



HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

Owner	Director of Service Improvement
Responsible Person	Head of Health & Safety
Date Written	July 2018
Date Reviewed	October 2019
Date of next review	9th October 2022

CONTENTS

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Equality and Inclusion](#)
3. [Aims/Objectives](#)
4. [The Operational Assurance Plan](#)
5. [Role of The Operational Assurance Team](#)
6. [Reporting](#)
7. [Appendix 1: Operational Assurance Plan](#)
8. [Appendix 2: Reactive Monitoring](#)

1. INTRODUCTION

Humberside Fire and Rescue Authority has a legal responsibility to ensure that an effective Fire and Rescue Service is provided across the Service area.

The Fire and Rescue Framework for England 2012 provides strategic direction for English Fire and Rescue Authorities.

2. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

HFRS aims to continuously improve the standards of service we provide to the community we serve. We recognise the importance of and are committed to promoting equality and inclusion in the provision of our services and to our employees. We are committed to encouraging equality and diversity amongst our workforce and to eliminating unlawful discrimination. We aim for our workforce to be truly representative of the community we serve and for each of our employees to feel respected and to be able to give their best.

3. AIMS/OBJECTIVES

The aim of Operational Assurance (OA) is to assess and continually improve Service delivery and operational preparedness, this will be achieved by;

- Providing assurance of emergency response to incidents.
- Supporting the achievement of the Service Strategic Objectives.
- Identifying, capturing and progressing any shared learning that would benefit Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) and other services.

In pursuance of this requirement, OA will undertake the monitoring and assessment of activities across a wide range of operational incidents and activities.

4. OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE PLAN

The Operational Assurance Plan provides guidance on how Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) carries out assurance during operational activities including training events and station inspections.

The plan is available to view in [Appendix 1](#) and on the Operational Assurance portal page.

5. OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE TEAM

Operational Assurance activities are carried out by either a member of the Operational Assurance team or suitable nominated representative. The fundamental role of the Operational Assurance Team is to support the achievement of Service Delivery Goals.

6. REPORTING

The Operational Assurance Team will produce a Quarterly and annual report of feedback from all debriefs that resulted in Service-wide implications or improvements. Quarterly and Annual reports will take place and will be embedded in the Health, Safety and Environmental Reports. The annual report will also identify and highlight trends and themes which will assist in structuring the annual 'Training Needs Analysis'.

**If you require further guidance on this document,
please contact Health, Safety and Environment Team**

APPENDIX 1

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Background

Humberside Fire and Rescue Authority has a legal responsibility to ensure that an effective Fire and Rescue Service is provided across the Service area.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 provides strategic direction for English Fire and Rescue Authorities. It identifies the government's priorities and objectives, placing a requirement to provide assurances to their communities and to government on financial governance and Operational matters. It is also a requirement for all Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish a statement of Assurance.

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) carries out its functions in accordance with the statutory and policy framework in which it is required to operate. The key legislation documents defining these responsibilities are:

- The Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004
- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- The Regulatory Reform Order 2005
- The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- The Localism Act 2011
- The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

To help ensure this is met, HFRS undertakes monitoring across a range of operationally focused activities. These monitoring activities form the Operational Assurance (OA) assessment, which are carried out by officers from across the organisation.

This Operational Assurance Plan sets out the OA activities to be undertaken during 2018-21 and is reviewed annually to ensure:

- The Service has a safe, well trained and competent workforce capable of meeting the demands placed upon them; and,
- The Emergency Response element of the Service is effectively achieving the relevant aspects of the Strategic Plan.

This Plan will also seek to provide assurance of HFRS's operational preparedness. Within the context of this plan, operational preparedness is defined as "a measurable state of readiness which will ensure that the Service is ready to respond to foreseeable emergency events, with the highest level of effectiveness". This is achieved by ensuring that:

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Version 2.0 October 2019	Not Protectively Marked	4 of 13
---	-------------------------	---------

- Personnel with responsibilities in support of the emergency response function of the Service are competent in that role, with all training and assessment current and validated.
- Routine vehicle and equipment checks and periodic tests are carried out robustly, with an appropriate level of diligence.
- Discrepancies, deficiencies and damages are recorded, accepted, progressed and where necessary investigated to ensure the maintenance of a safe and acceptable level of operational performance.

In addition, the Operational Assurance Plan contributes towards achieving the following Service outcomes and deliverables:

- Prevent the loss of life, injuries and impact on communities caused by emergency incidents
- Respond quickly and effectively to emergency incidents
- Help the public stay safe
- Inspire community confidence

This plan plays an essential role in measuring operational activities and competencies. It uses experiential learning from incidents and exercises as well as the use of debriefs, station plans and inspections to achieve this. The key focus will be to:

- Value our people
- Respond effectively
- Support delivery
- Make our communities safer

Operational Assurance

OA is embedded within the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) team and consisting of a Station Manager (SM), two Watch Managers (WM) and two specialist Grade 9 staff.

The aim of Operational Assurance is to assess and continually improve Service delivery and operational preparedness, this will be achieved by;

- Providing assurance of emergency response to incidents.
- Supporting the achievement of the Service Strategic Objectives.
- Identifying, capturing and progressing any shared learning that would benefit Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS)

In pursuance of this requirement, OA will undertake the monitoring and assessment of activities across a wide range of operational incidents and activities.

Additional benefits achieved by undertaking OA assessments at incidents allowing the reviewing Officer the opportunity to:

- Mentor and support less experienced colleagues at the incident
- Gather and provide evidence in support of the ongoing maintenance of competency (PDR PRO recording)
- Review the activities of crews to ensure incidents are being adequately progressed towards a conclusion
- Ensure compliance with the organisational debriefing policy

Review of Significant Events

A structured and deliberate review of significant events is advocated as a beneficial way to encourage reflection within an organisation. This method is widely used as a way of helping an organisation understand the direct and indirect cause of events, expose potential gaps in policies, procedures and capabilities which may cause employees to think differently. The HSE team will play a key role to support the review of significant events where the focus is on an operational incident or safety event.

Safety Critical Events

Occasionally during execution of the role, incident commanders will observe an action or omission that is considered to have potential to cause serious injury or severe damage to equipment, or to the environment. Such occurrences are termed '**Safety Critical Events**'. All safety critical events must be challenged and where possible rectified immediately. The incident commander or allocated OA officer will complete the OA return stating this issue as a 'Safety Critical Event' and in addition take any immediate steps to prevent any further events. For best practice a 'Near Miss' report must also be submitted to the Health and Safety Team by the OA Officer, where a follow up on any remedial actions will also take place.

Reporting

The HSE Team will produce a quarterly and annual report from all debriefs that resulted in Service-wide implications or improvements. Quarterly and annual reports will be embedded in the Health, Safety and Environmental Reports. The annual report will also identify and highlight trends and themes which will assist in structuring the annual 'Training Needs Analysis', (TNA) whilst providing key evidence from an operational assessment.

The HSE Team will be responsible for collating the OA reports. Key findings will be communicated accordingly throughout the Service.

Managers can request specific reports from the Health, Safety and Environmental Section.

Key specific OA outcomes can also be viewed allowing them to maintain a pro-active and current TNA overview.

Assuring Operational Activities

Assurance is split in to two areas:

- **Reactive Monitoring** – this provides assurance during operational incidents, exercises, training events and thematic reviews.
- **Station Performance Review** – this is a station-based assessment of operational personnel and premises.

Reactive Monitoring

Incident Monitoring

Part of the Tactical Advisors role is to undertake the monitoring and assessment of activities across a wide range of operational incidents. However, some incidents can be operationally assured by the incident commander in the absence of a Tactical Advisor i.e. Watch Manager or Crew Manager.

To facilitate the OA process, Fire Service Control will instigate, then assign incidents to the Tactical Adviser, (where applicable) which meet the following criteria:

- 3 appliances or more mobilised
- Any incident where there are 'persons reported' including fatalities
- Multiple vehicle RTC or 'persons trapped'
- Water rescue
- Line rescue
- Special appliances mobilised including National Assets and Technical Rescue Unit
- Special Service Incidents which result in the mobilisation of a Station Manager subject matter expert e.g. Fire investigation or Hazardous Materials
- Any other 'significant' incidents
- Thematic incidents and where any new equipment or new appliances are in use.

The OA process can also be initiated by the Incident Commander where they see any areas of good practice or lessons learned that need to be shared via the OA Process using the Monitoring System.

CCTV will be utilised to assure operational activities. The aim for the OA team is to assure two incidents a month (one north bank and one south bank).

Debriefing will identify, record and document any significant information or lessons learnt. Whenever possible, the Incident Commander should debrief crews prior to leaving the

incident ground about any events or occurrences that demand attention. The primary aim is to identify, record, action and communicate any event that has the potential to contribute towards the improvement of our Service. This may include examples of good practice, not just areas for development.

The Tactical Advisor or a suitably identified officer on the incident ground will be expected to complete the OA process within a 21-day deadline.

Debriefing Operational Activities

Reviewing workplace activity is an effective means of improving performance. HFRS aim is to therefore review operational and training activities on a regular basis. The application of a robust debrief process provides the organisation with an opportunity to learn from both the successful innovative practices and opportunities for improvement identified during related operational activities.

The debrief process is managed by the HSE Team, ensuring debriefs are undertaken following all operational incidents and training activities. Any identified implications and action plans arising can then be forwarded to the relevant "Actioning Manager". The HSE team do this by generating a Potential for Improvement Notice (PIN) or Good Practice Notice (GPN) through the OA process. The Actioning Managers will formally record their responses and subsequent actions taken to resolve the issue raised on the PIN. GPN's are for information purposes and do not require a formal response. The HSE Team is also responsible for collating and utilising the feedback gathered through this process, ensuring that all learning and development areas are captured and progressed and where necessary shared nationally. It is therefore imperative that the feedback through observation of the incident or exercise and from debriefs are recorded as thoroughly as possible. Meaningful data is vital to the success of the process.

The three types of Operational Debrief undertaken within HFRS:

Operational (Hot) Debrief

Carried out at the earliest opportunity following conclusion of an operational activity. Conducted either at the scene (dressed down where appropriate), or immediately upon return to the normal place of work.

Tactical Debrief

If the outcomes of the operational debrief cannot be dealt with at an operational level or if the OA section believe it necessary, the debrief should be elevated to a formal tactical level. The decision to raise the level of debrief is not restricted to the size of the incident but is based on the need to deal with the outcomes of the incident within a wider forum to raise significant learning opportunities.

Strategic Debriefs

This debrief should be used following a multi-agency declared emergency, major incident, training event or exercise, or after a multi-agency event. The lessons learned following this debrief can reasonably be expected to influence the work of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) or inform Service policy and guidance associated with spate conditions/extreme weather or large-scale emergency procedures.

The HSE Team will continually review all debriefing activities including analytical risk assessments to provide assurance that HFRS maintains a debriefing system which remains 'fit for purpose' and delivers meaningful outcomes that drive service improvement.

For more information on operational debriefs see Operational Intervention Standards Policy.

Training / Exercise Monitoring

In 2018, the HSE team will operationally assure central training courses. The aim will be to assess one course per month. This will be an in-depth review of all aspects of the training courses the service provides, including lesson plans, risk assessments, course content, set up/make up and facilities.

HSE team must be notified of any exercises that take place and either a HSE representative or a nominated officer must attend to operational assure the exercise. Any lessons learned from training and exercises carried out on a smaller scale should be captured by the officer through a debrief. For more information on the exercise process then see PGN 7_10 Operational Exercise.

These activities will provide the Service with assurance that:

- The required range of training courses and exercises are being undertaken
- Personnel are working in accordance with standard operating procedures, Policies and guidance within the training environment.
- Supervisory officers are provided with an opportunity for development and feedback.
- Learning opportunities are being maximised through support of collaborative working and peer review activities etc.

Thematic Reviews

A Thematic Review will typically involve detailed research and analysis of an operational subject. The identification of significant organisational risks can occur at any time and therefore a flexible approach is applied to undertaking thematic reviews, ensuring Operational Assurance can remain sufficiently agile to respond to new developments.

Thematic reviews are highlighted by the HSE team and will be agreed by TMT. They will be based upon areas of organisational risk and trends analysed from data captured from operational assurance and Health and Safety reports.

FDS officers will be briefed on the identified theme through emails, Siren weekly and meetings with the expectation that particular focus will be placed on the theme in addition to their normal role.

There will be an aim to undertake a minimum of one prioritised thematic review per quarter, although there are many occasions where the HSE team undertake short notice, demand led activities arising from identified organisational risk.

All information gathered will be recorded via the monitoring system.

See [Appendix 2](#) for reactive flowchart

Station Performance Review

In 2018 HFRS will be commencing a Monthly Station Performance Review (SPR). The review will be split into two parts;

- **Watch Performance Review**, this will be undertaken on a monthly basis by station-based Watch Managers. It will include Operational Competency, Public Safety, Health & Safety and Watch Administration. This will be validated by Emergency Response Station Managers/Control Room Manager.
- **Station Performance Review**, this will be carried out by Emergency Response Station Managers every month with the aim to assess alternate watches over a 24 month period, this review will consist of the following areas;

An assessment of the Practical and Theoretical Performance of Station personnel, this will take the form of an observation of practical and theoretical sessions carried out either on stations or in conjunction with the Operational Exercise Programme. In addition to this, a Station Inspection will be carried out. Areas will include, Station Facilities, Operational Vehicles & Equipment and Operational PPE including Breathing Apparatus.

The SPR schedule is a 24 month cycle. Within this period, a biannual peer review will take place from an independent Station Manager. The focus will be on the Scrutiny of the current and previous Monthly Reviews, aiming to incorporate alternate watches for each period and every On-Call station completing an inspection once in a twelve-month period.

The OA team will attend at least one Peer Review on a monthly basis.

This process will enable the Service to develop a self-critical evaluation and will assist in identifying any shortfalls in competency and enable the Service to address these matters promptly and effectively, providing support and sharing good practice to improve overall standards.

Monitoring System

The monitoring system that will be used currently is part of the PDRPRO system. It will be the key tool for the assurance of operational activities. It will capture information from all debriefs including thematic audits evidence.

Reporting by Exception

Reporting by exception is the principle of only documenting or recording events or occurrences that are not standard or normal, and therefore demand or deserve attention. The primary aim of the OA monitoring system is to identify, record, action and communicate any event that has the potential to contribute towards the improvement of the Service. This may include examples of good practice as well as areas for development. The HSE Team can issue PIN's or GPN's.

When a PIN is issued then all relevant action must be in place within 28 days.

Review and Evaluation of the Ops Assurance Plan

The activities set out within this Ops Assurance Plan will be subject to continual review so as to ensure they continue to meet with corporate expectation and satisfy the objectives defined within the introduction to this plan.

APPENDIX 2

Reactive Monitoring – Provides assurance during operational incidents, exercises, training events and thematic reviews.

