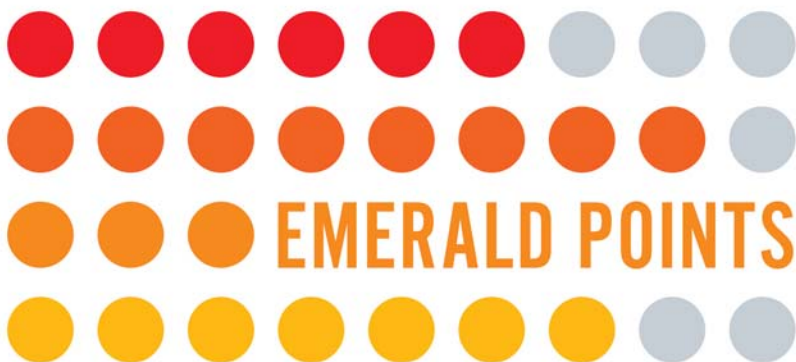


# REBUILDING THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

Policy, Delivery and Assurance

Peter Murphy, Katarzyna Lakoma,  
Peter Eckersley and Russ Glennon



# REBUILDING THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

The authors have produced a tour de force that combines comprehensive knowledge of performance management, a holistic systemic perspective, and real affinity for the fire and rescue services and the improvement of services to the public.

*Andrew Lynch, Editor of FIRE Magazine*

This is an instant, knowledgeable and very practical response to some of the most urgent contemporary issues facing the leadership and management of fire and rescue services. It effortlessly transcends policy and practice with clear practical and realistic recommendations for improving this vital public service.

*Paresb Wankhade, Editor: International Journal of  
Emergency Services, Edge Hill University, UK*

In the best tradition of *Emerald Points*, this book has clear implications and lessons for policy development, the delivery of fire and rescue services and the assurance that the sector owes to the public. It should be compulsory reading for senior civil servants, chief fire officers and our regulatory colleagues.

*Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer,  
Nottinghamshire Fire Service, UK*

This book provides a comprehensive understanding of performance management and adopts a critical friend perspective that epitomizes the best of such a position: a rigorous critical analysis of the sector with constructive advice on how to improve.

*Kirsten Greenhalgh, University of  
Nottingham, UK*

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## ALARM BELLS RINGING: INTRODUCTION

*It is currently almost impossible to scrutinise your local fire and rescue service. There's no independent inspectorate; no regular audit of performance; and only limited available data on performance over time or between areas.*

(May, [2016](#), p. 8)

Theresa May, in one of her final speeches as Home Secretary before becoming prime minister, outlined a number of major inadequacies in the performance measurement, management and monitoring of the Fire and Rescue Services in England. At the time, she was the longest serving Home Secretary since James Chuter Ede (1945–1951). Her speech was delivered at the think tank ‘Reform’, as had many of her speeches and those of her ministers when dealing with controversial subjects. The speech outlined her response to two highly critical reports from the National Audit Office ([NAO, 2015](#)) and the Public Accounts Select Committee ([PAC, 2016](#)), which had looked into the national oversight and management of the service by the government and more specifically the (former) Department of Communities and



Local Government under the leadership of Secretary of State Eric Pickles.

*The Secretary of State has a statutory duty to assure Parliament on the standards of fire and rescue authorities, but DCLG's evidence to support these statements is limited. DCLG is almost entirely reliant on authorities to self-certify they are in compliance with their mandated duties.*

([NAO, 2015](#), p. 10)

In January 2016, in response to the NAO report, the government announced that it was transferring the responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services to the Home Office. This could be interpreted as an attempt to avoid the scrutiny by the House of Commons' Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) in the light of the NAO report. Nevertheless, as we know, the PAC insisted on investigating the state of the service and its own highly critical report was published in February 2016 ([PAC, 2016](#)).

*The Department of Communities and Local Government's understanding of the pressures now faced by Fire and Rescue Services is seriously flawed. Without this understanding, further efficiency savings could put services at risk, potentially putting lives at risk.*

(Meg Hillier MP. Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts statement 5 November 2015)

The committee recommended that the Home Office should write to the committee by the summer of 2016 and set out how it would be improving the central government's understanding of the impacts of ongoing funding reductions on fire and rescue authorities. This should take into account, in particular, both the fire authorities' capacity to make further efficiency savings and the impact of prevention and protection activities on fire risk ([PAC, 2016](#), Recommendation 1. p5).

The government accepted the committee's recommendation in April 2016 (as it had in responding to the draft report earlier) and Mrs May's speech set out in some detail its strategic vision which was consciously based on a similar series of reforms to the police carried out under her stewardship of the Home Office between 2010 and 2015 (Murphy, Ferry, Glennon, & Greenhalgh, 2019; Wankhade & Weir, 2015).

Mrs May proposed to develop and incorporate appropriate amendments in the Policing and Crime Bill that was going through its final stages in Parliament at the time. Although Chapters 1–4 of the subsequent Policing and Crime Act 2017 essentially deal with changes to Fire and Rescue Services, it was too late to change the 'face' of the Bill, and Fire and Rescue is not included in the title of the Act. The Grenfell Tower Disaster occurred on 14 June 2016, the UK European Union membership referendum took place on 23 June and Mrs May became Prime Minister on 13 July 2016. The referendum, general election and appointment of Mrs May as Prime Minister not only facilitated the relatively smooth passage of the Policing and Crime Bill into the 2017 Act but also dramatically refocused the political, bureaucratic and managerial time and energy of the government and key stakeholders onto the agenda that swiftly became known as Brexit.

This book looks at the three specific aspects of the subsequent reforms that are mentioned in the opening quote from the Home Secretary over three years ago.

Chapter 2 sets out a model that demonstrates the interrelationship between the three subjects: policy development, service delivery and public assurance. It locates them in relation to the strategic and operational landscape of Fire and Rescue Services in England, the legislative parameters to action and the public resources made available to the sector. It also provides the basis for assessing the adequacy of the overall performance regime and its constituent parts.

Chapter 3 examines the state of performance data, information and intelligence available to the government, to Fire and Rescue Services, to their regulators, to stakeholders and to collaborators. The regular audit of performance and the inadequate performance data over time and between areas together with other changes required by the act demonstrated that the 2012 National Framework ([DCLG, 2012](#)) was both inadequate and obsolete. Chapter 3 looks at the evidence base available for policy development, service delivery and public assurance that was acknowledged by the government as unfit for purpose by 2016.

Chapter 4 examines the 2018 National Framework ([Home Office, 2018](#)), which replaced the 2012 framework as the performance regime for National Fire and Rescue Services. Under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services 2004, the Secretary of State must prepare a national framework and keep it up to date and once the NAO and PAC reports had exposed the gross inadequacy of the arrangements under the 2012 Framework, it was inevitable that it would have to be replaced ([Glennon & Murphy, 2018](#)). Although the Public Inquiry into the Grenfell Tower disaster ([Moore-Bick, 2017](#)) and Dame Judith Hackitt's enquiry into the inadequacy of building regulations ([Hackitt, 2018](#)) were both ongoing at the time, the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service in launching the 2018 Framework said:

*The national framework provides the basis for how fire and rescue services in England should operate. The revised version we have published today should support them becoming more accountable, effective and professional than ever before and embed the government's reform programme.*

(Nick Hurd MP. Minister for Policing and the Fire Service 8 May [2018](#))

Nevertheless, he acknowledged that further changes would be necessary to incorporate lessons learnt from Grenfell and from the Hackitt Report. The necessity for further improvement was highlighted on the day of publication of the Hackitt Report when the FM Global Resilience Index 2018 revealed that the UK was ranked 34th when it comes to fire resilience, below Turkey (17), Russia (21) and Bosnia (26), as well as the developed nations in the EU (FIRE, 2018). The index is intended to help risk managers understand and measure their companies' capacity to endure and respond to disruption, so they can ensure the business remains resilient. The UK's arrangements for fire resilience were considerably below the UK's other factors measured by the index such as natural hazard exposure, supply chain visibility, corruption and corporate governance quality.

The Framework did, however, include guidance on how fire and rescue authorities should work with, *inter alia*, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The 'robust and independent' inspectorate for Fire and Rescue Service that Mrs May promised in her 2016 speech was established in July 2017 although it emerged as a remodelled Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. HMICFRS and its first programme of fire and rescue service inspections is the subject of Chapter 5 of this book. The final chapter will then draw together some conclusions and suggest some ideas or areas for both future research and potential implications for future practice.

Before embarking on this evaluation it will be helpful to establish some basic fundamental contentions about Fire and Rescue Services in England that are held by the authors. For scholars and practitioners outside of the UK these may appear self-evident but in the UK they have recently been contested under the UK's Coalition and Conservative Governments between 2010 and 2019. By being explicit about these

judgements we hope to facilitate the readers' understanding of our position and the views and recommendations that flow from our evaluations into our conclusions and suggestions for future research and practice.

The primary purpose of fire and rescue services and the **strategic intent of government** is to maintain the **safety of the public**, through the avoidance, minimisation or mitigation of fire and related incidents and the associated risks to the public. This is not contested but it is concurrent with a statutory requirement to provide public services that are as economic, efficient and effective as they can be in the circumstances, they are in. There are clearly potential conflicts between these two aspirations and in practice trade-offs have had to be made.

The work of fire and rescue services also involves multiple strategic and operational collaborations with other emergency services, most notably the police and ambulance service. These include, but are not limited to, Local and National Resilience Forums, Community Safety Partnerships, Health and Well-being Boards and Local Safeguarding Partnerships for both Children and Adults. The common characteristic of all these collaborations is that their core purpose is the safety of the public.

The provision, evaluation and configuration of fire and rescue services should be undertaken on the basis of an assessment of the **contemporary risks to public safety** (whether to individuals to communities or to land, buildings and premises) in the short, medium and long term. This was established by the 2004 Fire and Rescue Services Act and has been operationalised through the Integrated Risk Management Planning process.

The delivery of most public services is configured on the basis of an assessment of individual or collective need, and examples include welfare, social services, education, social

housing etc. Some services are provided on the basis of demand, such as leisure services, building control and transport. Some services are known as universal services because they are available and are assumed to benefit every citizen. These are often regulatory services such as trading standards, environmental health, development control or public health provision.

Fire and rescue services throughout the world are overwhelmingly and traditionally provided and configured on the basis of an assessment of risks. In the recent era of austerity in the UK, some politicians, most notably Brandon Lewis MP (previous Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service, 2016) and his successor Nick Hurd MP (the Minister in 2019) have tried to emphasise or present the falling number of fire incidents in England as a reduction in *demand* for the service, and therefore part of a justification for continuously reducing the resources available to the service (Hurd, 2018).

Since 2010, the legislative and policy framework for Fire and Rescue Services in England has also strongly emphasised the control of costs (DCLG, 2010; Home Office, 2018) and the consequences of this change are evident in the first HMICFRS inspection reports (Murphy, 2019). Competition, commercialisation and marketisation were also prominently encouraged in the early years of the Coalition Government, via the Open Government White Paper (Cabinet Office, 2011) and the 2012 National Framework (DCLG, 2012) which for the first time was addressed solely to Fire Authorities (and not Fire Services). The 2012 National Framework differentiated the roles of the Fire Authority and Fire and Rescue Services along a commissioner/provider split with the Fire Authority being solely responsible for commissioning services while the Fire and Rescue Services (and other private companies for outsourced services) would become service providers.

Following the NAO and Public Accounts Select Committee reports, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and the 2018 National Framework signal a shift in emphasis in how the sector's 'strategic intent' is to be delivered with a **much greater emphasis (and a formal statutory duty) on collaborations between public services** most notably (but not exclusively) collaboration between the three 'Blue Light' emergency services of fire, police and ambulance services.

This re-emphasis reinforces our fourth contention. The most promising and appropriate theoretical basis for investigating and evaluating fire and rescue services is the adoption of a **public value theoretical perspective** (Benington & Hartley, 2019; Benington & Moore, 2011; Moore, 1995, 2013; Williams & Shearer, 2011). Public value was first operationalised and applied in the UK context by the Cabinet Office in 2002 (Kelly & Muers, 2002; Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2002), when Table 1.1 was produced to contrast its characteristics with those of traditional Public Administration and New Public Management.

Stoker (2006) argued traditional public administration and new public management sat 'uncomfortably' with networked governance and that Public Value Management was the paradigm most suited to the form of networked governance that was also emerging over the New Labour years. Networked governance (and operations) is clearly appropriate in the context of emergency services where effective collaborations are crucial. Although the Coalition Government of David Cameron and the 2012 National Framework attempted to introduce marketisation and hybridisation based on the operationalisation of New Public Management principles (Cabinet Office, 2011, 2012), these had only a very marginal impact on fire and rescue services, where opportunities for local and national outsourcing were extremely limited. The NAO (2015) and PAC (2016) reports, the Policing and Crime