



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

LFC – 0753

Completed by Governance Team

New Approach to Home Fire Safety Visits 2023

Report to:

Operational Delivery Board
Investment & Finance Board
Commissioner's Board
Deputy Mayor's Fire and Resilience Board
London Fire Commissioner

Date:

21 September 2022
27 September 2022
05 October 2022
13 October 2022

Report by:

Vicky Lowry, Head of Admin, Policy & Strategy - Prevention & Protection

Report classification:

For decision

For publication

I agree the recommended decision below.

Andy Roe

London Fire Commissioner

Date This decision was remotely
signed on 04 November 2022

PART ONE Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

Executive Summary

Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) are the primary intervention that the LFB has with the community, providing tailored advice and smoke detection to reduce the risk of fire, and the risk of death or serious injury should a fire occur. This report sets out the proposed strategic direction for HFSVs in line with the 2022/23 LFC Delivery Plan, with a risk prioritisation approach adopted to ensure an efficient and tailored service, allocating the majority of our resources to the most vulnerable Londoners, and expanding the provision of fire safety advice to all Londoners through a variety of methodologies. This paper has been jointly produced by Prevention & Protection and Fire Stations as an agreed approach.

For the Deputy Mayor

That the Deputy Mayor has considered the attached report prior to the London Fire Commissioner approving the proposed new approach to HFSVs, which will be incorporated into the 2022/23 Delivery Plan.

For the London Fire Commissioner

That the London Fire Commissioner agrees the proposed new approach to HFSVs, which will be incorporated into the 2022/23 Delivery Plan.

That the London Fire Commissioner approves Option 2 at an approximate cost of £10,000 Implement manual workaround solutions until OneRisk is live in addition to making minor updates to the online Home Fire Safety Checker. This option would consist of a number of ad-hoc solutions to prioritising risk, including:

- Amendments to the Home Fire Safety Checker to allow for more detailed risk prioritisation in line with the new proposals. This would ensure the new criteria were in line with the manual triage system
- The development of MS Forms for Area Teams and Control to use in order to triage individuals based on the new criteria, and respond with the relevant intervention – either referring them to the online checker, booking a telephone or in-person HFSV depending on the risk
- The creation of a Power BI report which would analyse information input into the HFSVs database and Microsoft forms to report on categories and reduction of risk at HFSVs
- Updating the policy to formalise revisits, utilising LFB Diary to diarise follow ups

1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 HFSVs are at the centre of the LFC's approach to reducing deaths and injury from fire, as well as the overall incidence of fire across the capital. There are two main elements to the visit - the advice provided to the resident to reduce the risk of a fire occurring, and the alarms fitted in all areas of risk, to provide early warning in the event of a fire. Where appropriate, standard smoke alarms or those for the hard of hearing are fitted during this visit. Upon finding someone at particularly high risk, a welfare concern or safeguarding referral can be made. Currently anyone living in London can request a visit, which is carried out by fire crews or staff based in area teams. Partner agencies or concerned friends/family members may refer someone for a HFSV if they think that individual is at risk, however the referee may decline the visit if they choose. Since 2003, over 1.09 million visits have been delivered across the capital, and prior to Covid-19, approximately 80,000 in-person HFSVs were carried out each year.
- 1.2 During the Covid-19 pandemic the HFSV service was reduced to provide in-person HFSVs only to those most at risk from fire during lockdown. All those requesting a visit were asked Covid-19 screening and fire risk questions, based upon amended 'immediate risk to life' criteria which was circulated to the area teams, this mainly included residents who had reduced mobility and were a smoker. To partially offset this reduction in visits, the Brigade's online advice was reviewed and updated, and area team staff provided guidance over the telephone to those who the fire risk questions had shown were at a lower risk from fire. The Covid-19 pandemic led to a backlog of 6,500 HFSVs (December 2021) which was noted as a cause of concern by the HMICFRS in April 2022. This backlog has now been addressed, with no outstanding visits.
- 1.3 Self-assessment tools were introduced in 2021, to meet objectives laid out within the LFC's Transformation Delivery Plan (TDP). The TDP set out three objectives regarding home fire safety advice provision - to further develop the fire prevention content on the London Fire website, to

provide an online 360-degree fire hazard-spotting exercise and to create an online 'virtual' home fire safety visit function. This function, known as the Home Fire Safety Checker, went live in Spring 2021 and comprises of both an online risk triage and tailored home fire safety advice service. The checker can be found here: [home-fire-safety-checker](#).

1.4 In April 2022 the LFB received a 'Cause of Concern' letter from the HMICFRS regarding HFSVs:

'The brigade doesn't adequately prioritise HFSVs on the basis of risk. It doesn't have a system in place that allows for the consistent assessment of risk levels among those people it has already identified as being at greatest risk from fire'. The four recommendations from the HMICFRS were:

By 31 May 2022, the brigade should have plans in place to:

- Develop a prevention strategy that clearly details how it will implement its prevention activity.
- Develop an effective system that assesses levels of risk among those people it has already identified as being at greatest risk from fire.
- Make sure it prioritises HFSVs for those people it has identified as being at greatest risk from fire.
- Develop a plan that addresses the HFSV backlog in a way that is both timely and prioritised on the basis of risk.

A Taskforce group was established to address this concern, and an action plan was sent to the HMICFRS at the end of May 2022 (See Appendix 1 for latest update to the action plan).

2 Proposed Approach

2.1 Since their inception, the target for completion of HFSVs has been numerical, peaking at 80,000 per year in recent years. HFSVs have been targeted both towards people known to be at higher risk from fire – known as high-risk individuals or P1 people in order to reduce deaths and serious injuries - and to places which our data shows have a higher incidence of accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) in order to reduce the number of fire incidents, these are referred to as P1 postcodes. To address the P1 postcodes, crews often carry out 'grouped risk visits' (GRVs) to an area, offering HFSVs to all residents in that area regardless of personal risk factors. HFSV data shows that the balance between seeing people most at risk and delivering visits to those not at risk, has largely remained at 45% (high risk individuals) to 55% (other) in recent years. A person who is deemed to be high risk will meet two of the three following criteria:

- Carries out high risk fire behaviours
- Is less able to react to a fire/alarm
- Is less able to escape from a fire

2.2 In October 2019 the HFSV Governance Board was established which brings together representatives from key departments within the Brigade. A departmental project 'HFSV Improvement Plan' was also instigated with the objective of moving forward with a new, more tailored, and efficient strategy which would allow the targeting of resources to the most vulnerable in the community, alongside a wider provision of fire safety advice using a variety of methodologies. The HMICFRS Cause of Concern letter addressed issues that had already been identified as areas for improvement, with progress made against the project deliverables.

2.3 Alongside this work, the brigade has also acquired a new dataset (ACORN) which replaced the previous Experian MOSAIC data. This new dataset allows us to target high risk individuals down to household level, as well as having access to NFCC risk data which can be used to overlay elements of risk relating to place and property type. This data will be used by Borough Commanders to identify risk within their boroughs and will be included in the local borough Risk

Management Plans. Work is underway to produce a standardised report and guidance for BCs to use this data at a local level by November 2022.

- 2.4 The following new approach to HFSVs are recommended based upon a combination of these pieces of work, along with consultation and engagement in the community carried out by the Community Engagement Team for the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), and internal stakeholder engagement which informed the new HFSV training planning process.
- 2.5 Amendment of the 'priority' criteria for individuals from 'high risk' (historically P1) and 'low risk' to 'very high', 'high', 'medium' and 'low' risk. A set of criteria will be determined to support these categories, along with a methodology for prioritising high-risk individuals
- 2.6 Enhancement of online and telephone HFSVs, and a move away from providing in-person HFSVs for low-risk individuals, with in-person visits offered only to high and very high risk individuals. Implementing this proposal would create efficiencies in that it would limit the interruption in station routines, station-based training or other essential operational activities that may need to be undertaken in preference to attending low risk HFSVs, allowing for more efficient and targeted use of frontline resources.
- 2.7 Identification of vulnerable Londoners will be enhanced through the use of ACORN and NFCC datasets which will be referenced in the Borough Risk Management Plans. Group Risk Visits (GRVs) will remain, however people living within P1 postcodes (those who are more likely to have a fire but are able to react and escape) will mainly be targeted through online methodologies unless identified as high-risk individuals with the objective of reducing the number of accidental dwelling fires.
- 2.8 The facility to offer re-visits for those with degenerative conditions – this is currently carried out on an ad-hoc basis and will be formalised within the new strategy.
- 2.9 Introduction of an out of hours facility and a mechanism for responding to 'very high risk' referrals within 4 hours. This facility will be used for those who meet set criterion for very high risk, including any identified safeguarding concerns and those at risk from arson. The target for responding within 4 hours will be more achievable if other time efficiencies are made as, for example through reducing attendance to Unwanted Fire Signals which is subject to a separate paper.
- 2.10 A new HFSV Training package is currently being devised for all relevant staff groups within the organisation.
- 2.11 The LFB Prevention Strategy and Delivery Plan are in the process of being drafted to accompany the CRMP which will contain further information about how risk is prioritised and addressed. This will be presented in early 2023.

3 Options for resourcing the new approach

- 3.1 In order to support the proposed approach, updates to IT systems will be required, along with associated funding. The OneRisk project is estimated to complete in 2025 and these updates have been specified within the requirements of that project. Although waiting for the OneRisk solution is the most cost-effective solution, the brigade has pledged to address the HMICFRS Cause of Concern by March 2023. Therefore, three options have been explored to address this outstanding risk. Prevention & Protection have explored the possibility of using government grant funding to

support this project, however, this work has been found to be 'out of scope'. The following estimates are rough and further scoping work is being undertaken to firm up the costings.

3.2 Option 1 – Prioritise upgrading IT solutions to streamline the risk prioritisation approach, from identifying high risk individuals through to a tailored intervention based on risk. This option would consist of updates to the online Home Fire Safety Checker, the HFSV database and related IT systems in order to:

- Link the Home Fire Safety Checker to the booking form to be able follow a person's journey through the process
- Record risk categorisation and triage on the HFSV database
- Record telephone HFSVs on the HFSV database
- Add flags for re-visits on to the HFSV database, with recommended frequencies
- Add assurance mechanisms into the existing database

To fund these updates, approximately £266,000 will need to be secured, which includes £100,000 for the online checker, and £166,000 for the HFSV database and related system updates. An investment bid has been initiated in order to fund these updates if this option is chosen, however no other revenue stream has been identified. IT have indicated that they are already working on two major projects which will impact on their capacity for getting these upgrades implemented before April 2023 at the earliest. AC Fire Safety has raised concerns that this option may not provide value, particularly given the inability for this to be delivered in the short term without other major IT projects being paused and given the proposed implementation of OneRisk.

3.3 Option 2 – Implement interim manual workaround solutions until OneRisk is live in addition to making minor updates to the online Home Fire Safety Checker. This option would consist of a number of ad-hoc solutions to prioritising risk utilising applications such as Microsoft Forms., including:

- Amendments to the Home Fire Safety Checker to allow for more detailed risk prioritisation in line with the new proposals. This would ensure the new criteria were in line with the manual triage system
- The development of MS Forms for Area Teams and Control to use in order to triage individuals based on the new criteria, and respond with the relevant intervention – either referring them to the online checker, booking a telephone or in-person HFSV depending on the risk
- The creation of a Power BI report which would analyse information input into the HFSVs database and Microsoft forms to report on categories and reduction of risk at HFSVs
- Updating the policy to formalise revisits, utilising LFB Diary to diarise follow ups

This option is less streamlined and would create additional work for the Area Teams, however the cost would be significantly lower, in the region of £10,000. This option removes duplication of spending to update the HFSV database and incorporates changes to the online Home Fire Safety checker which will be compatible with OneRisk and will enable risk categorisation to be consistently applied for all interventions. This cost could be funded from departmental budgets. If this option is chosen, the Investment bid would be withdrawn, and the manual triage process would be recorded on the Corporate Risk Register as there would be more potential for human error. Additional work would be completed to progress further updates to the online checker once IT have capacity in 2023/24. This option is recommended.

3.4 Option 3 – Make no changes to either the Online Checker or IT systems and establish a manual triage process as stated in Option 2 above. Although the triage process would meet some aspects

of the HMICFRS requirements, if the Online Checker were to remain in its current state, the 'very high risk' category would not feature, leading to an inconsistent approach. Therefore, this option is not recommended.

4 Assurance and Performance

4.1 Prior to Covid-19, the number of in-person HFSVs carried out was the key performance indicator reported on. During the pandemic, telephone HFSVs were also recorded, and reported to the Home Office on a regular basis.

4.2 The quality assurance process for HFSVs is currently being updated in line with the new Service Assurance approach and will be instigated once staff have received the new training package.

4.3 In order to review the effectiveness of the new strategy, the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and local service measures are proposed once the new systems are in place. These will primarily be owned by Fire Stations, with the exception of the online checker which will be owned by Prevention & Protection:

Measure	Corporate KPI	Local Measure
Percentage of station staff time spent on Prevention activity	X	
Online Home Fire Safety Checker activity, broken down into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triage completed • Self-assessment completed 	X	
Total number of Home Fire Safety Visits, broken down into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone HFSVs • In-person HFSVs 	X	
Percentage of in-person HFSVs carried out to 'Very High' and 'High' risk individuals	X	
Percentage of 'very high risk' HFSVs that are contacted within 4 hours of receiving the referral		X
Percentage of HFSVs that are contacted within 3 working days of receiving a high-risk referral		X
Number of unallocated visits after 1 month of receiving the referral		X
Percentage of QA audits that are marked as 'Good' within the new Assurance framework		X

5 Equality comments

5.1 The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience are required to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when taking decisions. This

in broad terms involves understanding the potential impact of policy and decisions on different people, taking this into account and then evidencing how decisions were reached.

- 5.2 It is important to note that consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty is not a one-off task. The duty must be fulfilled before taking a decision, at the time of taking a decision, and after the decision has been taken.
- 5.3 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage, and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination), race (ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation.
- 5.4 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision-takers in the exercise of all their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 5.5 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
 - remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic where those disadvantages are connected to that characteristic.
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
 - encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- 5.6 The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.
- 5.7 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
 - tackle prejudice
 - promote understanding.
- 5.8 An equalities impact assessment (EIA) has been carried out and is attached as appendix 2 to this report. There were no adverse impacts identified against the protected characteristics, however it is a recommendation of this paper that the proposed change in provision is closely monitored through analysis of fire data to ensure that any unintended consequences, such as an increase in accidental dwelling fires, are identified swiftly and measures put in place to address those.

6 Other considerations

Workforce comments

- 6.1 It is not anticipated that there will be any workforce implications and staff using the updated process and database will be sufficiently briefed about the updated database. The trade unions have been provided with this report in advance of the Deputy Mayor's Fire & Resilience Board meeting.

Sustainability comments

6.2 This report discusses the advancement of online and telephone HFSVs for low-risk individuals, which will have a positive impact relating to business travel and fuel usage. This report does not introduce any significant sustainability impacts. Where new policies and/or corporate projects arise, they are subject to the Brigade's sustainable development impact assessment process.

Procurement comments

6.3 The recommended option raises no concerns from a Procurement perspective due to the anticipated spend being at or below the Commissioner's tendering threshold. If the spend exceeds this threshold we expect purchasing to be in accordance with Standing Orders

Communications comments

6.4 This will feed into the development of a Brigade wide Community Engagement (CE) strategy which is currently being developed taking all of the learning from the CE pilots and will introduced an evidence based layered approach to engagement. The policy will be delivered in January 2023 under the brigades new CRMP and will include specialist engagement package including engagement in the aftermath of an incident, strategic and aerial view of CE and global learning that will take place in the aftermath of an incident, the policy will ensure best practice CE is delivered across the brigade and set standards for participation. New CE metrics and a community forum are being established to measure social value of our engagement for communities.

7 Financial comments

7.1 This report sets out the proposed strategic direction for HFSVs with a risk prioritisation approach adopted to ensure an efficient and tailored service and recommends that the LFC approves Option 2 at an approximate cost of £10,000.

7.2 If option 2 is approved, it is expected that the cost of £10,000 will be contained within existing budgets.

8 Legal comments

8.1 This report seeks approval of expenditure to update the HFS checker database system. It also seeks approval from the London Fire Commissioner of the revised HFSW strategy and action plan attached to the report.

8.2 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "Commissioner") is established as a corporation sole with the Mayor appointing the occupant of that office. Under section 327D of the GLA Act 1999, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the Mayor may issue to the Commissioner specific or general directions as to the manner in which the holder of that office is to exercise his or her functions.

8.3 By direction dated 1 April 2018, the Mayor set out those matters, for which the Commissioner would require the prior approval of either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience (the "Deputy Mayor").

8.4 Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of the said direction requires the Commissioner to seek the prior approval of the Deputy Mayor before "[a] commitment to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150,000 or above as identified in accordance with normal accounting practices...".

- 8.5 The Deputy Mayor's approval is not required as the report recommends Option 2 which is estimated to cost £10,000. The LFC's Scheme of Governance, particularly relating to procurement must still be complied with. It should also be of note, the Deputy Mayor of Fire shall be consulted as far as reasonably practicable before any decision of the LFC is taken that can be reasonably be considered to be novel, contentious or repercussive in nature, irrespective of the monetary value of the decision involved (which may be nil).
- 8.6 The arrangements proposed is consistent with the Commissioner's power under section 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to do anything it considers appropriate for the purposes of the carrying-out of any of it functions.
- 8.7 Furthermore, under section 6 and 7 of the aforementioned legislation, the Commissioner has the power to secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting and fire safety.
- 8.8 The proposed HFSW strategy aims to address the recommendations of the HMICFRS and will ensure the organisation remains efficient and effective in the discharge of its core functions.

9 List of appendices

Appendix	Title	Open or confidential*
1	HFSV Task and Finish Group Action Plan to address HMICFRS Cause of Concern letter	Open
2	Equalities Impact Assessment	Open

Part two confidentiality

Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part Two form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a Part Two form: NO

Originating officer declaration

Reporting officer to confirm the following by using 'x' in the box:

Reporting officer Vicky Lowry has drafted this report and confirms the following:	
1. Head of Service Charlie Pugsley has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to Board for consideration	X
2. Advice The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal: Hameera Darr Legal Advisor, on behalf of General Counsel (Head of Law and Monitoring Officer).	X

Omolayo Sokoya Financial Advisor, on behalf of the Chief Finance Officer.	
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Appendix 1 – HFSV Task & Finish Group Action Plan based on Cause of Concern letter

	Priority Areas	Action	Start date	Completion date	Owner	Progress
1	Develop a prevention strategy that clearly details how it will implement its prevention activity	Produce a short interim Prevention/HFSV strategy for 22/23 that complements our 22/23 delivery plan Consider how this will complement our CRMP for 23/24	April 2022	May 2022	Vicky Lowry/Craig Carter/Susan Ellison-Bunce	COMPLETE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Strategy produced and sent to CRMP team HFSV Strategy Report brought forward to April PMM/PMB and programmed into ODDb, CB & FRB – last Board date 13 October 22 Latest draft of CRMP shared with group HFSV strategy added to Delivery Plan 22-23 More detailed Prevention Delivery Plan to be drafted to include objectives, plans and resourcing
2	Develop an effective system that assesses levels of risk among those people it has already identified as being at greatest risk from fire	Implement an effective system for allocation of HFSVs that utilises all our current HFSV methods (online/telephone/face to face) based on risk and need	July 2022	Mar 2023	Vicky Lowry/Craig Carter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New strategy to be agreed at ODDb, CB and FRB – Oct 22 Regular engagement and calibration with Area Teams/DACs taking place communicating direction of travel Work in progress to update policies, guidance, and aide memoires Working to scope out cost and time to update HFSV database to record telephone HFSVs Working to scope out cost and time to update online checker to link to the HFSV booking form where someone is identified as high risk
		Consider how consistency of approach for each call centre is maintained and regularly quality assured	April 2022	Mar 2023	Vicky Lowry/Craig Carter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged with Area Teams to ensure short term consistency of HFSV booking QA discussed with Area Teams New QA process being devised for HFSV booking in line with new LFB Assurance process
		Consider how we will communicate these changes internally and externally	July 2022	Mar 2023	Ash Kohan/Matt Jackson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comms strategy being planned – to cover internal and external comms

3	Make sure it prioritises HFSVs for those people it has identified as being at greatest risk from fire	Consider a service measure for urgent HFSVs similar to the one currently used for alleged fire risks	April 2022	Mar 2023	Vicky Lowry/Craig Carter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Very high risk' criteria drafted to include meeting all three high risk criteria and/or threat of arson. Suggested response time is 4 hours in line with Safeguarding policy.
		Consider any necessary changes that are required to our call centre approach to complement a revised way of working (out of hours high risk contact)	April 2022	Mar 2023	Vicky Lowry/Craig Carter/Jo Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control HFSV Reps now in place • Links to action above re: 'very high risk' individuals • Meeting held with Control to scope out practicalities
		Consider any necessary changes that are required to our use of light duty staff to complement a revised way of working	April 2022	Mar 2023	Vicky Lowry/Craig Carter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option was scoped by Ops leads and found to be impractical for various reasons. The backlog has been reduced utilising existing resources and it is predicted that crews will be able to continue to respond to demand. • Ops leads looking at more flexible appointment times for HFSVs • Updated telephone policy & guidance will cover crews and light duty staff making HFSV calls, as well as Area Teams
		Consider how we will communicate these changes internally and externally	July 2022	Mar 2023	Ash Kohan/Matt Jackson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comms strategy being planned – to cover internal and external comms
4	Develop a plan that addresses the HFSV backlog in a way that is both timely and prioritised on the basis of risk.	Clear the backlog of the remaining 2000 HFSVs by end of Q2	April 2022	Sep 2022	Vicky Lowry/Craig Carter	<p>COMPLETE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current unallocated visits over 100 days old = 18 which have been reviewed and found that the resident has been unresponsive to any contact initiated by LFB • Thank you email being drafted to Area Teams and Crews for their hard work in eliminating this backlog