Achieving more together
The National Fire Chiefs Council Strategy

Contents

Foreword

I am delighted to share our new strategy with you. Having consulted National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) members, I am assured that this three-year strategy reflects our ambitions as the professional voice of the fire and rescue service.

While the strategy is of course forward looking, I think it is important to also look back on the first three years of the NFCC to consider the challenges our members have faced and what the NFCC can do to support them in the future.

There is no mistaking the impact that the tragic fire of 14 June 2017 at Grenfell Tower had on the NFCC and our members. Our response has evolved since the initial period following the fire and now influences all we do to ensure that we never see a recurrence.

As an organisation, the NFCC is committed to learning from not only the Grenfell Tower fire but from incidents across the UK. Our members are sharing their learning with us so that we can in turn share it with others. We look to our experience in order to improve for the future.

This speaks to a general attitude within the NFCC about improvement. This is a theme running throughout our strategy and our thinking as we take forward a programme of work framed around our refreshed strategic commitments.

Improvement comes in many forms. It comes from how our members are managing the risks in the communities they serve; how they treat their people and how they take advantage of digital and data to help them work better and more efficiently. The Covid-19 crisis, which was near its peak as these words were written has demonstrated yet again the importance of a strong, coherent NFCC supporting fire and rescue services whose aim is to protect our communities.

To achieve this, I want the NFCC to be at the forefront of the development of high-quality national Fire Standards along with guidance, tools and services that will enable our members to manage community risks and create safe places for the public to live and work. Identifying, managing and responding to risk lies at the heart of fire and rescue services, so doing this well and more consistently is a key focus for our Community Risk programme.

I want the NFCC to help fire and rescue services become employers of choice, offering an inclusive culture and welcoming place to work for the widest variety of people from all backgrounds. Our People programme is wide-ranging in its ambitions, just as it should be. We want to be better.

If we are to make the improvements and transformation to our services that members would like and that others are asking of us, we must be bold about how we use data and modernise our technology to enable the expected transformation. Our digital and data programme is designed to achieve those ambitions.

I know that we are stronger together. The NFCC has a vital and unique role in bringing its members together, co-ordinating national work for local benefit, driving improvement across the fire and rescue services to face the challenges we recognise now and those yet to come.

Roy Wilsher
Chair, National Fire Chiefs Council

Overview

1. This is the second strategy for the NFCC. Created in 2017, the NFCC is still a relatively new organisation but has a long history based on its origins as the Chief Fire Officers Association.

2. The purpose of the strategy is to set out for our members what the NFCC is all about, what our ambitions are as a membership organisation and to bring clarity to how we operate. Here we set out our vision, mission and values. We have developed these in discussion with our members and consider that these establish a strong foundation for our work as the professional voice of the fire and rescue service.

3. The NFCC has a unique role in representing fire and rescue services on the national stage with one voice for maximum impact and harnessing the knowledge and expertise across the country, bringing it together for the benefit of all. We want our members to understand what we can do to support and help their own fire and rescue service on a day-to-day basis, but also in times of crisis. We describe the three key benefits of the NFCC's role below.

4. In recent years, much of our work has been dominated by responding to the consequences of the tragic Grenfell Tower fire. The NFCC has worked with its members, governments and many other parts of the fire sector, to understand what needs to change to ensure that the risk of another fire on this scale is significantly reduced. We know that we cannot be defined by one incident, but we must let it guide our thinking, actions and journey to improvement in all areas of fire and rescue service business.

5. We are committed to undertaking a regular review of the external influences that affect the NFCC. For example, the impact of climate change is starker than ever; we continue to live in financially challenging times, and we must be adaptable to the ever-changing world of technology. We can help our members by using, for example, our convening power or by lobbying for legislative change. Whatever the need, the NFCC stands ready to support its members.

6. The NFCC is committed to supporting fire and rescue services as they seek to improve service delivery at a local level. To best co-ordinate efforts nationally we have set out our approach through four strategic commitments, three of which form the backbone of our continuous improvement programmes: Community Risk, People, and the need to revitalise our approach to digital and data. Our fourth commitment focuses on efficiency, finance and collaboration.

7. As part of the professional partnership fee, NFCC members fund the Central Programme Office (CPO) to co-ordinate the delivery of the NFCC improvement programme. There is a governance process that is overseen by the NFCC Steering Group and Council, with contributions from stakeholders through the Strategic Engagement Forum. With this professional support and rigour, the NFCC can ensure that it produces trusted products to meet the needs of fire and rescue services where a national approach is beneficial.

8. As with all organisations we must manage our risks to ensure we remain resilient, compliant and sustainable; we also have to communicate clearly and engage effectively with our members and with 2020the wider fire sector and beyond. We set out the principles in our strategy and provide the detail in our delivery plans which will be subject to regular review at our quarterly Council meetings.

Our vision

> *"The vision of the NFCC is to improve safety in communities by working collaboratively with fire and rescue services, promoting national approaches where they work best."*

9. We have given considerable thought to clarifying a vision for the NFCC. We see it as something to aspire to and not a state that is fixed at a point in time. We recognise that we are a membership organisation and our members carry considerable commitments and obligations as employers of fire and rescue personnel, and with clear legislative parameters.

10. Safety is at the heart of what fire and rescue services do; they provide a 24/7 insurance policy for communities as set out in a local contract in the form of risk management plans. The NFCC cannot deliver this, but it can provide members with access to good practice through the creation of national guidance; it can bring people together to create solutions that can be used in all areas of fire and rescue service business.

11. The collaboration that the NFCC can encourage, negotiate and support comes from the fact that it represents all fire and rescue services in the UK. That can manifest itself at a local level where risk goes beyond organisational boundaries, at a national or even international level.

Our mission

> *"All fire and rescue services have local priorities and by working together through the NFCC on the issues that affect us all, we can achieve solutions efficiently and effectively.*
>
> *The collective voice of the NFCC allows us to shape our reform agenda with our stakeholders and co-create the fire and rescue service needed for current and future generations."*

12. The mission remains constant despite priorities changing over time in response to external developments. There is a strong emphasis on collaboration and working together, both of which lie at the heart of the NFCC.

Our values

13. We think it is important to articulate our values as a member organisation. Our members expect us to operate in a way that fits with their own personal and organisational values. We have identified six values that underpin our approach.

14. We:

     i. Are open in how we carry out our work for our members

     ii. Are transparent in our decision-making

     iii. Actively listen to all views

     iv. Recognise difference in how fire and rescue services are run and governed

     v. Are consultative in our approach

     vi. Are supportive of our members' needs

Our offer to members

15. There are three distinct roles that the NFCC performs which are benefits for members of the NFCC.

16. The first is **advising and influencing** through a high-level collective effort that means all fire and rescue services are represented with one voice. We do this at a national and member level.

17. Our advice and peer support to members comes from our leadership: through the Chair, Vice Chairs and the Steering Group. It can also come from specialists within our membership, those that lead on areas of fire and rescue service business. It may be advice to individual members, a collection of members or to all; advice can also be outward facing.

18. The NFCC Chair, supported by NFCC members, has been an important adviser to government on many fire-related matters. His relationship with government after the Grenfell Tower fire consolidated the NFCC's reputation for professional, calm and insightful advice at times of crisis.

19. The range of NFCC stakeholders is extensive, and engagement with them at all levels is continuous. The figure below shows the core groups of our stakeholders:

Fire & Rescue Services	Central Government	Local Government	Professional Bodies & Associations	Wider Industry and General Public
• Chiefs • NFCC Members • All employees	• Departments, Agencies, Projects, Inquiry Teams • Devolved Administrations • Assurance / Inspecting Bodies • Other National Projects / Boards	• Governing bodies • Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) • Other responder agencies (Category 1 and 2)	• Employers • Trade Unions • Representative bodies • Other related bodies	• Academia and education establishments • Research bodies • Private sector fire services • Suppliers • Insurers • Trade Journals • Communities and businesses

20. Our ability to influence comes from our reputation. We have worked tirelessly over the last few years to establish the NFCC as a respected, credible, thoughtful and reliable member organisation that has well-considered views. We wield our influence carefully and continue to do so as challenges emerge to confront our members.

21. The second benefit of membership is how the NFCC can **develop solutions and tools** to support fire and rescue services where a national approach would be beneficial. Prior to the creation of the NFCC in 2017, the National Operational Guidance Programme worked for many years to establish a complete suite of national operational guidance (NOG) that would underpin the way that all fire and rescue services work. There is no legislative lever to mandate its adoption, but through the collective and joined-up approach which focuses on peer review and openness, the resulting guidance is now being implemented in fire and rescue services across the country.

22. NOG is a good example of how the NFCC has developed solutions and tools that have national impact. There is much to be done in other areas but the bar is set high and we know from the first set of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspections that having guidance on which to test what 'good' looks like has been critical to their activities.

23. The third and final benefit of membership is the ability of the NFCC to **co-ordinate response** to incidents, events and issues that go beyond service boundaries where a joined-up approach makes more sense.

24. We have seen so many examples of this approach working, whether it is to large-scale flooding incidents, to extreme wildfires or to large building fires. We know that fire and rescue services have mutual aid arrangements in place at a local level, but what we seek to do as a member organisation is to assist, supplement and work with members to ensure the best outcomes are achieved.

25. Our response is not always operational. The NFCC responds to consultations on change that affect all our members, such as those that impact non-domestic buildings where government has sought to make improvements to legislation and guidance. We work with other organisations to leverage access to data and other assets at a national level that would be harder for individual fire and rescue services to achieve. We recognise the strength that our convening power brings for the benefits of all members and we seek to use it wisely.

26. On a day-to-day basis, NFCC members are active through their contributions to various national and regional practitioner groups. This unique network of expertise is where the collective view of fire and rescue services is most helpful in developing policy and other activities that affect fire and rescue service business.
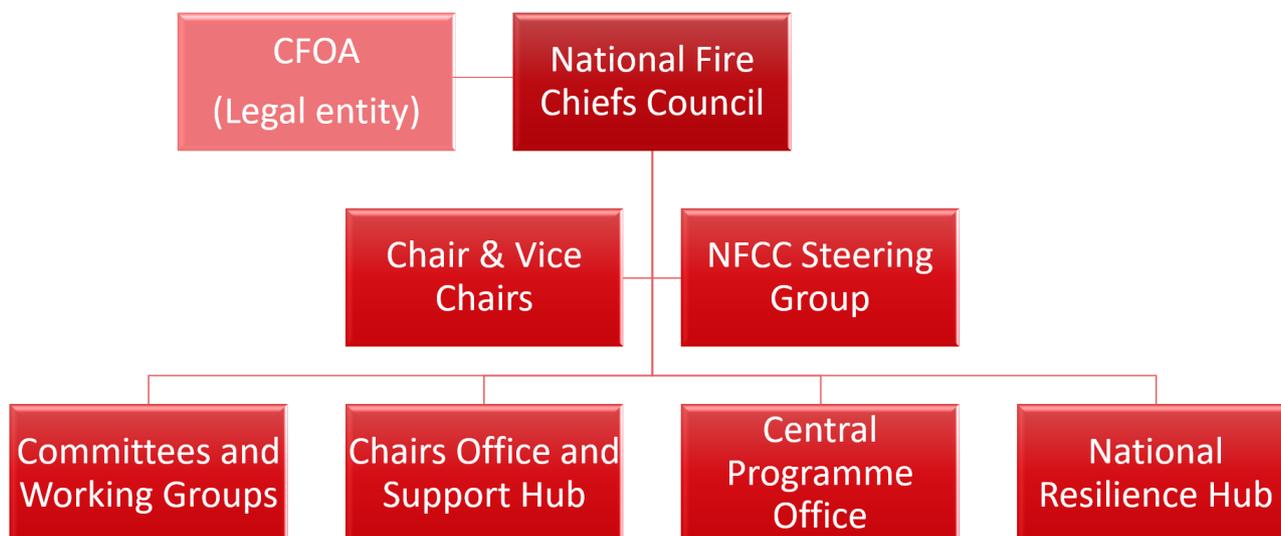
Our context

27. It cannot be underestimated how impactful the Grenfell Tower fire has been in terms of how the service views itself, how it operates and how the wider public now thinks about fire safety.

28. The NFCC has been intimately involved in the response to the fire from the day it happened, with the Chair being integral to the process of advising London Fire Brigade, ministers, and others involved in the aftermath. The work to put in place reforms and improvements that affect NFCC members will continue throughout the life of this strategy and beyond.

29. We put in considerable effort and resource to assist our members with the changes that result from the Grenfell Tower fire – from both the public inquiry phase 1 outcomes and the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. We must also remain vigilant to the other factors that influence the context in which we operate and present different challenges.

30. We also know that society is changing in different parts of the country in various ways. Our members are reshaping themselves to address societal changes, including population growth and movement, an ageing society and health issues such as obesity and heart disease.

31. Fire and rescue services need also to consider environmental changes, leading to increasing risks of flooding, wildfires and water shortages. They also need to be able to build upon their success in changing human behaviour and improve their contribution to a safer more prosperous society. There is a role for fire and rescue services in the future that builds on the excellent work so far and continues to not only save lives but change lives.

32. Our members continue to be on high alert as terrorism remains a threat to our communities. The NFCC, while not a responder defined under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, is able to use its convening power and influence to contribute to responses as appropriate. The NFCC Chair has attended the Government's COBR(A) meetings set up in the aftermath of recent terrorist incidents. The Chair, supported by members, has been a critical link between the national stage and the local delivery of response at times of crisis.

33. All of this forms the landscape against which we operate and support our members to deliver high-quality public services. We know that they operate within tight financial restraints and as a result we seek to operate as leanly and efficiently as we can so that the professional partnership fee is used effectively.

How we work

34. The diagram below shows the operating model of the NFCC as well as the closely related organisations that we work alongside. This is a common operating model for professional membership associations.

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┌─────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────┐
│      CFOA       │  │  National Fire  │
│  (Legal entity) │  │ Chiefs Council  │
└─────────────────┘  └─────────────────┘
              │
   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
   │  Chair & Vice│   │ NFCC Steering│
   │    Chairs    │   │    Group     │
   └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘

┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐
│Committees  │ │Chairs Office│ │  Central   │ │  National  │
│and Working │ │and Support  │ │ Programme  │ │ Resilience │
│  Groups    │ │    Hub      │ │   Office   │ │    Hub     │
└────────────┘ └────────────┘ └────────────┘ └────────────┘
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35. The leadership of the NFCC comprises a full time Chair, two Vice Chairs and the chairs of the NFCC committees. The Chair is elected by the membership in line with the NFCC Operating Principles. The Chair is supported by two Vice Chairs who are serving Chief Fire Officers/Chief Executives and who fulfil this role on a pro bono basis. The NFCC committees are led by serving Chief Fire Officers/Chief Executives.

36. All Chief Fire Officers/Chief Executives are members of the NFCC Council. This is a decision-making body and meets quarterly.

37. The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It is the legal entity underpinning the Council and its support hubs, and its governance is detailed in the articles of association. The NFCC Chair is a paid, full-time employee of the charity.

38. The Central Programme Office (CPO) is based in London Fire Brigade's headquarters. Staff in the CPO may be seconded from fire and rescue services or employed through London Fire Brigade specifically to work for the NFCC.

39. In addition to the CPO there are two other 'hubs' that support the delivery of the NFCC's business. The first is a support services hub that operates from West Midlands Fire Service headquarters. Staff provide a range of administrative, membership, secretariat and communications services. The second hub is focused on National Resilience and the oversight of the national assets that are distributed around the country. This is based at Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service headquarters.

40. Funding for all this work is part of the professional partnership fee and supplemented by government grants. There is more detail about how the NFCC works in the NFCC Operating Principles that can be found on the NFCC website.

41. The following diagram shows how the different parts of the NFCC relate to each other.
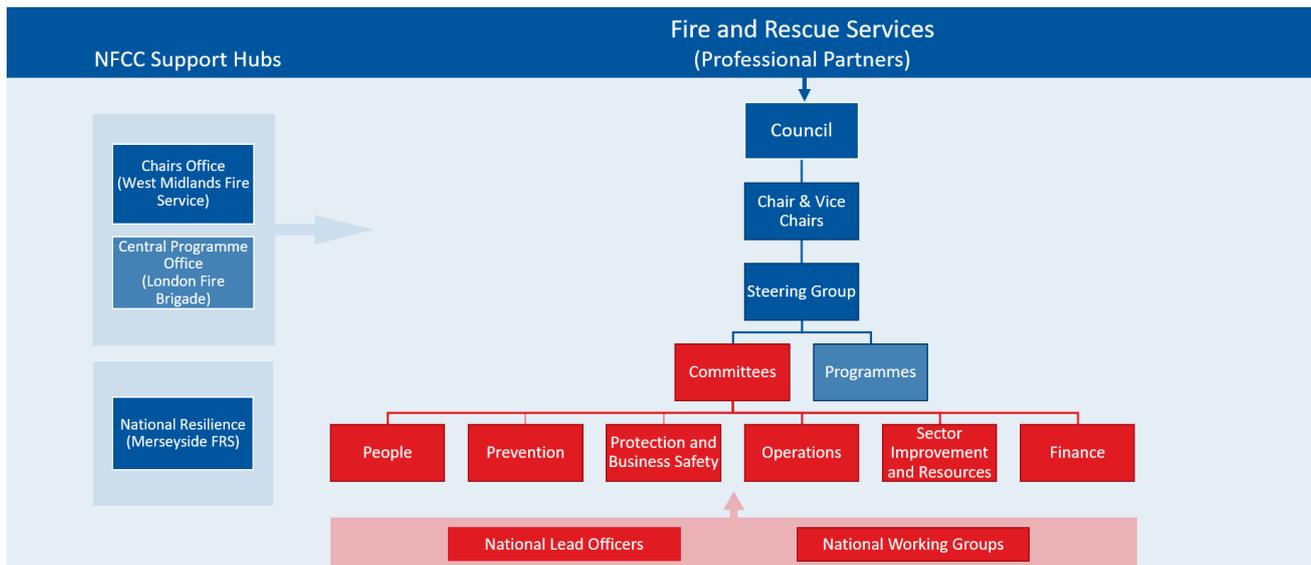
Our strategic commitments

42. As an organisation, we want to focus on areas that best reflect the needs of our members and that bring greatest benefits in terms of improvement for all. We express this through our strategic commitments. Three of these commitments form the NFCC's improvement programme and a fourth commitment focuses on efficiency, finance and collaboration.

43. The first strategic commitment is to **reduce community risk and vulnerability** through a number of programmes that will support fire and rescue services in the improvement of their deployment and service delivery through their risk management plans.

44. The second commitment is **focused on people**. The greatest asset in fire and rescue services is people. We are working with members on a wide range of projects related to improving the way services recruit, train, lead, manage and support their employees.

45. The third commitment is to lead **digital and data solutions to drive transformation**. This will enable services to improve the way they collect, store, use and present data, manage information, and make best use of digital technology.

46. The fourth strategic commitment is for the NFCC to be an **efficient and financially sustainable organisation that is collaborative and works in partnership** with others for the benefit of all members. We are committed to running a lean organisation that ensures the professional partnership fee paid by all our members is used to deliver the greatest benefit to all.

How we deliver

47. The CPO is central to how we deliver a programme of improvement that affects all NFCC members. The CPO uses industry standard portfolio, programme and project management methodologies to ensure that there is robust process and due consideration given to the efficient delivery of products.

48. Each of the NFCC improvement programmes delivers on its strategic commitments. In totality they are the improvement programme. Each programme has a programme board and a programme executive who is a member of the NFCC Steering Group. The head of the CPO is a member of the NFCC Steering Group. This provides direct line of sight from the leadership of the NFCC to the programmes and then on to the projects and products. This is critical to ensure that the direction provided by the members is monitored and delivered on the ground.

49. The NFCC committees and underpinning national practitioner and user groups are an essential part of how the NFCC delivers national products. They provide a rich source of subject matter expertise, a unique and powerful network to allow sharing of good practice and innovation as well as contributing to the development of national products.

How we manage our risks and opportunities

50. Like all organisations, we must be aware of the risks and opportunities we face as we go about our business. We recognise that our risks are strategic, financial, reputational, operational, and compliance related. We are also aware of the opportunities that may arise and be beneficial to us and stand ready to embrace them. As a membership organisation, we must ensure that we operate as our members would expect.

51. We are committed to taking our risks seriously and professionally and as such we call on professional risk management services to assist us. Reporting on risk accompanies the quarterly updates to Council to ensure all members are aware of what the risks are and how they are being managed. It provides members with the opportunity to advise and provide input, reinforcing the NFCC as a truly member focused organisation.

52. Members have made it clear to us that they wish us to use a model called PESTLE to help us understand the external influences and opportunities that affect how we run as an organisation. PESTLE stands for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental risks. We are committed to developing the expertise to analyse our external influences and opportunities and provide the outcomes as part of our risk management reporting.

53. There is a separate risks and opportunities policy that incorporates the PESTLE model approach. It should be read alongside this strategy.

How we communicate and engage with our members

54. Effective communication is critical for the NFCC. The communications strategy stems from the NFCC strategy and helps us to deliver our business and our strategic commitments. We have well developed channels for communicating with members, but communication is much more than simply providing and receiving information.

55. We think it is important to make the distinction between communicating and engaging. We want to see increased levels of engagement with our membership and will endeavour to do so using different methods and approaches. We are a listening organisation and only by engaging with our members can we improve and grow.

56. We are committed to timely communication with members so that they can be effective participants in the improvement programme and other aspects of the NFCC. We stand by our values where we commit to listen to our members and respond in a timely way. We facilitate dialogue through our many different channels and welcome lively debate.

57. Our communication is also outward facing. We produce position statements, work with the media and lead on national campaigns. We have mechanisms in place to facilitate responses to consultations, incidents and national issues and, where needed, we will respond robustly when it is in our collective interest for the NFCC to do so. We recognise the importance of working closely with stakeholders and commit to understand and develop appropriate relationships.

58. The detail of how we communicate and engage with our members is in a separate communications strategy that should be read alongside this strategy.

How we report back to members

59. As part of our commitment to transparency and openness, on a quarterly basis we will report on progress against the strategic commitments contained in this strategy as well as the risks, opportunities, communications and engagement. Progress reports will form a standing item on the agenda for the Council meeting.