

Circular number	63/2009	Date issued	13 October 2009
This circular is	For information	No response required	
This circular is	Relevant to the National Framework		
Status	This circular announces the publication of two research reports entitled - Community Fire Safety Fund: Process Issues and Risk Based Performance Measurement in the Fire and Rescue Services		

Publication of Two Research Reports – Community Fire Safety Innovation Fund: Process Issues; and Risk Based Performance Measurement in the Fire and Rescue Services

Issued by:

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Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
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Summary

The Community Fire Safety (CFS) Fund: Process Issues report aimed to evaluate the implementation and delivery issues of the CFS Innovation Fund. The Risk Based Performance Measurement in the Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) report sought to investigate the scope for the formulation of future performance measures for FRSs.

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1.0 Background

Community Fire Safety Fund: Process Issues

- 1.1 The Community Fire Safety (CFS) Innovation Fund was established in response to earlier research which suggested that those most likely to suffer a fire live in socially deprived areas and/or in low income families. The Innovation Fund aimed to contribute to the reduction of fires and fire-related casualties, reduce the level of inequality in the incidence of fires and fire-related casualties, and to identify local CFS approaches that could be rolled out nationally.
- 1.2 The size and amount of funding allocated to each FRS across England varied. Although the funds were allocated over a three year period from 2003/04 to 2005/06, this study seeks to evaluate the first two years of the Innovation Fund.
- 1.3 The aim of the study was to carry out an evaluation that concentrates on the implementation and delivery issues of the CFS Innovation Fund and seeks to understand whether the fund achieved the desired results.

Risk Based Performance Measurement in the Fire and Rescue Services

- 1.4 In the 2004 Spending Review, Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in England were given a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to reduce the number of accidental fire related deaths in the home by 20%, and to achieve a 10% reduction in deliberate fires by 31 March 2010. This included a floor target which stated that FRSs rate of dwelling fire deaths should not be 1.25 times the national average.
- 1.5 This research sought to investigate the scope for the formulation of future performance measures for FRSs, with an emphasis on the adoption of risk based outcome focused measures. Three areas were identified as suitable for the application of measures, namely dwelling fires, a composite measure of the economic and social cost of fire, and deliberate fires.

2.0 Findings

Community Fire Safety Fund: Process Issues

- 2.1 FRSs varied in their approaches to the use of Innovation Funding.
- 2.2 The majority of funding was spent on interventions or programmes aimed at children and young people as well as programmes targeted at youth and at-risk young people.
- 2.3 Many FRSs used the funding to support work around Home Fire Risk Checks, while some entered partnerships with other agencies to provide a more comprehensive home safety assessment that covered areas such as security, energy use and trip hazards.

Risk Based Performance Measurement in the Fire and Rescue Services

- 2.4 The results of the analysis reveal that dwelling fire rates (as opposed to fire deaths or injuries) provide the least volatile measure for FRSs of any size.
- 2.5 The study found that the method of calculating dwelling fire metrics for each FRS (based on the socio-demographic make up of each FRS) produces measurable targets that are linked to inequality in the incidence of fire.
- 2.6 The analysis of the composite fires index measure concluded that a 'cost of fire' index based upon fatalities, injuries and property damage incurred as a result of deliberate and accidental fires for dwellings, non-domestic premises and vehicles is a good performance measure, as this measure would be reflective of the broader role of the FRS in protecting the community from fires and aligns well with developments in integrated risk management planning.
- 2.7 This metric is also shown to demonstrate a good correlation with risk of social deprivation and crime.
- 2.8 A metric based upon the total number of fires, or fire rate, was identified as a suitable for a deliberate fires measure. Such a metric would align with tackling deprivation and potential crime rates targets set by the Home Office.
- 2.9 Finally the examination of FRS contribution to other (non FRS) target areas concludes that there may be scope to measure performance at Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) and in terms of the Environmental Impact with a view to future metrics.
- 2.10 It is suggested that 'ethnicity' should be part of a broad range of measures to ensure that public services are representative of the communities that they serve. Such targets should be set in regard to staff turnover.

3.0 Conclusions

Community Fire Safety Fund: Process Issues

- 3.1 The analysis of the Innovation Fund showed that there were reductions in the previous five to six years of fires and fire related casualties in both the Intervention and Comparison areas.
- 3.2 However, it was difficult to isolate and tease out the effect (statistically) that the Innovation Fund had made over and above that taking place elsewhere.
- 3.3 The impact of this work on future policy was that it prompted further work and led to the commissioning of the Fire Prevention Grant evaluation.
- 3.4 The full report can be found at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/firesafetyinnovationfund>

Risk Based Performance Measurement in the Fire and Rescue Services

- 3.5 The emphasis on the formulation of future performance measures for the FRS was on the adoption of risk based and outcome focused measures.
- 3.6 Dwelling fires produce measurable target metrics that are linked to inequality in the incidence of fire.
- 3.7 Composite Cost of Fire measure is robust at local area levels and demonstrates a good correlation with the risk of social deprivation and crime. Crucially, it is an outcome measure rather than an output measure.
- 3.8 The deliberate fires metric is based upon the total number of fires, or fire rate, and was identified as a suitable candidate for a deliberate fires measure and this metric would line up with tackling deprivation and potential crime rate targets.
- 3.9 The conclusion drawn from looking at FRS contribution to other (non FRS) target areas is that there may be scope to measure performance at RTCs and Environmental Impacts as a future metric. With regards to ethnicity, any future targets should include a wide spectrum of measures to make certain that public services represent the communities they serve.
- 3.10 The report provided some of the underpinning for the development of DSO6.1 and 6.2 (National Indicators 33 and 49), which use the basis of the cost of fire metric (without the suggested weightings) and the deliberate fires index respectively. There are now two directly fire related indicators in the National Indicator set. 30 FRSs have chosen to set targets for these indicators, which should mean fires, deaths and injuries are targeted closely in the most at risk areas, and overall risk falls.
- 3.11 The full report can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/frsmeasurement>

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