



Working together to make communities safer

A memorandum of understanding between His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners

July 2025

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Introduction

The public want the police and fire and rescue services (FRSs) to succeed in their duties to keep people safe and secure. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners \(APCC\)](#) recognise it is in the public interest that the quality of policing and fire and rescue keeps improving. We are committed to collaborating in our work to make communities safer.

HM Inspectors (HMIs), [police and crime commissioners \(PCCs\)](#), and [police, fire and crime commissioners \(PFCCs\)](#), and mayoral equivalents, have crucial roles in the whole-system approach to accountability. By working together, we are better able to promote improvements and make sure that police forces and FRSs are operating efficiently and effectively.

This document is a memorandum of understanding setting out how HMICFRS and the APCC work together, and how HMICFRS aims to work with individual PCCs, PFCCs and deputy mayors. It will be regularly reviewed and may be subject to change by agreement or after new legislation is enacted.

About us

HMICFRS

HMICFRS independently inspects, monitors and reports in the public interest. It is responsible for inspecting the 43 police forces in England and Wales, the 44 FRSs in England, and other services, forces and agencies by statute or invitation.

His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) and HMIs are appointed by the Crown and are independent of the police, the fire and rescue service, and the Government. HMIs ask the questions they believe the public would wish to have answered. They gather evidence, use their expertise to interpret it, and make judgments and recommendations. HMICFRS publishes its findings in reports that provide clear information on a force or FRS's performance, or on broader themes in policing or fire and rescue.

Another longstanding and important aspect of HMICFRS's work is providing advice to the Home Secretary, PCCs and chief constables, who are collectively responsible for the governance of policing. HMICFRS's independent, evidence-based assessments help:

- the Home Secretary to set the strategic direction and national priorities for policing, make policy decisions, allocate funding and use statutory powers appropriately;
- PCCs to fulfil their statutory duties to secure an efficient and effective police force in their local area, hold the chief constable to account and set the force budget; and
- chief constables to identify strengths and weaknesses in operational policing and make improvements to efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy.

Since the introduction of fire and rescue inspection responsibilities in 2017, similar advice has been provided about FRSs to the Secretary of State, fire and rescue authorities including PFCCs, and chief fire officers.

PCCs

PCCs were established by the [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#). They are elected to be the voice of local people. They have an important role in representing local communities' priorities by setting a police and crime plan, setting the force budget, holding the chief constable to account, commissioning local services, and leading a local partnership approach to criminal justice and crime prevention.

PCCs can take on responsibility for fire and rescue governance in their area and become PFCCs. In some police force areas, police and/or fire governance is the responsibility of an elected mayor, who is likely to appoint a deputy mayor for policing, crime and/or fire to exercise functions on their behalf. References in this document to PCCs include PFCCs, mayoral equivalents and the Chair of the City of London Police Authority unless otherwise stated. References to PFCCs include mayoral equivalents.

PCCs have statutory responsibility for:

- securing the efficiency and effectiveness of the police force in their area;
- appointing the chief constable, holding them to account for running the force and, if necessary, dismissing them;
- setting the police and crime objectives for their area through a police and crime plan;
- providing the link between the police and communities, working to translate the legitimate aspirations of the public into action;
- setting the force budget and precept;
- contributing to the national and international policing capabilities set out by the Home Secretary; and
- bringing together community safety and criminal justice partners, to make sure local priorities are aligned.

In addition to the above responsibilities, PFCCs have statutory responsibility for:

- maintaining an efficient and effective fire and rescue service in their area;
- appointing a chief fire officer, holding them to account for the delivery of their priorities, and if necessary, dismissing them;
- creating a fire and rescue plan;
- approving the integrated risk management plan; and
- setting the budget and precept.

The APCC

The APCC is the national membership body for PCCs, PFCCs, deputy mayors, and other policing governance bodies in England and Wales. It helps members to secure an efficient and effective police force or fire and rescue service, and a criminal justice system that is accountable to the public.

The APCC provides its members with support and guidance, including:

- information on national policy issues and legislation;
- help to develop policy positions and influence change;
- supporting the leadership role of PCCs on national governance structures including the [College of Policing](#), National Crime Agency and other bodies;
- opportunities for members to meet to debate and discuss national policy and work with senior stakeholders;
- helping PCCs to share good practice and identify ways to achieve efficiencies through collaboration; and
- supporting PCCs aiming to take on fire and rescue governance responsibilities.

Regular contact and collaboration

HMICFRS and the APCC

HMICFRS and the APCC maintain regular contact and work to support each other in any way they reasonably can, while respecting the separation between their respective roles. Both HMICFRS and the APCC recognise that early and regular information-sharing is in the public interest, and in the interests of both organisations.

HMCI and the chair of the APCC meet regularly, usually quarterly. They discuss matters affecting the whole-system approach to accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of the police service, the work of their organisations, the support needed for individual forces and PCCs, and where relevant, FRSs and PFCCs.

HMICFRS staff and APCC staff are also in regular contact. The chief operating officer of HMICFRS and the chief executive of the APCC meet regularly. APCC portfolio leads and their staff work closely with HMIs and HMICFRS staff in relevant areas of work. The APCC performance portfolio is the primary point of contact for police inspection matters and can co-ordinate consultation and collaboration with the wider APCC membership. The APCC fire governance portfolio is the primary point of contact for fire inspection matters and can co-ordinate consultation and collaboration with PFCCs and deputy mayors.

HMICFRS and PCCs

The HMI assigned to a force or FRS regularly liaises with the PCC for that area as part of their duties. Formal meetings are held at least twice a year, but PCCs or HMIs can contact each other to discuss matters whenever necessary.

HMIs are always working to better understand the context in which forces and FRSs are operating and want to hear any representations relevant to inspection that PCCs may have. For policing, this includes the police and crime plan, the resources available to the chief constable, the PCC's assessment of the performance of the force, and the local community safety and criminal justice environments.

HMIs can also share information with PCCs about the performance of their local police force or FRS that will support the PCC in carrying out their statutory duties and holding the chief constable or chief fire officer to account. This may include information that isn't yet published or force-specific findings from thematic inspections.

Every office of the police and crime commissioner (OPCC) or equivalent is encouraged to build and maintain a relationship with the relevant HMICFRS chief of staff and force or service liaison lead. This helps both organisations to share information and insights to support a whole-system approach to accountability and performance improvement. OPCC chief executives (or another suitable deputy) and HMICFRS liaison leads should meet at least once a quarter.

Police, fire and crime panels

[Police, fire and crime panels](#) scrutinise the actions and decisions of their PCC, providing both support and challenge and acting as a critical friend. A panel doesn't scrutinise the chief constable or police force but does scrutinise how the PCC carries out their statutory functions. While the panel is there to challenge the PCC, it must also support the PCC to carry out their functions effectively.

HMICFRS doesn't inspect PCCs. But HMIs have a duty to explain the methodology of HMICFRS inspections and the meaning and significance of HMICFRS reports. As such, briefings can be given to the public through the media or stakeholders within the policing system, including police, fire and crime panels.

If HMICFRS receives an invitation to attend a police, fire and crime panel meeting to brief them about an inspection process or an inspection, the HMI will carefully consider whether to accept. As part of this, they will ask for representations from the PCC. At a panel meeting, HMIs will only provide information that is relevant to the efficiency and effectiveness of the force and is already in the public domain.

Preparing for inspections

Inspection programme and framework

At regular intervals, HMICFRS prepares an inspection programme and framework for both police forces and FRSs. This describes the inspections HMICFRS proposes and how they will be carried out.

HMCI asks the chair of the APCC for representations on inspection types or topics that should be included. The APCC asks all PCCs for their views and collates them into one response. Individual PCCs may also respond to HMICFRS directly.

HMICFRS considers these representations before finalising the inspection programme and framework. The inspection programme and framework is sent to the Home Secretary for approval and then laid before Parliament.

Commissions

A PCC may want further inspection of their local police force beyond that planned for in HMICFRS's inspection programme. This can provide them, the chief constable, the Home Secretary and the public with assurances about the force's activities and highlight what is working well and if any improvements are needed.

At any time, a PCC (or group of PCCs) may ask HMICFRS to carry out a commissioned inspection on a particular matter or particular activities. HMICFRS has the experience and knowledge to inspect any aspect of policing.

HMICFRS aims to accommodate all requests, if possible. Before formally accepting the commission, it will discuss the requirements and the scope of the inspection with the PCC. The costs for this type of inspection are met by the OPCC. Standard terms, including estimated duration and cost, will also be agreed before proceeding.

The legislation doesn't allow for commissioned inspections of FRSs. But HMCI may assist other public authorities. If there are matters PFCCs would like assistance with, they may raise them with HMICFRS.

External reference groups

HMICFRS regularly consults interested parties about its inspection methodologies. Sometimes this is through convening a select group of relevant people called an external reference group. As a general principle, HMICFRS includes the APCC or at least one PCC as members of these groups.

Carrying out inspections

Notification of inspection

HMICFRS informs the PCC and the chief constable or chief fire officer, at the same time and in the same level of detail, about any inspections it will carry out in their police force or FRS area.

HMICFRS carries out police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections through continuous assessment, and may choose to examine a particular matter at any time. But there are certain milestones on the schedule, such as the final evidence-gathering period. HMICFRS informs the PCC about the PEEL inspection schedule at the same time as the chief constable.

The PEEL assessment framework and other inspection methodologies or terms of reference are published online. If there are any major changes to a methodology mid-cycle, the HMI who is the senior responsible owner of that inspection programme will inform the APCC and PCCs.

Strategic presentations

For some inspections, HMICFRS asks the inspected force or FRS to provide a strategic presentation at the start of the inspection. HMICFRS uses this to understand the local context, gather evidence for the inspection and consider further key lines of enquiry.

HMICFRS is supportive of PCCs and PFCCs being present at strategic presentations. For police forces, it is the responsibility of the chief constable as the head of the inspected body to decide whether to invite the PCC. If the PCC isn't present at the strategic presentation, the HMI may share with the PCC any information that will promote the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in that local area.

For FRSs, the PFCC can choose whether to attend the strategic presentation. HMICFRS prefers that PFCCs attend the presentation or send a deputy if they are unavailable.

Evidence-gathering

Inspections of police forces are concerned with their efficiency and effectiveness and HMICFRS doesn't inspect PCCs. HMICFRS inspections of a force may consider work carried out by staff appointed or contracted by the PCC, but only in limited circumstances as set out under section 54(7) of the Police Act 1996.

But PCCs influence functions covered by police inspection methodologies. HMICFRS considers the Policing Protocol Order 2023 when carrying out its inspections, including the responsibilities of the chief constable regarding the local police and crime plan.

Where HMICFRS gives the chief constable an opportunity to provide evidence toward an inspection, HMICFRS will also request a discussion with the PCC about the relevant areas of the methodology as part of the evidence-gathering process. If the PCC provides relevant information, HMICFRS may use it as evidence. PCCs aren't obliged to have this discussion. If discretion is required, PCCs may disclose matters to the HMI in confidence and these won't be used as direct evidence.

For FRS inspections, where there is no established operational independence for chief fire officers (except for the London Fire Brigade Commissioner), HMICFRS interviews PFCCs in the same way it interviews leaders of all fire and rescue authority governance models. This information is used as evidence for inspection reports. Certain functions are expressly excluded from inspection by statutory order.

Debriefs

Once HMICFRS has finished evidence-gathering for an inspection, or soon after, it provides the force or FRS with a debrief. This contains a preliminary view of the findings but isn't a complete account of the evidence and doesn't include graded judgments. Forces and FRSs find debriefs helpful to understand emerging findings and initiate any immediate improvement work.

HMICFRS is supportive of PCCs being present at all debriefs, including for thematic inspections. For policing, it is for chief constables as the head of the inspected body to decide whether to invite the PCC to the debrief. Where PCCs do attend debriefs, there is an agreement that they won't release any of the information from the meeting into the public domain until HMICFRS has published its report. If the PCC isn't present at the debrief, HMIs may confidentially share information about the findings of the inspection with PCCs before report publication.

For FRSs, PFCCs as the fire authority are entitled to attend the inspection debrief. PFCCs commit to keeping all information shared in confidence and out of the public domain until HMICFRS's report is published.

Factual accuracy

Before HMICFRS finalises an inspection report, it shares a copy with the force or FRS for a factual accuracy check. Forces and FRSs are asked to complete a template with their comments, which HMICFRS considers. The factual accuracy check is solely concerned with giving forces or services the opportunity to correct matters of fact. It is not an opportunity to add context or seek to persuade inspectors that gradings or judgments should be more favourable. HMICFRS doesn't share the draft report with the PCC at this stage and only invites comments from the chief constable or chief fire officer of the force or FRS concerned.

If either the debrief or the draft report indicates that there are matters of significant concern about the efficiency or effectiveness of the force or FRS, the chief constable or chief fire officer is responsible for keeping the PCC updated.

Publishing and responding to reports

Embargoed reports

HMICFRS publishes almost all its inspection reports, sometimes after redaction of information that might jeopardise a person's safety or breach national security. In the week before a report is published, HMICFRS sends a diary note to interested parties alerting them to the upcoming publication date.

If a report relates to an individual force or FRS, such as a PEEL or FRS report, the chief constable or chief fire officer and PCC are usually sent an embargoed copy of the report at least 48 hours before publication. They are also provided with a copy of the press release, if there is one.

For all other reports, interested parties, including chief constables, chief fire officers and PCCs, are sent an embargoed copy of the report at least 24 hours before publication, unless the report is for immediate release.

Accelerated causes of concern

If HMICFRS identifies a serious, critical or systemic shortcoming in a force or FRS's practice, policy or performance, it is reported as a [cause of concern](#). This is normally detailed in the published force or FRS report. But when there are significant service failures or risks to public safety, HMICFRS reports these concerns and recommendations sooner. This is called an [accelerated cause of concern](#).

The HMI for the force notifies the PCC at least 24 hours before an accelerated cause of concern is issued and provides them with an embargoed copy of the report and press release. If there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this, the HMI will inform the PCC of the decision and the reasons why.

Public responses to HMICFRS inspection reports

If HMICFRS publishes an inspection report and that report relates to a police force, PCCs are required by law to prepare and publish comments on the report within 56 days. This process recognises and reinforces the important role of PCCs in securing the efficiency and effectiveness of their local police force. It also helps to make sure that inspection reports are being used to support continuous improvements and to promote openness with the public.

A PCC response is required to all reports involving a police force conducted under section 54 of the Police Act 1996. HMICFRS sends a copy of all relevant police inspection reports to PCCs and updates its monitoring portal so that PCCs are aware of all reports they need to respond to.

PCCs prepare their responses to reports, making sure they contain all the [required information](#), publish their responses on their websites and upload a copy to the HMICFRS monitoring portal within 56 days. This satisfies the duty on PCCs to send a copy to both HMICFRS and the Home Secretary. HMICFRS will share data with the APCC that can be used to improve the statutory response process.

For FRSs, the national framework requires that fire authorities, including PFCCs, give due regard to HMICFRS reports and recommendations. And they must also prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan that details how the recommendations are being actioned. PFCCs publish these action plans on their website or the FRS website.

Monitoring

Continued holding to account

PCCs continue to monitor their local force's or FRS's progress against HMICFRS inspection findings, including causes of concerns, recommendations and areas for improvement. This forms part of PCCs' local governance arrangements for holding chief constables or chief fire officers to account, helping them to make sure policing or fire and rescue is improving for the benefit of local communities. Regular contact and collaboration between the APCC, PCCs and HMICFRS helps to support this work.

Routine monitoring

HMIs routinely monitor the performance of all police forces and FRSs within their remit to identify emerging problems and make sure corrective action is being taken.

There are two stages in the HMICFRS monitoring process, Scan and Engage. All forces and FRSs are in Scan by default, which is routine monitoring. Engage is enhanced monitoring and is for forces and FRSs that aren't sufficiently responding to a cause of concern, or aren't succeeding in managing, mitigating or eradicating it.

Routine monitoring may identify concerns that don't yet warrant the force or FRS being placed into Engage, but that the chief constable, chief fire officer, PCC or other bodies within the policing or fire and rescue systems should be aware of. If such concerns are identified, then the HMI for the force notifies the PCC at the same time as they notify the chief constable or chief fire officer. PCCs are encouraged to consider whether to pass this information to the APCC or request additional support.

Enhanced monitoring

HMCI may place a force or FRS into the enhanced monitoring process, Engage. This decision is based on evidence, professional judgment and the advice of the HMI for the force or FRS. In Engage, a force or FRS is asked to develop an improvement plan and attend the Policing Performance Oversight Group (PPOG) or Fire Performance Oversight Group (FPOG), which are usually held three times a year. As part of this process, it receives support from other parts of the system such as the APCC, Local Government Association, Home Office, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Fire Chiefs Council, National Police Chiefs' Council or College of Policing. It also receives additional inspection from HMICFRS.

For openness, HMICFRS publishes the decision to place a force or FRS into Engage and the causes of concern that have led to that decision being made. The HMI for the force or FRS is responsible for personally informing the PCC or PFCC of the decision to place the force or FRS into Engage before this is announced publicly. The HMI follows this up in writing with a formal letter to the chief constable or chief fire officer and PCC or PFCC.

PCCs and PFCCs contribute to the enhanced monitoring process by regularly holding the chief constable or chief fire officer to account for implementing their improvement plan. They also attend PPOG or FPOG meetings and take part in frank and open discussions with attendees about the performance of the force or FRS and the progress being made.

The APCC joint performance portfolio leads make sure that they attend all PPOG meetings, FPOG meetings where relevant, and offer all reasonable support to PCCs with forces and FRSs in Engage. If they aren't available, they should nominate a deputy of suitable seniority.

The APCC has developed an Engage toolkit to help support PCCs whose forces or FRSs are in Engage. The toolkit aims to provide additional information and guidance on the process and signposting to support available. When a force or FRS enters Engage, the APCC joint performance portfolio leads write to the relevant PCC and shares a copy of the toolkit with them. Support is provided throughout the process when requested by the relevant PCC. Any offers of assistance recorded as an action at a PPOG or FPOG meeting are followed up in writing within five working days of the meeting, with a copy sent to HMCI.

Leadership

Recruitment

The PCC or PFCC has sole responsibility for recruiting a chief constable or chief fire officer. But PCCs and PFCCs recognise there are benefits to involving HMIs and the College of Policing in the process. Selecting an effective leader is critical to the success of forces and FRSs and HMIs are well placed to take part in the appointment process or to provide advice.

PCCs or PFCCs are encouraged to consider the extent to which an HMI should be part of the appointment panel. This may include helping them to shortlist applicants, assess all shortlisted candidates and consider which candidate most closely meets the appointment criteria.

If an HMI isn't taking part in the appointment panel, PCCs or PFCCs are encouraged to contact the HMI for the force or FRS during pre-appointment planning, to obtain useful information to inform the assessment process and appointment criteria. After applicants have been shortlisted, HMIs can also provide an overview of the efficiency and effectiveness of shortlisted applicants' current forces or FRSs and areas it may be useful to examine during interview.

Misconduct

HMIs have a statutory duty under [section 15 of the Police Reform Act 2002](#) to make sure they are kept informed about complaint and conduct matters relating to a police force. As part of this, PCCs will keep the HMI for the force updated on any such matters relating to the chief constable.

HMIs also have a general duty, as part of their assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of FRSs, to keep themselves informed of complaint or conduct matters relating to the chief fire officer which may affect the FRS. PFCCs similarly make sure they keep HMIs updated.

Super-complaints

Designated bodies can raise concerns on behalf of the public about patterns or trends in policing in England and Wales that are, or appear to be, significantly harming the interests of the public. These are known as super-complaints. Super-complaints examine systemic issues in policing, rather than complaints about individual forces or officers, and are separate from existing police complaints systems.

HMICFRS is responsible for managing the system and works with the [Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#) and the [College of Policing](#). Together, they are the police super-complaint decision-making bodies.

When a super-complaint is eligible for investigation, one of the investigating bodies notifies the APCC at the earliest opportunity. The relevant APCC portfolio leads work with HMICFRS, IOPC and the College of Policing to support the investigation of super-complaints.

When HMICFRS publishes a super-complaint report, it may include recommendations for PCCs. If this is the case, the investigating bodies will work with the APCC to co-ordinate responses from all 43 PCCs.

Signatories



.....
Sir Andy Cooke QPM DL

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary

HM Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue

Date: 3 July 2025



.....
Emily Spurrell

Chair of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners

Date: 3 July 2025

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