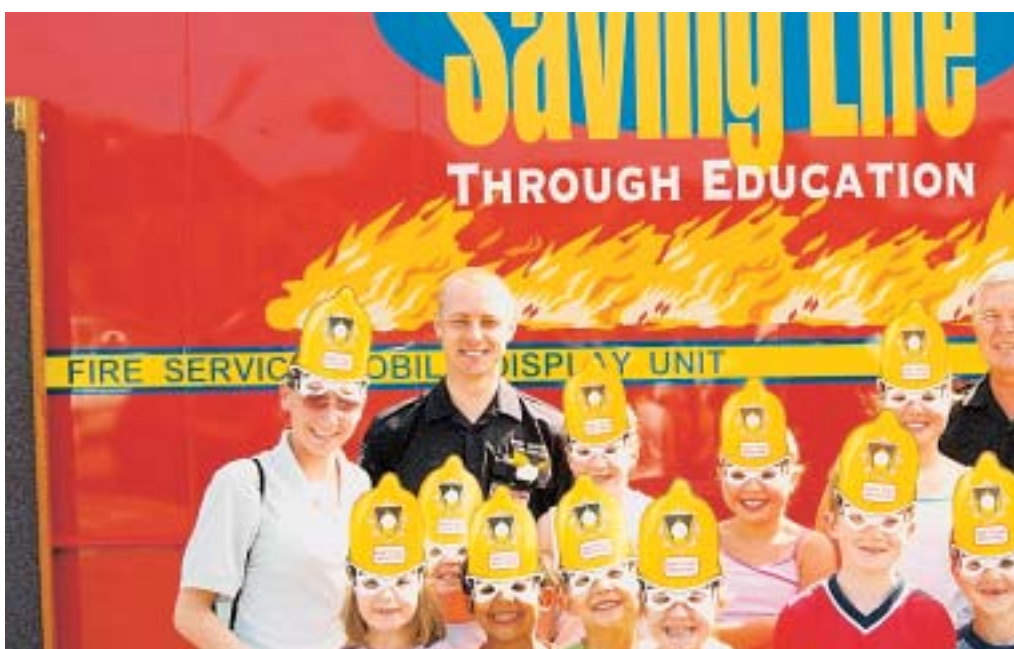
3.26 Traditionally, the fire and rescue service has organised its staffing levels and the location of fire fighters, stations and appliances to match nationally prescribed fire cover standards. That means that there are set standards for sending a given number of appliances within a given number of minutes to a fire which has broken out. The level of fire cover in an area depends chiefly on how built-up that area is. The more buildings, the more fire cover. Those standards were set originally in the 1930s. However, we know from the evidence of recent years that the incidence of fires tends to vary between particular types of building in particular locations and at particular times of the day.

3.27 We will establish a new statutory framework which will place a responsibility on the fire and rescue service to plan for, and respond to, a range of emergencies

on the basis of risk assessment and management. These new requirements will be brought together in the *Integrated Risk Management Plans* (IRMPs), which each fire authority will be required to produce. We have already begun the process of consulting fire authorities and others on the introduction of these plans.

3.28 The aim of IRMPs is to bring about improved community safety – and to make a more productive use of fire and rescue service resources – by:

- reducing the incidence of fires;
- reducing loss of life in fires and accidents;
- reducing the number and severity of injuries occurring in fires and other emergencies;
- safeguarding the environment and protecting the national heritage; and
- providing communities with value for money.



'The aim must be for the fire service to move from a predominant culture of responding to fires to one of preventing their occurrence. Over time, the need for intervention should come to be seen as a failure and this will not happen unless there are changes to the existing legislative and regulatory frameworks.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 5.8)

This is achieved by making an informed assessment of the risks in the area and the best ways to manage them, looking at prevention, enforcement and response.

3.29 In place of the old 'standards of fire cover', which dictated the level and speed of response to fires depending upon the density of buildings in the area, we will require locally generated plans for preventing and responding to fires and other emergencies, based on an assessment of risk. Fire and rescue authorities will consult their local communities on these plans, and the fire and rescue service will work with the other emergency services to implement them. We will support and guide the fire service through this process with technical advice (see Chapter 5). The outcome, in terms of community safety, will be the key measure of good performance and success.

3.30 The new plans will combine long-term targets and objectives, as well as a number of early actions that can be taken immediately to improve community safety and service delivery. By adopting this approach, fire and rescue authorities will be able to respond to the needs of their communities more flexibly – and therefore more efficiently. Authorities will take on new responsibilities for making judgements about the risks within their area, the balance between prevention and intervention, and for determining response standards and resource allocation. Fire and rescue authorities will need to assure themselves that they have access to the necessary expertise in risk management and analysis to do all this. By implementing Integrated Risk Management Plans, they will be making their communities safer both from fire and from other risks and dangers.

Protecting our community

3.31. The role of the fire and rescue service has changed. It now protects our community in a variety of new ways that were not envisaged when the bulk of our current fire laws were first enacted. We are committed to providing the fire and rescue service with a modern statutory framework, the tools and the funding to take on its modern role. We believe that fire and rescue authorities will rise to these new challenges and will work with the public and others to reduce risk and so help make our communities safer.



The Government will set national objectives for the fire and rescue service, although we will not dictate matters that are best decided at regional or local level. The current structural arrangements of the service are in need of reform. Many functions are currently not carried out in a cost-effective way. For example, the cost of local-level control room cover can be as high as £168 per incident handled, compared to £18 per incident in London. In addition, there are some roles, including preparing for possible terrorist attacks, that are clearly better carried out at a different level. And, as the new approaches to fire cover and to human resources set out in this White Paper are developed, it will become increasingly difficult for many fire authorities, particularly smaller ones, to cope with the expectations of the public. In those areas where elected regional assemblies are set up, we will establish new, larger, fire and rescue authorities on a regional basis. These authorities will be more efficient and will be better able to discharge their responsibilities for dealing with non-fire emergencies. In the meantime, fire authorities will remain within local government and will be accountable for the service to elected local authorities. However, it is essential to ensure that the regional efficiencies are delivered quickly. The fastest way of achieving this will be for local fire authorities themselves to establish effective regional management arrangements so that control rooms, resilience, procurement and many human resource functions are delivered regionally from an early date. We will discuss with existing authorities, the Local Government Association and other stakeholders this system of regional management to ensure that it meets national objectives. We will strengthen our powers to combine fire authorities on a compulsory basis, if the voluntary regional management solution does not deliver. Responsibility for fire policy has already been devolved to Scotland and Northern Ireland; we now intend to devolve it to Wales.

4: National, regional and local responsibilities

4.1 Implementing our vision for the fire and rescue service, responding to the new dangers that we face, and ensuring that the focus of the service is firmly on fire prevention and wider non-fire tasks will

demand new approaches to the management of the service. We should be clear from the outset who is responsible for what and at what level. The structure of the fire and rescue service should be robust and

appropriate to the challenges it now faces. We will set the national strategic direction for the service and ensure that it is underpinned by a structure that can deliver that strategy. But securing the step change demanded by the reform agenda will require changes in the level and quality of management. There must be regional co-ordination mechanisms to ensure that those changes are delivered. In addition, as and when elected regional assemblies are established, we will transfer responsibility from the existing fire authorities in those areas to new regional fire and rescue authorities (based on the Government Office regions in England, outside London).

Current arrangements for managing the service

4.2 The current arrangements for managing the service are confused and inefficient. At the moment, the Government sets targets for the fire and rescue service both as indicators of the performance expected at national level (such as the Service Delivery Agreement target to reduce deaths in domestic fires by 20%) and by way of performance indicators against which each fire authority's performance is assessed each year (as part of local government assessment procedures). In addition, national fire cover standards have largely determined how resources are deployed and used. Under Section 19 of the Fire Services Act 1947, there has been a requirement to obtain the Secretary of State's consent to any reduction – however small – in the staffing of a brigade or in the number and location of its appliances. The Secretary of State has therefore been involved to a remarkable level of detail in the operation of individual fire authorities, and in setting some national standards.

4.3 Locally, the service is run by fire authorities. However, their overall capacity to run the service effectively and to deliver change has been limited. This is because there is such a large range in the size of authorities and also because of the quality of strategic and operational leadership provided by fire authorities over recent years. Innovation and change has been hindered by restrictive central prescription. Because of their size, and the independent way in which some of them have operated, and the degree of central prescription, there have been few management efficiencies generated. Stronger leadership from fire and rescue authorities will be needed in the future to address these shortcomings.

4.4 In essence, there are too many small fire authorities, which struggle to provide a cost-effective service because of their size. Authorities range from a few hundred staff in the Isle of Wight to about 7,000 in London. Several authorities have only around 500 staff. 14 have less than 700. It will become increasingly difficult for such small authorities to deliver the more efficient service required. The number of authorities makes it difficult for them to co-ordinate action effectively, as the recent industrial dispute has highlighted. And the small size of many of them makes it difficult to achieve economies of scale.

4.5 For example, control rooms have continued to operate at local level, which is inefficient. Many of them deal with as few as two calls an hour during the busiest periods of the day and only one call every two hours during the night. The cost of such cover can be as high as £168 per incident handled, compared to £18 per incident in the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority control room (see Table 3). Research for the Government conducted in 2000 (*The Future of Fire Service Control*

Rooms and Communications in England and Wales – Mott Macdonald) found that optimum efficiency, effectiveness and economy could be achieved by significantly reducing the number of fire service control rooms, of which there are currently 49. The events of 11 September 2001 have given further new impetus to the need to rationalise the way in which the fire service resources are used. Further work since then supports the case for moving towards regional-scale fire control rooms. They would make possible more effective responses to local, regional or national incidents of any scale and complexity, as part of a longer-term strategy for moving towards more joint and shared control rooms with the other emergency services.

4.6 Furthermore, the current system for providing human resources (HR) and training and development services in brigades is not as effective as it should be. Sharing the HR operations of smaller brigades would make possible efficiencies of scale in recruitment and deployment. It would facilitate the development of a more skilled and strategic HR function capable of responding to the many challenges facing the fire service. Currently there is over-provision of training and development facilities, some of which are not being used as efficiently as they could be.

Regional handling of certain training and development functions would reduce the costs of brigades, improve quality and ensure better use of training resources and specialist training equipment.

4.7 Other corporate services, such as procurement, have been inefficient. Some authorities have not exploited the potential for savings by joining together to reduce specialist administration costs and to place bulk orders. Equipment such as breathing apparatus is not standardised. Rationalisation of costs through bulk ordering and reducing overlapping bureaucratic processes would help to produce a more streamlined service and economies of scale.

4.8 Even where central government has had a clear idea of what it wanted the service to do – such as taking on more responsibility for responding to the threats of increased terrorism or of biochemical contamination – it has had no way of ensuring that authorities would play their part.

4.9 We have looked carefully at what is the right level to co-ordinate the various functions of the fire and rescue service. In relation to national, catastrophic incidents, for example, fire authorities generally do not have the level of resources and expertise to respond to that type of event.

Table 3: Three brigades with the lowest cost per incident and three brigades with the highest cost per incident

Brigade	Control room employee expenditure	Incidents	Cost per incident
London FEPA	£3,090,125	176,308	£18
West Midlands	£1,576,638	57,972	£27
West Yorkshire	£1,252,317	42,258	£30
Lincolnshire	£587,041	7,148	£82
Northumberland	£464,048	5,085	£91
Isle of Wight	£331,037	1,976	£168

Source: Derived from CIPFA statistics 2002, data taken from 2000/01 figures

That is why we have already established regional co-ordination machinery. But this relies on the goodwill of individual authorities. In other areas, the fire service has been less successful in operating at the right level. The Independent Review of the Fire Service identified large benefits from collaboration between brigades. But, even though such benefits had been identified in previous studies, there has been little evidence that the fire service, as a whole, has pursued amalgamation of fire control rooms, better procurement, collaboration arrangements for vehicle maintenance, or the rationalisation of management and support costs with any real enthusiasm.

4.10 A number of service functions are currently being carried out at an inappropriate level. The box opposite summarises an analysis of the ideal level for each function of the fire and rescue service to be carried out so as to ensure the most efficient deployment of resources and the maximum scope for generating economies of scale, while maintaining the local focus of the service in the community.

The national perspective

4.11 The Independent Review of the Fire Service pointed out that a constant theme running through the written and oral evidence they received was that central government did not give adequate guidance or leadership on fire policy. We agree that greater clarity of direction is needed. We propose therefore to provide a new National Framework for the service to bring together all the expectations and requirements which central government has on behalf of the nation generally. This does not mean that we want to dictate from the centre matters which should be left to local discretion, as is shown by the provisions in the current Local Government Bill to repeal Section 19 of the Fire Services Act 1947. But we cannot allow a situation to continue

where, for example, an individual authority can frustrate key elements of a national plan for protecting the public from the consequences of chemical, biological, nuclear or radiological incidents. We will produce and keep up to date a 'National Fire and Rescue Framework', as recommended by the Independent Review. We will report against the Framework.

4.12 This Framework will provide the context for the overall work and direction of the service. It will set out:

- what outcomes the Government expects the service to achieve in the light of the proposed new statutory role;
- how the service should undertake specific functions, where this is necessary for reasons of national efficiency (Normally, we would not expect to tell fire and rescue authorities how to run their service. But there will be some areas where, from time to time, the Government does need to set parameters about how things should be done – such as the procurement of communications systems, where setting a national specification can ensure interoperability with other brigades and emergency services); and
- the financial and other support that the Government will provide, such as technical advice, research co-ordination and expertise, and the contribution of the Fire Service College.

<i>Current arrangements</i>	<i>Proposed arrangements</i>
<p>National level</p> <p>Standards on recruitment, training and development, some delivery</p> <p>Inspection/good practice guidance</p> <p>Research and development</p> <p>Pay negotiations</p> <p>Decisions on operational capacity (Section 19 of the Fire Services Act 1947)</p> <p>Some training</p> <p>New Dimension/Firelink</p>	<p>National level</p> <p>National Framework</p> <p>Standards on recruitment, training and development, some delivery</p> <p>Inspection/good practice guidance</p> <p>Research and development</p> <p>Technical support, eg estates, communications</p> <p>Pay negotiations</p> <p>Procurement (at least of major purchases)</p> <p>Some training</p> <p>New Dimension/Firelink</p> <p>Regional level</p> <p>Control rooms</p> <p>Civil contingencies planning</p> <p>Recruitment and initial training</p> <p>Common services, eg HR, investigation</p> <p>Specialist service, eg response to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks</p> <p>Decisions on operational capacity (risk management planning)</p> <p>Health and safety planning</p> <p>Procurement</p> <p>Local level</p> <p>Day-to-day delivery (prevention and response)</p> <p>Community engagement</p> <p>Some decisions on operational capacity (risk management planning)</p>
<p>Local level</p> <p>Day-to-day delivery</p> <p>Control rooms</p> <p>Recruitment and initial training</p> <p>Some other training</p> <p>Civil contingencies planning</p> <p>Community engagement</p> <p>Procurement</p>	

4.13 The National Framework will be important as a clear statement of Government policy. We expect that fire authorities will recognise the national significance of the requirements and will find them a helpful context in their own planning and budgeting. How the authorities deliver their contribution to the National Framework will be a matter for them. The Government will take reserve powers only to ensure that an authority acts in accordance with the National Framework. Otherwise, fire authorities will be subject to the Best Value regime as are other authorities.

Collaborative working

Public services usually work best when they work together. In dealing with emergencies, the public rightly expects the police, fire and ambulance services to work closely with each other and with other agencies. For example, the Government wants to see co-responder partnerships developed and implemented more widely. Under these arrangements, fire fighters, when they are the first on the scene at an emergency, are trained and able to use basic life-support skills, including the use of automated defibrillators, to keep casualties alive until professional medical assistance arrives.

The regional perspective

4.14 The National Framework will only be effective to the extent that fire and rescue authorities are able to translate its requirements into efficient and effective local action. As the Independent Review of the Fire Service suggested, improved collaboration across areas larger than the current area of fire authorities is needed to unlock the benefits of modernisation in terms of lives saved and more efficient operation. Equally though, it is not appropriate to run a service with predominantly regional and local functions from the centre. We are satisfied, therefore, that larger units are required to run the new fire and rescue service. The regional level is acknowledged to be the right operational level for many functions, in particular securing the safety of the community in the event of terrorist attack or other major emergencies. Regional operations will yield management efficiency savings and will ensure management at the right level and of the right quality to deliver the outcomes we seek in terms of lives saved, and less property and environmental damage.

Elected Regional Assemblies

4.15 Our decision to establish a regional framework for the fire and rescue service is set against the background of the Government's White Paper on the Regions, which announced the progressive establishment of elected regional assemblies where people want them. We envisage that, eventually, where there are elected regional assemblies, fire and rescue authorities will be regional bodies constituted on similar lines to the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA), which has a majority of members from the Greater London Assembly.

4.16 But this is some time away. Even in the North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humberside regions, which could be holding referendums in the autumn of 2004, elected assemblies would not be established before the middle of 2006, at the earliest. We need to press ahead quickly with the modernisation and change programme on the ground in all areas. Therefore, we have concluded that, in those regions which choose to elect a regional

'Fire brigades face increasingly complex problems. Issues such as those raised by the New Dimension (of terrorism) mean that work will often be done more effectively if it is done at a level of management above that of a brigade.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 6.18)



assembly, regional fire authorities, like LFEPA, should be the right, longer term, model. But in the interim period, and in those areas that do not choose to have an elected regional assembly, another model is needed now to manage a range of regional functions to ensure that the benefits of a wider regional approach are fully exploited.

London Fire And Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)

LFEPA was set up with 17 members under the Greater London Authority Act 1999, succeeding the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, which had 33 members. It fits into the local government legislative framework, so it is subject to general local authority legislation, such as Best Value. Nine of its members are Greater London Assembly members, appointed by the Mayor. The remaining eight members are borough representatives. They are appointed by the Mayor on the nomination of the 32 London borough councils and the City of London, acting jointly.

Regional fire and rescue management boards

4.17 Local fire authorities will therefore be required to establish, before 1 April 2004, robust regional management arrangements with members from existing fire authorities. This will lead to the increased efficient use of resources, an increased level of safety for the community, with improved protection of property and the environment, and a reduction in deaths and injuries. We will expect regional management boards to take responsibility for delivering the following in accordance with national policies:

- ensuring resilience to emergencies, especially potential chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack;
- specialist or common services, where appropriate, such as fire investigation;
- establishing regional control rooms;
- introducing regional-based procurement or procurement to national standards;
- developing regional training strategies and delivery; and
- introducing regional personnel management and human resources management functions.

4.18 We will discuss with existing authorities, the Local Government Association and other stakeholders this system of regional management to ensure that it meets the objectives of the National Framework. We hope that such voluntary arrangements will succeed. But if these arrangements do not deliver modernisation quickly, we will use our powers to require combinations of fire authorities, in order to establish regional fire and rescue authorities. We will be strengthening these powers in the forthcoming fire legislation in order to ensure that such combinations can be achieved more quickly than at present, and to allow the Secretary of State to nominate some of the members of the regional combination authorities.

4.19 Such a regional approach will ensure that service improvement and also greater savings are achieved from regional fire control rooms, from reducing waste in other areas – for example, procurement, training and vehicle maintenance – as well as from rationalising management effort. The Independent Review of the Fire Service estimated that savings of the order of £42 million over the first three years could be achieved in these areas alone. In due course, as elected regional assemblies are established, there will also be savings from regionalisation in terms of reducing the bureaucratic overhead as the number of authorities is reduced. These savings would

be over and above those identified by the Independent Review, and so can be recycled into increased fire-prevention measures.

4.20 The move towards greater regional management of the service will ensure that all fire and rescue authorities have the capacity to take on and develop the new freedoms given by the new approach to fire and rescue cover, and by other aspects of modernisation. As well as needing capacity at regional level, however, they will need local intelligence and involvement. We expect delegation of day-to-day operational matters to the front line, allowing the necessary flexibility for the service to work closely with their local communities and to deliver the results that best reflect local needs.

4.21 Where regional management has been put in place, there have been real benefits. London is a good example of an effective regional authority that provides a coherent regional perspective across all London boroughs. It is large enough to be effective. Resources are shared effectively. Efficiency savings and economies of scale have been generated. There is strong political leadership of the authority.

The local perspective

4.22 At local level, the fire and rescue service will appear to local people much as before. People in local communities will, of course, still identify with their local fire service, while benefiting from the better use of resources, increased expertise, and good practice sharing that the regional approach will encourage, either via regional management boards or, in due course, from regional fire and rescue authorities.

Accountability

4.23 Democratic and public accountability is paramount. We will ensure that accountability is protected. Regional fire authorities will be accountable to the electorate through the elected regional assembly. In addition, regional authorities will have a power to delegate appropriate functions to the principal local authorities in their regions, for example, community fire safety functions.

4.24 Subject to future decisions by Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the organisation of their services, and once the process of regionalisation in England has been completed, the structure of fire authorities in the United Kingdom will look like this:

- nine regional fire authorities or regional management boards in England;
- eight fire authorities in Scotland;
- three fire authorities in Wales;
- one fire authority in Northern Ireland; and
- 21 in total (of which 12 would be in England and Wales), compared to 59 in the United Kingdom as a whole at present (see Map 2).

It may, in practice, be appropriate in some of the larger regions – such as the South East of England – to introduce two or three sub-regional combinations of authorities.

The devolved administrations

4.25 The devolved administrations in Scotland and Northern Ireland are responsible for the fire and rescue services in their areas. The involvement of the National Assembly for Wales is currently more limited.

Scotland

4.26 Under the Scotland Act 1998, the Scottish Parliament has legislative competence for all fire service matters in which central government has a locus. The principal statutory functions of fire authorities are contained in the Fire Services Act 1947; Section 36 of the Act relates specifically to Scotland. Scottish Ministers are responsible for the oversight of the legislative and financial framework within which the fire service operates. This White Paper does not cover Scotland, although many of its principles will be of interest to the Scottish Executive.

Wales

4.27 Since the National Assembly for Wales assumed its responsibilities in July 1999, there has been a close and productive working relationship between the Assembly and the Welsh fire authorities on a range of policy issues relating to community fire safety. However, most aspects of fire policy remained a UK Government responsibility. The Independent Review of the Fire Service recommended that fire policy should be devolved to Wales.

4.28 We now believe that the time is right to devolve the remaining responsibilities for fire fighting and fire safety issues to the Assembly, and we will discuss with both the Wales Office and the National Assembly for Wales how this might be achieved. In making the necessary Transfer of Functions Order, we will also ensure that such devolution of fire safety to Wales is consistent with broader emergency and civil contingency arrangements, and that the capacity for a UK-wide response to any terrorist or other threat is maintained.



'If new, directly elected, regional assemblies are created, it would make sense for regional fire authorities to be responsible to them.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 6.20)

Map 2: Proposed UK fire authorities and (in England) regional management boards



Source: ODPM

Northern Ireland

4.29 In Northern Ireland, the fire service is a devolved responsibility. Under the Fire Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1984, the fire authority for Northern Ireland is required to provide fire services, to enforce fire precautions, and to give advice, when requested, on fire prevention in relation to buildings and property.

4.30 The fire authority is directly funded by the Northern Ireland Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety through an annual budget allocation. Its members are appointed by the head of the Department and it is directly accountable to the Department. It is required to agree with the Department its plans for the effective delivery of fire services and to account for its performance, in meeting its objectives, of those plans.

4.31 The role of the fire service has expanded and evolved in much the same way as in Great Britain, and it is now facing similar challenges. While a number of issues within this White Paper, such as the restructuring of fire authorities and combined fire control rooms, do not apply, others do. The determination of pay and conditions for Northern Ireland staff is currently negotiated by national agreements through the National Joint Council, on which the fire authority is represented and any settlement on pay and terms and conditions of employment applies in Northern Ireland. Integrated Risk Management Planning and the Integrated Personal Development System are currently being introduced to the same timescale as elsewhere.

The fire and rescue service is currently overseen by an array of institutions. This includes statutory bodies, government bodies and joint employer/employee bodies. Although, when originally set up, they each had a clear role and purpose, over recent years they have not served the industry well. Since they were established, the role of, and the demands on, the fire service have expanded, putting a strain on the machinery which it is ill-designed to withstand. Roles and responsibilities have become blurred. The performance of the institutions has been variable. A radical overhaul of those institutions is now well overdue, building on existing bodies where they work well. We will introduce a new, simpler institutional framework to ensure strategic direction from ministers, on the basis of independent expert advice, as necessary. The process of modernisation, improvement and reform will be undertaken by a new central agency.

5: Institutional reform

5.1 The current institutions governing the fire services date back to the framework that was established by the Fire Services Act 1947. Since that time, however, the relationship between central and local government has developed and changed. In particular, after the Fire Services Act 1959, the Government lost its responsibilities in respect of pay and hours of duty, but retained other powers. Many of the bodies set up, in some cases over 50 years ago, are now inappropriate.

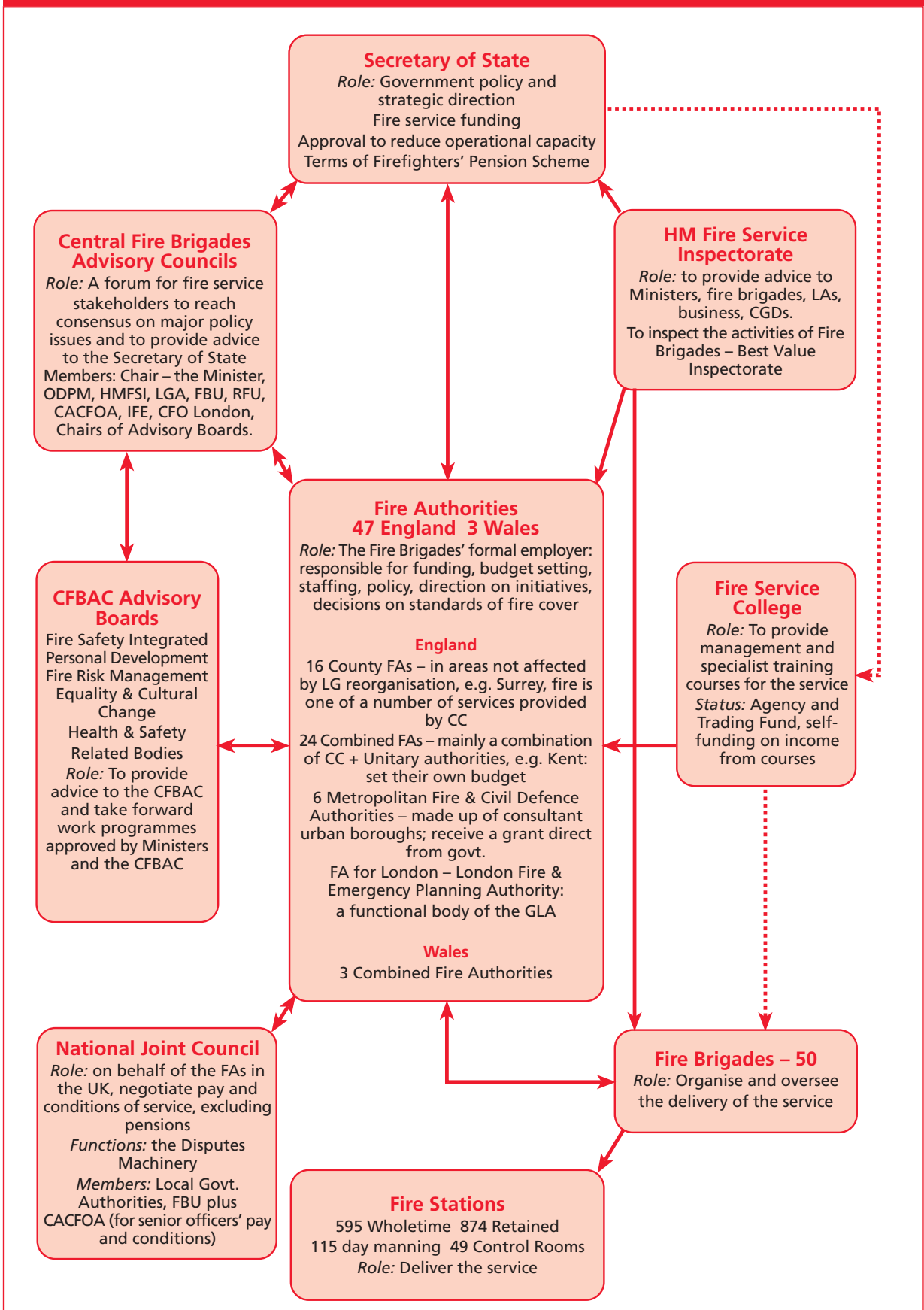
5.2 The Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (CFBAC), which was set up under the Fire Services Act 1947 to provide advice to the Secretary of State, has become increasingly bureaucratic, as the Independent Review of the Fire Service highlighted.

5.3 The National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades, also originally set up in 1947, consisting of the representatives of the employers and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), is responsible for negotiating the pay and conditions of service for fire service staff. It has proved

unwieldy. It has struggled, through its collective bargaining procedures, to negotiate changes in conditions of service for fire fighters to match changing operational demands and to ensure efficient resource management. The pay arrangements, prior to the current dispute, still embodied a formula that had been agreed 25 years ago, following the last national fire strike. The Independent Review of the Fire Service pointed out the institutional failings of the current arrangement and urged the government to make major structural changes.

5.4 The recent dispute between the fire fighters' employers and their union has also highlighted some inherent structural weaknesses. We believe that the time has come to address the overall structure of the fire and rescue service in England and Wales and the institutions that support that framework. We now need to make changes to ensure that the service can develop and improve quickly over the coming years.

Figure 7: The organisational structure of the fire service in England and Wales



Source: Independent Review of the Fire Service, Chapter 3

5.5 The emergency services, including the fire and rescue service, form part of the fabric of communities. The institutions that support those services at all levels should be efficient and should work well in partnership so that they jointly deliver the overall aims and objectives. But this is not currently the case. The central bodies responsible for advising ministers have often tended to focus on detailed discussion rather than on high-level strategic advice. Similarly, the local government employers' side of the machinery, responsible for negotiating fire fighters' pay and conditions, has been too large and unfocused to be effective. Fire authorities have often lacked the confidence and the necessary independent professional advice to facilitate change. The professional bodies of the fire industry have not always been dynamic enough to challenge existing, outdated, practices. Effective independent scrutiny has been lacking. For too long the fire and rescue service has not been seen as a priority public service. In future it will be.

The requirements of the fire and rescue service's institutions

5.6 The fire and rescue service's institutions should fulfil a number of requirements. Under the present structure and systems, some of these processes are not working effectively, if at all. The key requirements are as follows:

- Strategic direction by the government to give a clear sense of purpose and direction to the industry and all those working in or with it.
- Improvement of the fire and rescue service to ensure that the programme of change and the reforms set out in this White Paper are carried through and are delivered efficiently and on time.
- The provision of professional advice, research and quality assurance, including through inspection and identifying best practice, to support policy development and implementation.
- Practical input to policy making, including the highlighting of best practices, from practitioners within the fire and rescue service.
- Engagement of the wider stakeholder community, so that discussions and decisions about the fire and rescue service are not undertaken in isolation. Stakeholder engagement ensures that business, community and professional bodies also have their say in the development of the service.

5.7 The development of the fire and rescue service over recent years has been bedevilled by a lack of clarity about who is responsible for what and who delivers each of the above functions. In practice, some are provided and some are not. There is overlap and omission. The structure and system is unclear and inefficient. We intend to change that by setting clear roles, remits and responsibilities for all the main institutions.

Strategic development

5.8 Until now the fire and rescue service has suffered from a lack of strategic direction. While the CFBAC (composed of members drawn from fire authorities, fire service managers and employee representative organisations, specialist groups, the Government and the Commissioner for London) has nominally played this role, it has been ineffective in practice. It has tried to operate on the basis of consensus and has, consequently, not been capable of providing strategic direction whenever that consensus has broken down. The new National Framework, described in Chapter 4, will enable ministers to give expression to the strategic direction of the fire and rescue

service that they wish to see. To do this they will still benefit from outside advice. The Independent Review of the Fire Service understood this and recommended that a small advisory group should, in future, offer ministers advice on strategy development. We agree.

5.9 We will therefore wind up the CFBAC. We will repeal the provisions of the Fire Services Act 1947 requiring the establishment of the CFBAC and that it should be consulted on defined matters. We will replace these provisions with requirements to consult that take into account the topic and the most appropriate form of consultation. More generally, we are committed to consulting on the National Framework – and, wherever possible, on more detailed policy matters. As well as these formal consultation arrangements, ministers want access to informal strategic, high-level, high-quality advice. They will therefore be inviting a small number of people with fire and rescue experience, as well as outsiders with relevant expertise, to meet them occasionally in order to bring a wider perspective to modernising

the service. The terms of reference of this group of advisors will specify that, in this capacity, they will not be involved in the day-to-day operations but that they should concern themselves with advising ministers on the overall direction of the fire and rescue service.

Monitoring change and assuring it happens: the Service Improvement Team

5.10 Change will only happen if it is well managed. With a wide remit and a range of players, the fire and rescue service does not have a good track record of changing from within. That is why we will establish, quickly, a Service Improvement Team. Initially, it will be set up within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. We will keep its role and remit under review. It may be appropriate, in time, to change the location and status of the Team to increase its independence from central government. The broad aims of the team will be threefold:

- To act as a catalyst for change, promoting reform and working with

'Fire service management is diffuse. The several parts of the system do not work together to a common agenda. There needs to be a fresh start with a newly formed set of structures.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, Chapter 7)



all fire and rescue service institutions to ensure change happens. In particular, to ensure that the change of focus to prevention takes place.

- To monitor the overall rate of change, to report to ministers and the wider public on that progress and thereby highlight any problems or concerns.
- To ensure that the overall strategic direction of all the institutions is focused on the programme of reform and change in a coherent way (as opposed to the current disjointed institutional framework).

Quality assurance

5.11 High-quality technical advice is essential in professions such as the fire and rescue service. As the challenges and threats facing the service increase, as technology develops and as skill levels improve, so the need for expert technical advice increases. Equally, as the fire and

rescue service is publicly funded, the Secretary of State must be assured that public money is being invested efficiently. Therefore, a rigorous process of quality assurance is essential. A number of organisations will provide that assurance.

5.12 First, the Audit Commission will take over the role of quality assurance and inspection, at regional and local levels, to support improvement and to build towards the introduction of Comprehensive Performance Assessment for the fire service. In doing this, it will be helped by the staff from the Fire Service Inspectorate. This is explained in more detail in Chapter 6.

5.13 As part of that quality assurance process, fire and rescue authorities will be subject to regular inspection. The benefits of rigorous inspection of professional services and functions have been proved across many professions in recent years. From teaching standards to prisons, from social services to police forces, inspection is a tried

The Fire Service College – a centre of excellence

The vision

- A national centre for incident command training, based on a fire-ground that is unique in the world in its size and scope, well adapted to creating scenarios relevant to post September 11 training.
- Providing national specialist training in urban search and rescue and other New Dimension techniques, working closely with the other emergency services.
- Providing the drive and leadership for reform of the fire and rescue service through links with other service and fire-industry institutions.
- Providing training and development for the most senior and specialist roles.
- Leading on implementation of the Integrated Personal Development System and training in the approach to fire prevention.
- Spearheading e-learning (with the Scottish Fire Service Training School) and providing overall quality control.
- Leading on training on the best practice on compliance with regulation and thinking on change in the regulatory field.

and tested element of performance management and improvement. The fire and rescue service should be no different. Indeed, as the service goes through a period of change, it is essential to have independent monitoring of that change. Such independent monitoring will do two things: it will provide impartial scrutiny and reports on the progress of each authority and its fire and rescue service, and it will help identify best practice so that the poorer performers gain the benefits and insights of the best.

5.14 Second, we will reform the Fire Service College to provide the nucleus of a centre of excellence for the fire and rescue service along the lines recommended in the Independent Review of the Fire Service (see box on previous page). The College will be in the forefront of introducing the new management and personnel systems (described in Chapter 8), and in the promotion of the delivery of services through the internet. It will also spearhead the drive to place learning and development at the heart of the modernisation agenda. It will focus on raising professional standards by developing the future leaders of the fire and rescue service, and it will work, with partners, to develop itself as a centre of expertise on civil contingency planning. The Government will invest in the College to improve its facilities and develop new business streams.

HM Fire Service Inspectorate

5.15 Third, the work of the Fire Service Inspectorate will be refocused and redirected to support the process of quality assurance and service improvement. The Inspectorate currently has over 100 staff. Yet its role is ill-defined and, as the Independent Review of the Fire Service observed, the fire service tends to have been over-inspected, but not effectively enough.

Therefore, we intend to reform and redirect the work of the Inspectorate so that it is a smaller and more efficient body. It will, in future, have three distinct functions:

- Professional advice to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, from a small number of advisers who will identify good practice, advise on technical issues and assist in identifying the fire service leaders of the future.
- Support to the Audit Commission in developing the new inspection function for the fire and rescue service as part of the new Comprehensive Performance Assessment (described in Chapter 6).
- Support to the new Service Improvement Team on how to increase efficiency in fire authorities. In particular, this will include advice on, for example, ensuring greater efficiency of procurement at a regional level.

Fire research

5.16 New ideas for the fire and rescue service must be based on evidence from rigorous research which:

- keeps under review the wide range of technologies and underpinning science relevant to fire prevention, detection and suppression; and
- is responsive both to new challenges to public safety and to the needs of its user communities represented in the Practitioners' Forum and the Fire Business and Community Forum.

We will therefore support an invigorated programme of fire-related research which will:

- contribute to the development of the Fire Service College as a centre of technical excellence;

- harness the academic prowess of its students and staff;

while extending and building upon existing links with academia and other research institutions in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

Practitioners' Forum

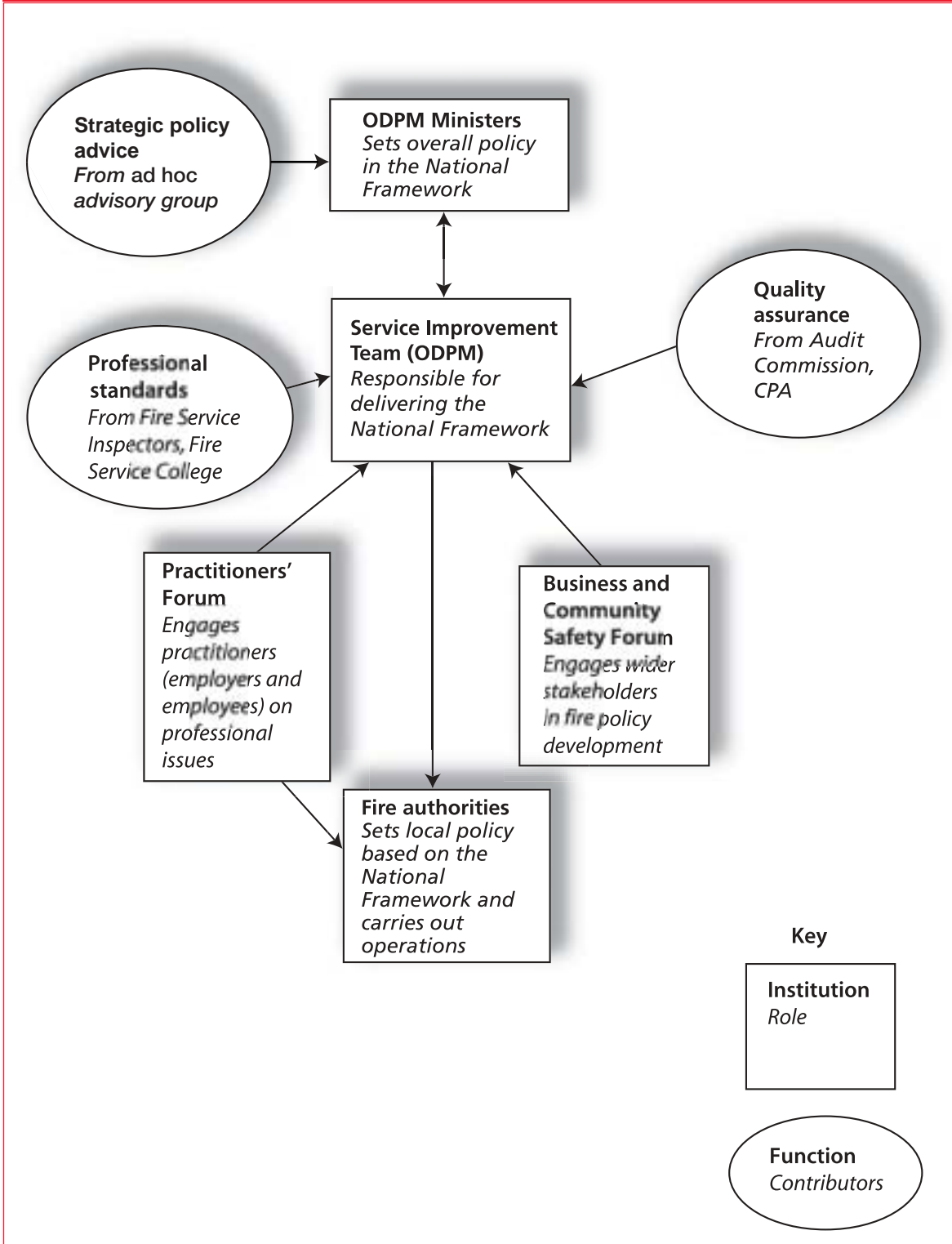
5.17 The Independent Review of the Fire Service recommended that there should be a forum to provide practitioner input into policy development. Again, we agree. This is not a substitute for the role of management, but it will assist in co-ordinating fire and rescue authorities' implementation of the National Framework, and it will provide a forum for discussion on best practice. That advice will include professional and technical input from the Fire Service Inspectorate and from the Fire Service College. We intend to give the lead in this new and challenging role to the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers' Association (CACFOA). The senior management of the fire and rescue service is a key resource in managing change, which has not been tapped to its full potential so far. Taking the lead in the new Practitioners' Forum – which will include providing the chair and secretariat for this new body – will mean that CACFOA achieves a pivotal function in fire and rescue service modernisation. We believe that, in this way, CACFOA can help ensure that the strategic direction for the service is developed in the light of practical considerations, and that specific policy initiatives are consistent with working practices on the ground and are deliverable.

Engagement of stakeholders

5.18 The fire and rescue service of the twenty-first century must not be insular. Its role in prevention, in tackling crime and in promoting social cohesion and neighbourhood renewal all mean that, in future, it must work alongside the wider community much more closely than at present. That community includes not just the direct members who work for the fire and rescue service, its managers and the fire authorities. It also includes business, industry, community representatives, wider fire and general safety interests (such as professional bodies), and many others. Until now, the Fire Safety Advisory Board has performed the function of co-ordinating all these various interests well. We wish to establish a new stakeholder advisory group, 'The Business and Community Safety Forum', building on that success. We will discuss with the independent chairman of the Fire Safety Advisory Board how to develop its role and responsibilities so as to enable stakeholders to engage in and contribute fully to the modernisation of the fire and rescue service.

5.19 The new institutional framework explained in this chapter will help to address the current weaknesses of the system. There will be clear ministerial direction, with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – the lead department for the fire and rescue service – taking a central role in driving forward changes and in monitoring performance. Ministers will have the benefits of independent expert advice in forming strategy. The new institutions will have a clarity of role and purpose, with input from all the relevant interests. They will complement each other in delivering change designed to provide a better fire and rescue service up and down the country.

Figure 8: The new institutional framework



We will set a new National Framework for raising the overall performance of the fire and rescue service. This will lead to a new improved system in which fire and rescue authorities give strategic direction, and in which senior managers are responsible for managing their services using modern methods and the best available technologies. There will be independent, rigorous quality assurance of the fire and rescue service using the type of processes that have proved their worth across local government. There will be a greater use of information technology in the service. The best fire and rescue authorities will get even better. Poorly performing authorities will be improved. Failure will be tackled. The overall effect of these changes will be to drive up standards and to deliver better value for money for the communities that the authorities serve.

6: The framework for improving performance

6.1 Improving the performance of all our public services is a central objective of the Government. The fire and rescue service has a long tradition as a locally based service, responsible to the local communities whose areas it serves. That model has existed for many years. While, in some respects, the fire and rescue service continues to perform well in terms of speed of reaction and response to fires, there is much that could be done to improve its performance in preventing fires, enhancing community safety and collaborating more widely. We will introduce new systems to improve the overall performance of fire and rescue authorities. Delivering a robust and rigorous system of better performance by these new authorities is a priority.

6.2 We will establish a system which:

- ensures that, within the new regional framework described in Chapter 4, local delivery can be tailored to meet local needs;

- where appropriate, sets outcome-oriented national standards because, in some areas of work, the public rightly expects minimum or consistent levels of service (not least where national security is concerned); and
- ensures that there is a consistent way of monitoring standards and improving performance. Because much of the funding for the service comes from the national taxpayer, the public rightly expects that the Government will ensure that taxpayers get value for money and that the service they receive improves.

6.3 The relationship between central government and local provision of services has developed enormously over recent years. Increasingly, the public is demanding improved public services and better value for money from the investment that they make, via their taxes, in those services. So, in all areas of public service – such as education, health or policing – the

challenge is to increase the value for money and to deliver those changes that best improve the quality of outputs. The fire and rescue service should be no different, in that respect, from any other public service. We will set a strong National Framework within which the service at regional and local level will operate.

6.4 At a national level, the role of the Government in this process is to set the overall strategy for the fire and rescue service and the targets which we expect fire and rescue authorities on the ground to achieve. Fire and rescue authorities and service management should be responsible for running the service on a day-to-day basis in a way that meets local needs, and for supporting continuous improvement. There should be a robust system for monitoring that process, for encouraging innovation and excellence, and also for identifying and dealing with poor performance, using inspection and other support measures.

The role of central government

6.5 The Government is responsible for setting clear objectives for the fire and rescue service. We will therefore establish a National Framework, as set out in Chapter 4, after consultation with stakeholders, within which all fire and rescue authorities will be obliged to work. This Framework will set standards and will spell out a strategy for delivering them. Just as the Government sets the broad parameters of the functions of other services, so it should set out the broad functions of the fire and rescue service. It does this for two reasons. First, it is our duty to specify the service standards that we, as a government, expect of the service. So we set national, quantified targets for the service to achieve – such as reduced deaths, improved safety provision, greater collaboration. Progress against these targets can then be measured

to assess the relative performance of different fire authorities. But second, there are also some functions that, on grounds of efficiency and economy, are more sensibly carried out on a shared basis, and central government should make that clear at a national level. Therefore, we will set out the standards that authorities should meet in terms of, for example:

- procurement of equipment to consistent standards;
- rationalisation of training and development; and
- preparation for handling chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents.

6.6 We also wish to reduce burdens to a minimum, consistent with maintaining high standards of safety and efficiency. That is why we have already acted to repeal Section 19 of the Fire Services Act 1947 and why we have increased local discretion on levels of fire cover. We intend to reduce burdens still further – including the burdens on business – by removing multiple and overlapping fire safety provisions and by replacing them with a simpler fire safety regime. This is not about removing necessary safeguards; it is about simplification and clarification. It is about giving fire and rescue authorities greater freedom to concentrate their enforcement efforts and resources much more on those businesses and premises where the risk to the public is highest, and less on those with lower risks.

6.7 However, the Government has a clear responsibility to intervene if necessary to deal with failing services and inadequate performance. If poor performance is identified, we will expect fire and rescue authorities to act decisively to rectify problems and we will work closely with them to ensure that this happens. Existing powers for ministers to intervene to deal with poor

performance will be retained within the new Framework. The Service Improvement Team will be the lead organisation for dealing with failing authorities.

6.8 There must be a fair balance between the devolution of central government powers, the autonomy of fire and rescue authorities and local government and the way in which powers are used. We will set out the overall broad objectives for the service, the delivery targets and any areas in which we wish to see greater standardisation. Beyond that the service should be devolved with a remit to ensure that regional management efficiencies are delivered and, at operational level, local needs are met (see Chapter 4). It is at local level that fire and rescue authorities should focus their efforts to ensure that the service meets the needs and concerns of the communities that work with and rely on them. We wish to see a process where intervention in the fire and rescue service is in inverse proportion to the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. We also wish to see increased freedom and flexibility for high-performing fire authorities.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

6.9 The Local Government White Paper *Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services* introduced the concept of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for local authorities. The Audit Commission, working with other inspectorates and key stakeholders, developed and implemented the methodology for CPA, which brings together performance-indicator data, plan assessments and inspection. These procedures provide an overall assessment of performance on service delivery and of each authority's corporate strengths and weaknesses. Last year, the Audit Commission published CPA outcomes for all

county and single-tier local authorities. It is currently implementing an appropriate CPA framework for district councils. This framework provides for each local authority:

- an improvement planning baseline for each council to work with government to deliver better services for local communities;
- the means to communicate clearly to local people a picture of the performance of their council;
- a basis for government to reduce and rationalise assessment measures and to reward high performance with increased flexibilities (such as reduced levels of inspection);
- priorities for the targeting of capacity support and inspection resources; and
- a means to identify and deal with failure.

We are asking the Audit Commission to work with us and other stakeholders to develop a performance assessment framework, using the lessons from local government CPA, as the basis for assessing the performance of fire and rescue authorities and their services, and for improvement planning. This framework will also form the basis for determining which fire and rescue authorities merit increased freedoms and flexibilities as a result of consistently good performance as measured against the tough national targets which we will set.

Best Value

6.10 The development and implementation of CPA and improvement planning will be supported by a 'Best Value' regime as a key performance management tool. This means that there will be a number of performance indicators for the service in order to help inform judgements on performance and support comparisons between different fire

and rescue authorities. The performance indicators for the fire and rescue service will be developed in support of the new assessment framework.

Inspection

6.11 External scrutiny plays a key role in raising performance. A new inspection regime will be introduced by the Audit Commission to help support improvement and to provide the building blocks towards the introduction of CPA. In future, the level of inspection for each fire authority will reflect its performance profile identified through the new CPA framework. We will work with the Audit Commission to develop this new regime. The Fire Service Inspectorate will contribute to this process.

6.12 The CPA and the new inspection regime will have three overriding objectives. It will:

- scrutinise independently the performance of fire and rescue authorities and the service as a whole, and it will produce public reports setting out the strengths

and weaknesses of each – this will include the extent to which each has developed its preventative systems and measures;

- provide a baseline for improvement planning to support improved standards, greater co-operation and more efficient use of resources within the fire and rescue service and between the emergency services where appropriate; and
- support greater freedom and flexibilities for high performers, targeting inspection and other capacity support measures in accordance with risk, identifying and dealing with poor performance.

The role of fire and rescue service management

6.13 Delivering improved local performance of fire and rescue services will require major cultural change. The focus will be on providing a high level of service to local communities with significant improvements in the quality of management at regional and local level, both in terms of local strategic direction

'Government ... needs to set out a clear framework for implementing policy across fire authorities and taking forward major change programmes.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 7.27)



from the authorities and in terms of day-to-day management of the fire and rescue service. Fire and rescue authorities will need stronger leadership and much improved strategic management than has been the case in many areas in the past. In addition, there will be challenging new roles for senior managers. In recognition of this, we will be opening up these posts (as well as those at a more junior level) to those with outside experience, as well as developing existing staff. In the past, many Chief Fire Officers have said that they did not feel they had the power to manage change and to modernise their services. In future, they will have that authority. They, and their senior managers, will be responsible to their fire and rescue authority for managing the overall performance of the service within their locality and for liaising with their local communities. They will be responsible for tackling failings and shortcomings in their services. They will have a crucial role in providing leadership and in improving performance. Authorities, via the regional management boards, will be responsible for ensuring that efficiency savings are made in each region as well as for targeting and supporting those parts of the service that underperform.

6.14 Raising the overall level of performance across the fire and rescue service as a whole will be a central objective of all authorities over the coming months and years. The Government will establish procedures for monitoring progress but the responsibility for making changes will rest with the fire and rescue authorities and, through them, their managers. To do this will require major changes in management and personnel systems.

Fire and rescue authorities should set policy for their fire and rescue service, and they should be accountable for the direction and performance of the service. Chief Fire Officers and senior service managers should have the operational responsibility for the service. Fire and rescue authority members and managers will need new skills. The National Joint Council should be reformed so that it is smaller, has a clearer remit and greater authority to negotiate.

7: A new approach to management

7.1 The changes described in previous chapters to the role, objectives and structure of the fire and rescue service, together with the new approach to giving national policy direction and to assessing performance, will make reform to the way the service is managed essential. These reforms will stretch from the overall, top-level relationship between government and the service, discussed in the previous chapter, right down to the way in which staff are managed on a day-to-day basis.

The relationship between fire and rescue authorities and managers

7.2 Fire authorities are, and will remain, employers of the fire and rescue service locally – in some areas in future this may be at a regional level. As with other services provided by local government, whether social services, housing or police, there must be a clear relationship between the authority and its service. The relationship we want to see is this: the fire and rescue authority will set policy and will be accountable for the overall direction and performance of the service, while the senior service managers of the fire authority will have operational responsibility to run

the service from day to day in accordance with those policies, thereby delivering a good service to the community.

7.3 It is the job of authorities to decide on priorities and on how the resources available within the agreed budget should be apportioned between priorities or between different types of work. Of course, they will need professional and technical advice from their senior staff. But they must set out the policy framework which managers will then apply on the ground. Their decisions about these and many other matters will be embodied in the Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) which we have now asked the existing fire authorities to produce, as set out in Chapter 3.

7.4 In producing IRMPs, fire authorities are taking on new and important responsibilities. Members of authorities will need more specific training in risk assessment and management. The Independent Review of the Fire Service recommended that ‘the Local Government Association and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities take steps to develop the contribution of elected members on fire authorities and to ensure that they give

stronger leadership in future'. We see the introduction of IRMPs as providing a focus for such activity.

7.5 Having set out its policies and priorities, the fire and rescue authority should not, under normal circumstances, be involved in the day-to-day management. That is for the senior managers of the fire and rescue service, who must have managerial independence. Indeed, at the heart of their role is the requirement to use the resources of the service to deliver, as effectively as possible, what the authority has set out in its plans.

7.6 This is a new challenge for the senior managers of the fire and rescue service. Many of them have recognised for some time the limitations of the national standards of fire cover and have argued for greater freedoms and flexibilities. But it is one thing to discuss this in the abstract and another to be faced with the difficult decisions which will have to be taken in reality. They will need support: first from their authority, which must set clear priorities and targets; second from their professional colleagues and from national resources, such as the Fire Service College, through the sharing of good practice; and third from their own management team through appropriate levels of delegation downwards and reporting upwards.

Fire and rescue authorities as employers

7.7 The role of the fire and rescue authorities as employers has come under the spotlight recently in relation to pay negotiations for uniformed staff, other than Chief Fire Officers, Assistants and Deputies. At present, their pay and terms and conditions of service are negotiated between the employers and employee representatives in the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades (the

NJC). The only recognised employee representative is the FBU. The employers' side of the NJC is 30 strong. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister does not have any formal role in the NJC, although, given its responsibility for local government finance generally and for fire and rescue service funding specifically, the Office is bound to have a view about the affordability of any pay deal and its implications for the council tax and for public sector pay policy.

7.8 There is also an NJC for Chief Fire Officers and Assistant Chief Fire Officers, where employees are represented by the Association of Principal Fire Officers. The pay and terms and conditions of non-uniformed staff are negotiated by the NJC for Local Government Services, which covers over 1.4 million employees across a wide range of services.

7.9 There has been much criticism of the NJC, as a result of the length of time it took to reach a settlement of the recent dispute. Some of this criticism may be misplaced. Negotiating a multi-year pay deal linked to radical changes in working practices, including many matters not directly in the remit of the NJC, was a challenging objective, made all the more taxing by the difficulty of finding common ground between the two sides and the absence of a clear national strategy or policy. However, it is also true that negotiations cannot be conducted effectively by large teams. The Independent Review of the Fire Service recommended that 'the NJC should be replaced by a smaller body, with executive authority to negotiate and the experience and skills to do so'. That is also our intention.

7.10 What the service needs is an effective pay negotiating machinery which does its work in the context of policies and strategies set elsewhere. The negotiations

'...Fire authorities will need to examine their working relationships with their Chief Officers in the light of the new approach to managing risk we have recommended.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 7.34)

can then respond to those policies and strategies rather than attempting to drive them. The institutions and structures described in earlier chapters, in particular the new National Framework, will provide the clear and coherent context and sense of direction that have so far been lacking. That alone would make the work of the NJC easier.

7.11 It has been suggested that we should go further and set up new pay review machinery for the fire and rescue service. We have decided that new bureaucracy of that kind would not be justified. But we have also decided that we will take certain powers, based on elements of other pay machinery, which will allow the Government to set the framework for negotiation between the fire authorities as employers' and employees' representatives.

7.12 First, we will take power to determine the number, composition and chairing of the negotiating body or bodies for England. We think there should be, as the Independent Review of the Fire Service recommended, a separate negotiating body for middle managers, to reflect their changing role within the service. In future, there will be fewer ranks and each of them will have a clearer responsibility for managing the resources under their command to deliver the outputs and outcomes set by the fire and rescue authority. The skills required will be quite different from those of fire fighters, with the greater focus on preventative measures.

7.13 We also agree with the Independent Review that a new negotiating body should involve representatives of the Retained Firefighters Union, the Fire Officers Association, and the Association of Principal Fire Officers. We see no prospect of such changes being made by agreement. That is why we intend to specify who should be

involved. We envisage three separate negotiating bodies covering different groups within the present grading structure:

- Chief Fire Officers and Assistant Chief Fire Officers;
- middle management; and
- fire fighters and control room staff.

The composition and chair of each body would be determined by the Deputy Prime Minister. The arrangement for non-uniformed staff would continue as now.

7.14 Finally, we intend to take powers to give guidance to any negotiating body which it would have to take into account in its work. The government has a legitimate interest in the outcome of pay negotiations and the impact on public sector pay policy, as well as the impact on the operation of the service, but we should not and do not want to step into the shoes of the fire and rescue authorities as employers. Rather than be drawn into detailed consideration of options as negotiations develop, we will set out our requirements openly before negotiations start. It will then be for the two sides to reach agreement within those limits.

7.15 We acknowledge that the agreement which has recently been negotiated between fire employers and the FBU recognises that the constitution of the NJC needs revision. The parties have agreed that 'by 30 November 2003 a working group representative of fire service stakeholders will propose revisions to the Constitution of the NJC. The report of this working group will be presented to the appropriate fire service stakeholders for ratification during December 2003.' We expect that what we say above about how the NJC might work better will be taken into account in this work.

7.16 We understand that the employers' side has plans to reform their side of the NJC so that there would be a smaller team, able to act with greater authority and decisiveness. We welcome these moves which would improve the workings of the negotiating body, even if no other steps were taken to do so.

7.17 In the light of these moves by both parties, we will keep under review the need for the proposed powers of intervention, depending on how far the outcome of the changes meets the need for new negotiating machinery fit for the purpose in a new service.

Strike action

7.18 The Independent Review of the Fire Service made no recommendations on the issue of restricting the legal ability of fire and rescue employees to take strike or industrial action, saying only that the question needed to be considered carefully by the Government. We have done so.

7.19 There is no explicit statutory right to strike in the UK. As well as recognising that an employee cannot be compelled to work, the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULRA) provides protections for workers taking industrial action and statutory immunity for trade unions where industrial action is lawfully organised. In addition, the ability to strike is seen as an important part of the freedom to associate under Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (although the Convention recognises that it may be necessary to impose restrictions on the right in relation to vital emergency services).

7.20 The number of strikes in Britain remains at an historically low level. But the recent fire fighters' dispute has raised the issue of placing restrictions on strike action in the fire and rescue service. The dispute has prompted suggestions that as fire fighters

staff a vital emergency service, like the armed forces or the police where strike action is unlawful, the fire and rescue service should operate within a similar framework. Restrictions on the ability to take strike action are in place for a significant number of employees in the UK - with many agreed voluntarily, as a result of changes agreed through normal bargaining.

7.21 Moreover, the ability to take strike action is already restricted, in narrow circumstances, by Section 240 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. This makes it a criminal offence for a person to breach his or her contract of employment (including by going on strike) where he or she knows that the probable consequences of his or her actions will be to endanger human life, cause serious injury, or destroy valuable property. It is also a criminal offence to incite others to commit an offence under that section. Where the Attorney General considers it to be in the public interest, he/she has a power, at common law, to apply for an injunction to prevent a breach of the criminal law. This power applies to section 240 as it does to any other criminal offence. However, the decision whether to apply for an injunction in any particular case is a matter for the Attorney General, who acts independently of Government in this role.

7.22 In addition, public sector trade unions and the TUC have long recognised the importance of maintaining essential services, even during periods of industrial action. The TUC published guidelines to this effect in 1979 - guidelines which remain in place for all TUC-affiliated unions. Particular concerns surround catastrophic incidents such as a rail crash or a terrorist attack in which a 'Gold Command' procedure is put in place. There must be clearly understood procedures in the

'The service of the future needs to make the best possible use of new technology and to adopt the streamlined structure, flexible skills and sophisticated management systems found elsewhere in the public and private sectors.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 7.35)

event of any further strike action by fire fighters to ensure that they can and will return to work in such circumstances.

7.23 The Armed Forces provided emergency cover during the recent fire strikes. We pay tribute to their work, and that of the police and other services in the dispute, in maintaining cover for the public. But the Armed Forces are not permanently equipped and trained to provide fire cover. They have their own responsibilities and commitments. Their ability to plan for and meet these commitments could be undermined by a requirement to provide emergency fire cover. As a result it would be wrong for any party to proceed on the basis that the Armed Forces will be available to provide emergency cover in the event of industrial action.

7.24 There clearly are strong arguments for introducing a broader and clearer restriction on the right to strike in a key emergency service like fire and rescue, particularly if strike action in the service concerned could result in a threat to life, as the fire service dispute unquestionably did. But there are also strong arguments for continuing to treat employees in the fire and rescue service in the same way as employees in other sectors, with fire fighters retaining the legal ability to take strike action, subject to their and their unions following the proper balloting and notification procedures.

7.25 In the Government's view, employees' ability to take lawful strike action should only be withdrawn in exceptional circumstances. While some may well argue that the experience of the recent fire strikes provide precisely such circumstances, the Government has no plans at present to remove from employees in the fire and rescue service existing freedoms under the law to take industrial action. But it will keep the position under close review.

Fire and rescue service senior management teams

7.26 We have said that, at the heart of the job of the senior management of the fire and rescue service, there will be the need to use the resources of the service to deliver the community safety priorities that the fire and rescue authority has set out in its Integrated Risk Management Plan. That plan will be informed by technical advice from the managers of the service so, to some extent at least, they will be implementing their own ideas. But it will be a new development for an authority to have to decide for itself what crewing arrangements – in terms of numbers, shift patterns, locations – are best for delivering the response standards set out in the plans, let alone drawing up work programmes on the prevention side, designed to achieve specified targets.

7.27 Managers at all levels will also need to develop their skills in setting realistic objectives, motivating staff, monitoring performance, giving feedback, taking action to improve the performance of teams and individuals, analysing data and considering alternative ways of achieving what is wanted. Those are skills which go far wider than those traditionally required in the fire service, so we want to ensure that there is the option of bringing in staff with outside experience as well as developing existing staff.

7.28 Other changes will also create demands for new skills, new ways of working and thus better management. We expect more collaborative working on such issues as human resource management or procurement, or more widely, as fire and rescue authorities recognise that they have shared or overlapping objectives which can best be achieved by working with other services and organisations. This will all put

a premium on understanding the context in which others work and on analysing how the skills and experience of the service can be used in that context. In particular, the new context of focusing on response to non-fire events, preventative measures and counter-terrorist work will demand new skills.

7.29 The experience of organising emergency cover during the FBU's strikes provided a useful insight into alternative ways of running control rooms. This has important implications for the future work of control room staff and for the development of new ways of assessing calls, and, in particular, for identifying false alarms which constitute a high proportion of current demands on the fire service.

7.30 All these new demands, and others yet to emerge, will require managers that are able to analyse what is needed, to identify the options available to meet those needs and to organise their staff and other resources to best effect in response. This reinforces the need for managers to deploy a range of skills for which specialist training will be required, or for expertise brought in from outside the service. Working up through the service and gaining promotion via that route will, in future, be only one of a number of routes to higher levels in the service and should depend on the acquisition of skills rather than the length of time served.

7.31 Not everyone will have the same skill and experience. The best basis for promotion should not always be performance in a lower grade. Managers should not assume that the demands of all posts at a particular level are the same (ie fire fighting). Nor should they judge someone's suitability for a task or a job by the length of time they have served. Managers will have to do what has long been commonplace in other sectors: consider what skills and competencies are right for the job and identify a candidate from inside or outside who can demonstrate that they have them.

7.32 Today's fire and rescue service requires modern management methods and skills. This includes a more efficient and streamlined system than the current system provides. It also means that there should be an increased role for the senior managers of the fire and rescue service in reporting to the fire and rescue authority. But it will also require changes in the day-to-day management of fire and rescue services and in personnel policy and practice. The next chapter looks at what this will mean for the staffing of the service of the future.

The fire service is an attractive career but, at present, it does not reflect the community it serves. It must recruit more widely. Its working practices and culture need to change. Terms and conditions of employment must be reformed to meet the needs not only of its staff but also of the public. The role of retained fire fighters is critical. We will consider the case for alternative pay arrangements for retained fire fighters and we will introduce an appropriate pension scheme for these fire fighters, recognising the variety of personal circumstances involved.

8: The fire and rescue service as a place to work

8.1 Fire fighters do a good job and, as a community, we are grateful to them for the job they do. At times it can be a dangerous job, although deaths in the service are rare and, over the past 10 years, injuries in the course of fighting fires have fallen by half. But people who join the fire and rescue service do so knowing that they may have to risk their lives rescuing others from peril.

8.2 With some 40 applicants for every full-time post, the fire and rescue service is a very attractive place to work, in terms of employee recruitment and retention within the labour market. But there are problems. Applicants to the operational service can only join as trainee fire fighters and work their way up the ranks – of which there are 12. No qualifications are required to join and there is no process whereby the best performers can progress quickly to more senior positions. This acts as a disincentive to graduates or other ambitious, talented people to join the service. For example, the

Independent Review of the Fire Service found that only some 2% of those employed in the fire service are graduates, compared to 25% in the police.

8.3 The Review also found evidence of sexual and racial discrimination in many parts of the service. The service does not represent the community it serves. In 2002, women accounted for only 1.74% of the operational workforce, while ethnic minority staff accounted for just 1.8% of the total workforce. This can partly be explained by the shift system, which is neither operationally efficient nor family friendly. Members of the service are subject to 'discipline regulations', which are anachronistic and do not sit well with the European Convention on Human Rights or the Human Rights Act of 1998. This chapter sets out what we are going to do to modernise personnel practice throughout the industry.

Recruitment and opportunities for development

8.4 The current 'Fire Service Appointments and Promotions Regulations' allow only one route for recruitment into the operational arm of the fire and rescue service. Whatever their skills and experience, applicants can only join at the bottom of the rank structure, as trainee fire fighters. Under current regulations, the only qualification required for entry is that applicants meet a 'fitness standard' (although, in practice, many authorities apply other conditions). In other words, although management experience and educational qualifications are not required, applicants must already be fit enough to do the job before entering training. This is in sharp contrast to other emergency services, where recruitment is more broadly based and trainees can develop the level of fitness required during their training.

8.5 The fire service provides limited opportunities for the development for its staff, and little reward for those who do develop their skills and talents to meet the demands of their job. Moreover, the community's new expectations of the fire and rescue service in promoting prevention and fire safety, in working with other agencies to reduce arson attacks and in addressing the risk of terrorism, all require new skills. Acquiring these skills is not reflected in the reward structure. The fire and rescue service of the future will, for example, need competencies in presentational skills, developing community relationships, experience of service delivery and management techniques.

8.6 The need for change has been recognised. For the past 10 years, the Government, the employers and the unions have been working jointly on a solution.

This year we have formally approved a new system of training and development, based on national standards and a framework of skills and competencies – the 'Integrated Personal Development System', or IPDS. The Fire Service College will play a leading role in introducing this new system. It includes all aspects of a fire fighter's activities from initial recruitment, selection, training, in-service development and progression through to retirement. The principles of IPDS apply to all members of the fire and rescue service, including control room staff, non-uniformed staff, retained and part-time personnel. IPDS will provide common standards across the service and will enable staff to demonstrate their competence in their role through workplace assessment. IPDS is the cornerstone of the Government's reform of the human resource management of the fire and rescue service. Together with the introduction of IPDS, we intend to:

- replace the 12 ranks of the fire and rescue service with seven 'roles', which reflect the work that fire fighters actually do;
- introduce multi-level entry, so that people can enter the fire and rescue service at a level appropriate to their qualifications and experience, including the most senior levels; and
- introduce accelerated development schemes, so that members of the fire and rescue service who have been identified as having the potential to progress to strategic management levels can receive appropriate development at an early stage in their careers.

This will enable people to move flexibly through the service as they gain the necessary skills. The different roles are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Different roles of the fire and rescue service		
Supervisory management	Middle management	Strategic management
Fire fighter/control operator	Station management	Area management
Crew management	Group management	Brigade management
Control management		

Moreover, new selection tests for the fire and rescue service are currently under development and are designed to ensure that applicants' abilities and potential are effectively assessed against standards relevant to the requirements of the modern fire fighter role. This should include abilities relevant to the new wider preventative context of the fire and rescue service and should not just focus on fighting fires. It will enable the service to develop, at all levels, the skills and specialisms it needs for the future, focusing on those which support fire prevention rather than responding to fire.

8.7 Medical standards for employment within the fire and rescue service will also be reviewed to ensure that the requirements are directly job-related and are compatible with

the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. We will ensure that the medical and physical requirements for employment within the fire and rescue service are practical, realistic and role relevant.

Working culture

8.8 The current, very limited, recruitment practice of the fire and rescue service, together with the rigid watch structure, has led to a closed working culture. A career in the service is not attractive to either women or ethnic minorities. Bullying and harassment are widely reported. The Independent Review of the Fire Service said:

'We have been, frankly, appalled at some of the stories we have heard of bullying and harassment. The harassment has

'...one of the more important changes required will be a move to more flexible shift patterns and a move away from single-tier entry. Recruitment practices will also need to change to attract more women applicants and people from ethnic minorities.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 7.48)



been both racial and sexual, even given the very small numbers of non-white and female personnel in the service. Such behaviour is illegal as well as being morally repugnant; it is also not in the best interests of the fire service.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 7.40)

This is not tolerable. We will take action, working with the employers and the unions, to promote a more diverse culture in the fire and rescue service. To do the job effectively in the community, the service must better reflect the community it serves.

8.9 The introduction of IPDS, together with opening up recruitment to those with the skills and qualifications to fulfil a 'role' (rather than a rank) in the service, should go some way to tackling this issue. The modern fire and rescue service has diverse needs and requires a diverse workforce to supply them. Diversity is about getting the best people with the best skills and not excluding people just because their faces do not fit, or because they cannot conform exactly to current working patterns. Diversity is also plain good business practice, enabling employers to choose their workforce from as wide a pool of potential employees as possible. Legislation already exists to promote diversity in the workplace. In the fire and rescue service we will promote diversity in management practice and in training. As part of the National Framework we will further develop the existing diversity strategy to support the service: to raise awareness of the career opportunities on offer to all sections of the community; to use more effective recruitment techniques; to tackle barriers to promotion and progression; and to address the issues affecting staff retention. This strategy will include reforming the structural rigidities in pay and terms and

conditions of employment that work against diversity. It will also include making adequate provision for part-time working.

West Midlands

West Midlands Fire Service holds awareness evenings for women interested in becoming fire fighters. The evenings are hosted by female fire fighters. Currently, West Midlands employs 25 female fire fighters. It is also making progress with the recruitment of ethnic minorities: West Midlands employs 80 people from ethnic minority groups within its operational workforce. The Fire Service met its target for 2002 to increase the representation of ethnic minorities in its non-uniformed workforce.

Warwickshire

Firm links have been established with the two Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) race equality councils within Warwickshire and the Black Community Action Group. The service is developing a community contact strategy with these groups and meetings with representatives are taking place. Warwickshire exceeded its 2002 targets to improve the representation of ethnic minorities within its uniformed and non-uniformed sectors.

Devon

The Authority has supported the formation of the Support Officers Network, which consists of volunteers and personnel staff who offer a confidential 24 hour helpline and a range of other support, including counselling and mediation. There is an ongoing training programme undertaken by the Network for all staff, covering such issues as overall policy awareness and dignity at work.

Kent

Kent Fire Service has completed a programme of projects at 27 of its premises to provide facilities for female fire fighters, access and facilities for the disabled, and places of worship for use by fire service staff and by the community. Kent exceeded its 2002 targets to improve the representation of ethnic minorities within its uniformed and non-uniformed sectors.

West Yorkshire

West Yorkshire Fire Service has developed community access centres at three fire stations in areas with a high proportion of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds (Dewsbury, Halifax and Stanningley).

8.10 One of the key elements of the working culture in the fire service is the current shift system. Although popular with many current fire fighters, it does not necessarily suit the needs either of the service or of the community it is meant to serve. With the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Planning, managers will want to have more flexibility to introduce shift patterns according to need. Those patterns will be consistent with health and safety standards – and management will set them so that they can be more attractive to a diverse workforce. Fire fighters will be consulted before variations to local shift systems are introduced.

8.11 The Technical Annex to this White Paper describes some different work patterns that illustrate how fire authorities could deliver a more effective and efficient fire service which matches resources to variations in demand. For instance, the period of duty at day crewed fire stations could be moved from the current 9am to 5pm to times which match the hours of

greatest demand. Or, at stations with more than one pump, one fire engine could move from being constantly crewed to being crewed when demand is greatest, perhaps with cover on a retained basis at other times. This could be achieved with staff working on different duty systems on the same station, each system providing crew for a particular vehicle (as already happens where wholetime and retained fire fighters share a station). Alternatively, all the wholetime staff at a station could work a new pattern of shifts, including day shifts and night shifts as now, but also ‘peak period’ shifts on the pumps that are not crewed round the clock.

8.12 In developing their Integrated Risk Management Planning, authorities will put forward a range of their own ideas for working patterns which best match the peaks and troughs of demand. We believe that, as the Technical Annex to this White Paper suggests, it is possible to do this without necessarily requiring immediate and wholesale change in everyone’s shift patterns. Indeed, on the basis of our examples, a majority of staff would face no immediate change.

Pay, terms and conditions of employment

8.13 There are a number of rigidities in the organisation, management and terms and conditions of employment of the fire service. A modern dynamic organisation requires a pay structure that rewards staff according to what they do and how well they do it, together with terms and conditions that are fair, that treat different people equitably and that encourage as wide a range of people as possible to join the service. It requires modern, professional human resources (HR) support, and we will work with the employers to improve the quality of HR management in the service. And it requires a clear basic framework for

terms and conditions of employment, considerably less detailed than the current 'Grey Book', which reflects the modernised service and allows for detailed conditions to be drawn up for local application.

Pay

8.14 We have already said that, as a principle, we will ensure that staff are appropriately rewarded for the work that they do. Since 1978, fire service pay has been based on national pay scales, and annual increases have been determined by a formula based on average upper-quartile male manual workers' earnings. Although this formula has provided a means of avoiding national pay disputes for nearly 25 years, it has left no leeway for changing trends in the overall economy, local employment conditions or within the work done by the fire service.

8.15 Public sector pay policy should drive – and reward – increases in performance and productivity. It should be responsive to particular, sometimes local, recruitment and retention difficulties. We are investing heavily in the public services and we must ensure that we achieve value for money from that investment. This is vital in the fire and rescue service.

8.16 Fire fighters and control room staff are employed by their fire authorities and their pay is therefore a matter for them to negotiate with their employers through the National Joint Council (NJC) for local authorities' fire brigades. However, we also believe it is in the public's interest that whatever pay system replaces the old formula should be consistent with the policy we have set out on public sector pay more generally. So we will work closely with the employers' and the employees' representatives to ensure that the new system is fair to staff and delivers value for money for the public. Under the

arrangements described in Chapter 7, we will take powers to give guidance to the NJC which it would have to take into account in its work.

The pension scheme

8.17 The current pension scheme is part of the structure which reinforces inflexibility in the service. It discourages diversity and more flexible working patterns by rewarding disproportionately those who come into the scheme and stay in, and by penalising those who join late and leave early. It is also expensive, both for those who work within the service and for their employers. Fire fighters contribute 11% of their pay towards their pension scheme. This high level of contribution discourages fire fighters from working beyond 30 years of service, by which time they accrue full pension rights, even if they wish to do so. This helps to explain the high proportion of fire fighters who retire in their late forties and early fifties. Together with the very substantial employers' contribution, the cost of the pension scheme amounts to over 35% of pensionable pay – making it the most expensive scheme in the public sector. Meeting pension liabilities is currently a huge burden for fire authorities. The current level of early ill-health retirements – at 43% and believed to be the highest in the public sector – adds to that burden.

8.18 Since the present pension arrangements were developed in 1948, the dangers involved in fire fighting have been mitigated by improved equipment and greater attention to risk management. The work of the fire and rescue service presents obvious risks, and the ill-health and injury benefits need to reflect this. But, as found by the Independent Review of the Fire Service, the job of a fire fighter does not carry any greater risk than many other occupations. At present, those who are no longer fit to

carry out the full range of fire-fighting duties are forced to retire. Yet much of the work of the modern fire and rescue service that is critical for reducing the risk of fire does not involve fighting fires. In particular, community fire safety work and other preventative initiatives could easily be carried out by staff who do not fight fires.

8.19 The high cost of the pension scheme has to be addressed. We will tackle the high level of ill-health retirement and ensure that the system is not open to abuse. We have already issued guidance on measures to improve the management of ill-health, including the use of independent medical assessment before early retirement on ill-health grounds is approved. In addition we will:

- broaden the definition of the term 'fire fighter' to allow a wider range of those employed in the service to remain in the pension scheme;
- place an obligation on fire and rescue authorities to use independent medical assessment before approving applications for early retirements on ill-health grounds;
- introduce alternative arrangements for local authority funding of service pensions, in consultation with the fire and rescue authorities; and
- introduce a new scheme more suited to the service of the future and reflecting changes in the relevant tax and regulatory framework on which there is already public consultation.

Discipline arrangements

8.20 The arrangements in the fire and rescue service for managing discipline are anachronistic. They originate from the military system of discipline in operation during World War II and all parties regard them as seriously in need of review. They

involve a cumbersome and time-consuming process which entitles uniformed members of the service to appeal to the Secretary of State, in addition to their statutory right to appeal to an employment tribunal. The regulations do not fit with today's priorities for an inclusive workforce. For example, 'untidiness' continues to be an offence while harassment and bullying are not.

8.21 In line with the recommendation of the Independent Review of the Fire Service, we will abolish the current discipline regulations and replace them with framework regulations based on the most up-to-date ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) best practice guidance.

Disputes

8.22 The existing disputes machinery is not effective and is in urgent need of reform. The process has become lengthy and bureaucratic. Because reference to the disputes and grievance procedure can be made by one party acting unilaterally, issues escalate quickly to the national level where they get bogged down in cumbersome procedure. The status quo prevails until the dispute is resolved, and this has sometimes been used as a tactical weapon in local industrial relations to block management change.

8.23 We believe that the disputes machinery should be reformed along the lines of ACAS guidance. Such reforms should include (but not be limited to):

- reference to the disputes procedure only where both sides agree;
- tighter terms of reference before invoking the national procedures;
- greater use of independent tribunal members rather than, as at the moment, confining membership to the NJC; and

- maximising the ability of the tribunal to find workable solutions by relieving it of the need to adopt an over-legalistic approach to its proceedings.

8.24 We hope that reform along the lines described above will be agreed voluntarily. If, however, this does not prove possible and the disputes procedure continues to be used as a device for frustrating reform, we can include provisions in the forthcoming legislation to create a new set of procedures along the lines set out above.

Retained fire fighters

8.25 Retained fire fighters currently provide 30% of the total workforce of the fire service and operate 60% of appliances. They provide the primary means of cover in rural areas. Their service is based around risk in the local community. They respond when needed and are paid primarily for responding to risk. At any one time, there are probably as many retained members of the fire service on duty as wholetime fire fighters.

Retained fire fighters provide an 'on call' part-time service. They respond to fire and emergency calls in the same way as wholetime fire fighters, using the same appliances and equipment. The difference is that the retained fire fighters are 'on call' in their homes rather than at a station.

Retained fire fighters are obliged, during all hours of declared availability, to remain within close proximity of their fire station, so that they can respond quickly. The importance of these fire fighters is their close links to the community and their enthusiasm and commitment. For example, retained fire fighters in Devon and in Mid and West Wales have been at the forefront in developing the First Responder schemes, which are an important addition to the emergency service response in rural areas and which are an excellent example of partnership working.



'The relationship between retained fire fighters and their wholetime counterparts must be modernised to remove the implication of a second class service and to allow retained fire fighters to play their full part in providing the service local communities need.'
(Independent Review of the Fire Service, Chapter 11)

8.26 For most, the 'on call' service is a second job and therefore they bring a wider experience to the role. Yet they are not afforded a breadth of experience or development opportunities, such as community fire safety work, comparable to wholetime colleagues. A material amount of their time may be spent in the service of their community fighting fires and responding to emergency calls, yet they have not been allowed to apply for senior management positions. They do not have access to a pension scheme, and there is a lack of a regular level of income from fire fighting other than the retainer fee. Indeed, the objective set out in this White Paper to move the service towards risk prevention means that the current basis for payment, which is primarily based on attendance at incidents, is clearly inappropriate for the future.

8.27 A major problem for the fire and rescue service is the recruitment of retained fire fighters. Nationally it is about 20% short of complement. The system of flexible local fire cover needs to attract a new pool of applicants who would not have considered the opportunity previously. The recruitment problems stem in part from the level of pay, the lack of a pension, the lack of development opportunities and the often inflexible availability system – in short, a lack of recognition of their contribution.

8.28 We will take action to correct this position. We are committed to:

- considering the case for alternative pay arrangements linked to wholetime pay for the retained fire fighters;
- introducing an appropriate pension scheme for the retained fire fighters, recognising the variety of personal circumstances involved;

- within IPDS, providing a harmonised training platform so that retained personnel can be used more flexibly in combination with wholetime staff;
- supporting development and promotion opportunities for all fire fighters; and
- encouraging a variety of working patterns using a flexible roster approach, such as that used for nurses in the NHS.

These changes will mean that, in future, all fire fighters will have the opportunity of a worthwhile and fulfilling career in the fire and rescue service. We believe these proposals will attract a much wider cross-section of society.

The fire and rescue service as a place to work

8.29 The fire and rescue service offers an attractive career, and it will continue to do so. In future, it will attract a more diverse and talented range of people. This is a necessary development if it is to meet the new demands placed by community fire safety and by wider emergency prevention, such as the response to environmental incidents and counter-terrorist activity. It will offer a fair deal for its staff, in terms of pay and conditions and opportunities for development. And it will offer protection – as well as value for money – to the public.

The changes described in this White Paper will have benefits for everyone. For the public will come the assurance that fire and rescue service resources have been deployed so as to tackle the areas of greatest risk – and the assurance that resources are being deployed efficiently as well as effectively. For business will come a more manageable framework of fire safety legislation. Fire and rescue authorities will benefit from a clear framework of accountability. Senior fire and rescue service management will have greater operational freedom. Fire and rescue service staff will benefit too. There will be more opportunities for development and advancement. Working practices will be more family friendly. There will be a reward structure that is fair to staff and fair to the public.

9: The benefits of change

9.1 The Government is determined to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. The fire and rescue service is no exception. The public is entitled to good value for money and it rightly expects high standards. Implementing the proposals for change in this White Paper will ensure there is a flexible front-line fire and rescue service that is able to face the challenges of today and the future – focusing on preventing fires, dealing with the new hazards of environmental threats and terrorism, as well as fighting fires.

9.2 The potential benefits of change are enormous – for the public, for business, for the fire community and, indeed, for fire fighters themselves.

The benefits to the public

9.3 What the public wants first and foremost from the fire and rescue service is improved public safety with a reduction in the loss of life, injury, and economic and

social cost arising from fires and other hazards. It is a clear, specific and legitimate goal. It should be achievable.

9.4 Many fires can be avoided. That should be the primary objective, as it offers the most immediate and direct benefits. Hence, the emphasis of the modern service must be on the prevention of fire rather than on methods of dealing with fires after they have started. This emphasis will mean that the resources of the fire and rescue service need to be deployed in a more effective way to educate the public so that people take simple, sensible, basic precautions. They should be able to have working smoke alarms to warn them should a fire occur and have escape plans to enable them to get out. Installing and then maintaining effective smoke alarms in those parts of the community where take up is lowest (such as in some ethnic minority communities) can yield disproportionate benefits.

9.5 Where fires do break out, the public then rightly expects that the fire and rescue service resources should be deployed as efficiently and effectively as possible, and that priority be given to saving lives. Our proposals in this White Paper for moving to a risk-based approach will mean some changes to the working practices of fire fighters to ensure that shift patterns fit demand, to allow different crewing levels at different times of the day and to allow staff to move more easily between fire stations. The benefits to the public are clear. The lessons learned from the experience of providing alternative emergency cover during the recent fire strikes confirm what can be achieved through a risk assessment approach and more flexible crewing and shifts.

9.6 Our proposals will not involve sweeping changes which would put the safety of the public at risk. What they will do is underline our commitment to the safety of the public as the primary goal. Our changes will lead to new arrangements that are demonstrably better than they are now. Consistent with national standards and expectations, those changes will be initiated locally, will be subject to local consultation with communities and key stakeholders, and will reflect local circumstances. Fire fighters will continue to be part of a service rooted in local communities and reflecting the needs of those communities.

9.7 Finally, the public rightly expects efficiency. Our proposals for restructuring the service and its institutions will increase value for money and will improve safety, while respecting local links with the service.

The benefits for business

9.8 For business, what is needed and what we will deliver is a fundamental reform of fire safety legislation. Fire safety law is

currently scattered among many different pieces of legislation. It is sometimes inconsistent and can be difficult to understand.

9.9 The fire safety aspects of the Building Regulations will continue to apply to most new, altered or extended premises. Otherwise there should be a simpler regime for ongoing fire safety, applying to all workplaces and other non-domestic premises. That is what our proposed risk-based approach to statutory fire safety will provide. We will bring forward detailed proposals, taking account of responses to last year's consultation. Responsibility for fire safety under the reformed fire precautions legislation will rest with the person responsible for the premises. Protection will be provided to persons inside the buildings and those who might be affected by a fire. This statutory framework will complement the integrated risk management approach we are introducing this year.

9.10 The reduction in bureaucracy that will come about from ending the requirement for fire certificates will be a direct financial benefit to business. Moving to a risk-based approach aimed at saving lives does not mean that commercial and industrial property will not receive appropriate protection.

The benefits for the fire community

9.11 Our proposals will mean effective devolution and delegation to the front line, within a National Framework to ensure the delivery of high standards and a clear framework of accountability. That is what fire authorities have been wanting for many years.

9.12 We will ensure that fire and rescue authorities and their managers have the necessary flexibility and freedoms to make decisions in the best interests of local

communities. It is not the job of central government to frustrate innovation or prevent local best practice laying the foundations for future improvements and wider reform.

9.13 The initiatives we have already taken to repeal Section 19 of the Fire Services Act 1947, and to enable changes to working practices, contribute directly towards this aim, facilitating maximum local flexibility within agreed national standards and objectives.

9.14 Our proposals for a stronger regional approach to fire and rescue will bring the benefit of efficiency and economies of scale in, for example, procurement. We remain determined to encourage and promote greater collaborative working both with other fire authorities and with other emergency services and agencies. Regional co-operation is a means of ensuring operational effectiveness, particularly in ensuring that fire authorities have the capability to respond to demands which go beyond the resources of many existing authorities. It is about the service becoming less insular and recognising that the people and resources are there to serve the community. It is about working together, proactively, to meet the public need across a wide range of activities.

The benefits for fire and rescue service staff

9.15 The benefits of change will be felt by the fire and rescue service and the fire fighters themselves. One of the more depressing features of the recent industrial dispute has been some fire brigades' refusal to see the process of modernisation and reform as an opportunity, and instead to represent it as a threat. The reality is that reform offers not only a better service for the public but also a more rewarding career for the men and women who provide it.

9.16 The reforms we are proposing in this White Paper offer the prospect of a more professional and better managed service, particularly through implementation in the coming months of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS), which the Government and all in the fire community support. This offers wider management training opportunities, particularly at the more senior levels of the service, along with increased investment and improvements in human resources skills. IPDS offers the prospect of promotion and advancement on the basis of merit and not on time-serving.

9.17 For fire fighters and other fire and rescue service staff, IPDS will give broader career options and the ability to develop a wider range of skills and competencies. It will enable retained fire fighters to be fully integrated into the service. It will mean that specialist staff get proper recognition for the contribution they make and it will open up promotion opportunities for them. It will allow experienced staff to continue to make a valuable contribution as they get older and their fitness declines, rather than being forced to retire. It will allow the fire and rescue service to attract from outside the additional experience and skills which it desperately needs.

9.18 Vitally, more flexible working practices promise a family friendly environment. They will also help breakdown a heavy-handed culture which discourages diversity and is deeply damaging. We have made it clear that we are determined that the service should directly confront bullying, racism and resistance to equality, and that it should take more effective measures to recruit more women and ethnic minorities.

9.19 Finally, reform offers the opportunity to develop a proper reward structure that is fair to staff and fair to the public. In those services for which the public foots the bill, the public is right to expect remuneration

arrangements which reflect affordability, which encourage improved service delivery and which reward good performance. Employers need the means to ensure recruitment and retention of staff, and the capacity to address local issues or skills shortages. Staff should expect to be able to grow their earnings over time by developing accredited, productive skills and competencies, and they should enjoy a choice of career paths.

9.20 From now on we will look to the employers and the unions to develop a new pay structure which balances these interests. IPDS already has the potential to provide an appropriate structure. As the reform agenda is delivered, so pay can increase. That is the positive outcome of modernisation for fire and rescue service pay.

The benefits of change

9.21 In the words of the Independent Review of the Fire Service:

'The prizes are considerable in terms of a better service for the public and a better and more rewarding career for the men and women who make up the service. Reform will unlock the individual's potential and give them the opportunity to demonstrate what they can offer. There will be new and exciting career paths, more suited to personal aspirations and circumstances, which enable the individual to take control of their own circumstances and develop in ways which suit them and their families. Coupled with this will be greater respect for personal and cultural differences, a more diverse mixture of people employed by the fire service, on a range of family-friendly and flexible working patterns. And, over time, as everyone develops their own careers and skills and embraces change, the higher performance which results will bring higher salaries. Over all of this the professionalism of the fire service will continue as before, with even closer links to local communities and the continued high esteem of the general public and partner organisations.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 12.49)

We endorse those sentiments.

This White Paper sets out a comprehensive programme of action as a result of which the fire and rescue service will be modernised and transformed over the coming months. There will be no delay. Straight away we will initiate a programme of change to reform the fire and rescue service so that it can deliver the vision we have set out in this White Paper. We will legislate as soon as possible to implement those aspects of the programme that need new law. The new Service Improvement Team will be responsible for ensuring that the programme of change is delivered.

10: The way ahead

10.1 For too long reform and modernisation of the fire and rescue service have been avoided. We are determined that, this time, that does not happen. As the Independent Review of the Fire Service said, ‘staying where we are is not an option’. The changes that we are proposing in this White Paper are essential if fire fighters are to have all the opportunities they deserve to reach their full potential and are to be rewarded appropriately for their skills and experience. They should have flexible, modern work practices as well as secure pensions arrangements. Equally, we are determined that the structure of the service, and the institutions and systems for managing the service, are reformed so that the service becomes more efficient, in terms of the way in which resources are used, and more effective in terms of targeting those areas of greatest risk. To do that, change is essential.

10.2 The reforms that we propose to implement will need to be managed. They fall into two broad categories:

- those reforms that require changes to primary legislation; and
- other changes.

10.3 We are determined to press ahead quickly on this twin-track approach. We will introduce, as soon as parliamentary time permits, a new Bill to set the legal framework for delivering the changes that we have outlined in this White Paper. The legislation will recognise the role that the fire and rescue service now has in prevention and in responding to non-fire-related emergencies, and it will facilitate reform of the structure and governing institutions of the fire and rescue service. It will set in hand the process for winding up the bureaucratic system of advisory bodies.

10.4 As part of its role in overseeing the implementation of reform, the Service Improvement Team will draw up a comprehensive action plan that will include a detailed timetable for the delivery of changes. This will be published once the position in respect of future legislation becomes clear, and after consultation with key stakeholders.

10.5 Legislative change is only one part of the transformation that we envisage. There is a range of measures beyond the legislative ones that can and will be delivered sooner. These changes will be driven through by the Office of the Deputy

Prime Minister, advised, as necessary, by the new institutions established following this White Paper.

10.6 Work on these will start immediately:

- We will set up a new group of advisors to provide strategic advice to ministers on fire and rescue issues.
- We will establish a new Practitioners' Forum with a wide membership representing all the stakeholders of the industry. We will work with CACFOA who will take the lead in setting up this body.
- We will set up a Business and Community Safety Forum, building on the success of the Fire Safety Advisory Board.
- We will work with the Audit Commission to establish the new Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework for monitoring and inspecting fire and rescue service performance.
- We will work with the Local Government Association and other key stakeholders, including individual local authorities, to set out the immediate tasks needed to introduce regional management boards, the timetable and process for establishing them in the different regions, and how the details of the structure and membership should be determined in each region.
- We will set out our proposals for the new fire and rescue service pensions scheme for further consultation with employers' and employees' representatives.
- We will work with the employers' and employees' organisations to develop a new structure that employs part-time (or retained) fire fighters on the same basis as their full-time colleagues.

- We will amend the Appointment and Promotion Regulations to allow multi-tier entry.
- We will repeal the Discipline Regulations.
- We will amend the Training Regulations.

10.7 We will publish, in due course, a document setting out the timetable for delivering each of these critical elements of reform. We will also, as indicated in this White Paper, publish for consultation next year the Government's first National Framework for the fire and rescue service. In future, the Framework will be reviewed regularly and amended, as necessary, to ensure that the structure, direction and targets of the service remain sound and that the document continues to reflect the changing environment within which the fire and rescue service works.

10.8 The new Service Improvement Team will be responsible for driving the process of change forward. Its remit will be:

- to monitor progress on the delivery of the agenda set out in this White Paper;
- to report systematically and regularly to the Deputy Prime Minister and other ministers, as necessary, on progress;
- to report publicly on progress – via the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's web site – so that the process of change is open and transparent;
- to identify any areas of slippage in the reform programme and to offer support in addressing and tackling shortcomings or failings;
- to ensure that the new institutional framework is put in place and that it operates in the flexible non-bureaucratic way envisaged; and
- to champion and encourage change in all parts of the service.

10.9 This is a massive agenda for change but it is a necessary one. For too long we have all avoided taking action on these critical issues. The fire and rescue service has a long and proud tradition. It is regarded well by the public who it serves. But that does not mean it should be immune from change or that the inherent inefficiencies and weaknesses of the system should not be tackled. They should be and they will be. The Independent Review of

the Fire Service last year recommended a programme for change. In this White Paper we set out the way in which such a programme will be implemented. We will reform and transform the fire and rescue service into a service focused on prevention and its wider new remit. A service that is well managed and efficient. In doing so, we will ensure that our vision of a modern, effective and efficient service for the twenty-first century is delivered.



‘The important message is for everyone to recognise both the need for change and the gains from doing so. Staying where we are is not an option, and we believe that reform will bring greater gains for everyone ... We leave you with the words of one of the members of the fire service who met us during one of our visits. Her message, quite simply, was “don’t let us down this time”.’

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, foreword)

Technical Annex

Examples of different working patterns for fire fighters

1. The following are all examples of ideas which fire authorities could explore as options for achieving a better match between demand and the distribution of resources. They have not been possible under current rules about crewing and fire cover. However, as unnecessary prescriptions are removed and greater flexibility is available to authorities, these and other options for providing a more effective and efficient fire and rescue service will be available.

Extending nucleus crewing

2. Considerable numbers of retained fire engines are unusable every day because of staff shortages. Typically, machines go out of service as retained fire fighters commute to work, coming back on call at night. This puts more pressure on other stations and could lead in the long term to the closure of a retained station or its conversion to a wholetime crew.

3. One way of dealing with this situation is nucleus crewing, where there is a small permanent daytime crew of wholetime fire fighters at a station, who are supplemented by retained fire fighters when there is a call. The wholetime crew are not enough to crew the fire engine on their own but they can with the help of the retained fire fighters. This arrangement guarantees enough fire fighters being available to turn out the fire

engine. Thus, the station remains available and the maximum use of retained fire fighters is made.

4. This idea could be extended to solve problems caused by short-term shortages of retained fire fighters, by moving wholetime fire fighters on a temporary basis to retained stations to cover shortages in staff which would otherwise take a vehicle out of service. This would not be a solution to long-term recruitment problems among retained fire fighters but it would help to ensure the effective use of retained stations and staff during short-term difficulties. In addition, some wholetime staff might find detachments to retained stations an attractive alternative to standard shifts involving night working.

Moving from day crewing to more variable crewing

5. Day crewed stations may be crewed by wholetime fire fighters from Monday to Friday or seven days a week. In either case, day crew fire fighters currently work normal office hours, with stand-by/retained duty outside those times. Consequently, the fastest response to a call will only happen during the normal working day. This may not match the times of day when there is the greatest demand for fire cover.

6. The wholetime period of duty could be moved from 9am to 5pm to the period of greatest need. That could be measured in a number of ways – emergency calls, community safety work, other duties, or a balance between all of these – depending on local circumstances.

Combining wholetime and day/variable crewing at one station

7. Around 160 fire stations have a fire engine staffed by a wholetime crew and one crewed by retained fire fighters. So it is already accepted that not all appliances at a station need to be crewed in the same way. Sometimes during the transition from day crewing to shift working at a particular station, there may be a wholetime-shift fire engine and a day-crewed fire engine.

8. It would be possible to extend the variable crewing model to multi-pump stations that are currently entirely wholetime crewed. For example, the quietest pump on a multi-pump station would move from being constantly crewed by shift staff to variable crewing at the time of greatest need. Those fire fighters working on the variable crewed pump would have stand-by/retained duties and pay in-line with the current day-crewing system. This could be considered for the 130 or so stations with two wholetime pumps and other specialist vehicles.

Changing the basic shift system

9. The ideas described above all assume that wholetime staff working on shifts around the clock would still be on the current ‘two days, two nights, four off’ pattern. But there are other shift patterns which could provide a better match with demand while still having similar benefits for staff, especially the grouped days off

which allow them to undertake paid or voluntary work or to play a significant part in the care of children or other dependants.

10. There are more than 100 fire stations with only two pumps, constantly crewed by wholetime shift staff, and no other vehicles. One option would be for the busiest pump to remain crewed at a constant level all the time. The quietest pump would be crewed part-time but, as with the variable crewing model outlined in paragraphs 5 to 8 above, this would be over the period of greatest need. This would be likely to be during the day or perhaps from the afternoon through to around midnight; the exact times would need to be decided after analysis of the local risks and demands.

11. The station would be staffed by six watches, each working four shifts on the busy (constantly crewed) pump, two shifts on the quiet (variably crewed) pump, and six days off. The pattern of work would be: two days on the first pump, two shifts on the second (variably crewed) pump, two nights on the first pump, then six days off. Overall, working hours would not exceed the current averaged 42-hour week.

12. Where risk assessment identified a need, a retained facility could operate to crew the second pump out of hours. Those staff prepared to provide this cover would be compensated in line with current arrangements.

Implementing new working patterns

13. These are examples of practical alternatives to current working patterns. There will be others which also fit or fit better with local and personal needs. Decisions about how best to deploy staff and other resources to meet needs will have to be made locally, after considering all the options.

14. These examples show that it is possible to find working patterns which are more flexible and efficient, and which focus on matching resources to the ebb and flow of demand, but they need not affect the majority of wholetime fire fighters. The minority that were affected would have the opportunity to choose from a wider range of work patterns than is available in the current 'one size fits all' system. Individuals may find that these alternatives offer significant financial incentives, or may be a more attractive shift system, which better suits personal circumstances and home life.



'If the recommendations in this report are accepted and put into effect, we also expect to see a service which will have the capacity and the will to continue to reform itself in response both to the Government's drive to improve public services generally and to the needs of local communities.'

(Independent Review of the Fire Service, paragraph 12.50)





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