HMICFRS PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES IN ENGLAND 2019

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

For Information

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the HMICFRS Public Perceptions of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019 attached at Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the HMICFRS Public Perceptions of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019 attached at Appendix 1.

2.2 Members are asked to note that the Chief Fire Officer will ensure that the outcomes from the Report will be used to inform the development of the Brigade's Community Engagement Strategy.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 As part of its reform agenda the Government introduced an independent inspection regime for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England in July 2017. The inspections are delivered by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). To assist these inspections, HMICFRS commissioned BMG Research to undertake a study of the general public's perceptions of their local fire and rescue service across England. The study covers the public's views and experiences of local fire and rescue services' activities.

3.2 A similar study was undertaken by BMG Research in 2018 for HMICFRS. The 2019 survey was undertaken in August and September 2019 and consisted of 10,024 completed surveys across 44 local fire and rescue service areas. The number of completed interviews by FRS ranges from 100 in the Isle of Wight to 1,443 in London. The surveys were conducted online with members of online research panels. The results have been weighted to ensure that responses to the survey are representative of the total adult population of England. A different methodology was used in the 2019 survey as the results were needed on a national basis only. Where relevant, results have been compared to the 2018 survey. Although the survey methodology and sample sizes are not identical for the 2018 and 2019 surveys, the results are comparable. Only changes that are statistically significant have been commented on.

4. HMICFRS PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES IN ENGLAND

4.1 The outcomes from the Study are detailed in HMICFRS Public Perceptions of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019 Report attached at Appendix 1. Highlights from the Report are set out below.

4.2 **Overall awareness and views of fire and rescue services**

- Perceived satisfaction with local fire and rescue services is high, with over seven in ten (73%) saying that they are very or fairly satisfied. The proportion who say that they are satisfied has increased compared to 2018 (70%).

- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of respondents consider that the FRS in their local area provides good value for money (70% in 2018). 4 percent disagree with this.

- The vast majority (90%) are confident that the fire and rescue service in their local area provides an effective service overall, which represents an increase compared to 2018 when 86 percent said that they were confident

- Nearly half of respondents (47%) say that the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 has made them view fire and rescue services in general more positively. Around one in three (36%) say that it has made no difference to how they view fire and rescue services. A minority say that it has made them view the fire and rescue services in general more negatively (11%).

4.3 **Local fire and rescue services' activities**

- Responding to fires is the local FRS duty that respondents are most likely to be aware of (90%) when shown a list of FRSs' statutory duties. Obtaining information from landlords/building owners to improve response if a fire or other emergency occurs in the building has the lowest level of awareness (61%).

- Responding to fires is seen as one of the top three most important duties for local fire and rescue services to prioritise when respondents were shown a list of statutory duties (85%). This is followed by rescuing people from road traffic collisions (62%) and responding to emergencies such as floods and terrorist incidents (48%).

- Responding to medical incidents (either assisting the ambulance service or as a first responder or to serious medical calls) is the most commonly selected activity as one of the top three most important for local fire and rescue services to prioritise when respondents were shown a list of non-statutory duties (77%). This is followed by responding to storms and other natural disasters (74%), and responding to water rescue incidents (73%).

- Respondents were shown the three duties that they selected from the list of statutory duties together with the three they selected from the list of non-statutory duties and asked to indicate which ones they think are the most important for their local FRS to prioritise. Overall, two statutory duties topped the list as part of the top three most important for the FRS to prioritise: responding to fires (77%) and rescuing people from road traffic collisions (49%). However, responding to medical incidents, which is a non-statutory duty, is the third most selected priority overall, with a third (33%) of respondents selecting this.

- Respondents were asked about their knowledge of the staffing arrangements for stations in their local fire and rescue service. Respondents have low awareness of this (42% gave an incorrect answer and a further 28% say they don't know)

- Residents living in buildings with four floors or more (36%) are seen to be in the top three most important groups for the local FRS to target for fire prevention activities, followed by disabled people or those with restricted mobility (35%), and those aged 65+ (27%).

- Nearly three-fifths (57%) claim to be aware that fire and rescue services can prosecute 'responsible persons' in public and commercial buildings if they fail to comply with fire safety regulations. Just over one third say that they are not aware (35%).

4.4 **Accessing local fire and rescue services**

- Around a fifth (21%) of respondents have had contact with their local FRS in the past 12 months. This compares to 16 percent who had had contact in 2018.

- The most common interactions for respondents in the past 12 months are through community events/open days (6%), as a witness to a fire incident (5%) or as part of home safety/fire risk checks (5%).

- Around three-fifths (65%) of those who have had contact with their local FRS say that they felt safer after their interaction. This proportion has decreased compared to 2018 when 72 percent said that they felt safer after their contact.

- Over four-fifths (84%) of respondents who have had contact with their local FRS in the last 12 months are satisfied with the last interaction. Around one in ten (9%) are neutral and 5 percent are dissatisfied.

4.5 **Public interest in local fire and rescue services**

- Over half of respondents (57%) do not feel informed about what their local fire and rescue service is doing. The proportion who feel this way has increased by 5 percentage points compared to 2018 (52%).

- The main reason reported by respondents for not feeling informed about their local FRS is that they haven't seen any information about it (79%).

- Nearly four-fifths of respondents (78%) are interested in knowing what the fire and rescue service is doing in their local area. 18 percent are not interested.

- The range of services provided by the fire and rescue service is the element respondents would most like to know about (52% of those who are interested in knowing what their local FRS are doing), followed by keeping their property safe from fire (47%) and what their local FRS are doing (44%).

- Around nine in ten respondents (88%) say that they have not been asked about their views on the local fire and rescue service in the area where they live in the past 12 months. Eight percent say that they have been asked about this.

4.6 **Fire safety**

- Around a fifth of respondents (19%) have seen, heard or read something about fire safety in the last three months. Households with smokers are more likely to have seen, heard or read something about this (24%).

- In the example scenario provided to respondents, fire safety concerns have an effect on stated purchase decisions for the vast majority of respondents when buying a new tumble dryer. 90 percent say that they would not buy the product or that they would find out more information if they had concerns and details the methodology used for and outcomes from the study.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

5.1 The outcomes from the Report will be used to inform the development of the Brigade's Community Engagement Strategy.

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