

Emergency Services News Briefing

August 2025



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Introduction

In this edition of our news briefing, we draw attention to some of the key developments and publications in the sector, including the government's Spending Review. We also cover updates on the National Policing Digital Strategy, the new neighbourhood policing programme and the government's priorities for fire and rescue services.





Spending Review

The Chancellor of the Exchequer presented the Spending Review 2025 to Parliament in June 2025 to set out the government's plans to invest in Britain and setting the departmental budgets until 2028-29 and capital budgets until 2029-30. The Spending Review outlines the government's delivery of the milestones set within the Plan for Change, which includes putting police back on the beat.

The announcements detailed that Police spending power will increase in real terms over the spending review period by an average of 2.3% a year, to support frontline policing levels across England and Wales and help restore public confidence in policing. Key highlights from the review include:

- £1.1 billion in capital investment will support digital policing, AI tools, and integrated data systems.
- Emergency services are being encouraged to collaborate even more closely, particularly in areas like mental health response and safeguarding.
- New frameworks will promote transparency and public trust, with a focus on community engagement and accountability.
- Investment in resilience training and equipment will help services respond to climate-related emergencies and other complex risks.

Chief Constable Gavin Stephens, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Chair, commented on the Spending Review and noted "this is an incredibly challenging outcome for policing. In real terms, today's increase in funding will cover little more than annual inflationary pay increases for officers and staff."

The National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) Chair, Phil Garrigan, commented that the "Spending Review makes no direct mention of fire and rescue services and that is concerning. Our communities already understand that firefighters are on the frontline response to every major incident our country faces, and we need government to recognise that too."



Questions for committee's consideration

- Is the Audit Committee assured around the measures being carried out by the Force / Service in prioritising the highlighted areas of the Spending Review?

Police

National Policing Digital Strategy 2025-2030

A “National Policing Digital Strategy 2025-2030” has been released by the NPCC and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), with support from the Police Digital Service (PDS) as a guide to inform investment decisions over the next five years.

The document outlines the significant sector challenges in adopting new ways of working with technology and data, which includes the recruitment and retention of a skilled digital workforce, balancing short-term operational objectives with long term strategic objectives and the significant expenditure required for maintaining legacy systems (with estimated spend of £590 million for maintain the systems in 2025-2026).

The Strategy outlines seven enabling pillars which underpin the digital transformation of the service, which are:

- Data and analytics.
- Strategic alignment.
- Modernised core data and technology.
- Connected technology.
- Risk and security.
- Talent in digital, data and technology.
- Open digital marketplace.



Questions for committee's consideration

- Based on the significant sector challenges outlined in the National Policing Digital Strategy, what assurances can the Audit Committee take on how the Force works with technology and data, and the digital skills within the organisation?

Working together to make communities safer

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has published the 'Working together to make communities safer: A memorandum of understanding between His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners' as part of the commitment for collaborative working. The documents sets how the HMICFRS and APCC works together, including:

- Regular contact and collaboration.
- Preparing for inspections.
- Carrying out inspections.
- Publishing and responding to reports.
- Monitoring.
- Leadership.

National training programme for neighbourhood police officers and police community support officers

A new neighbourhood policing programme is being rolled out to forces in England and Wales by the College of Policing for neighbourhood police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs). The programme has been trialled with over 1,000 officers across 11 forces, which the College of Policing reports had shown impressive results.

The programme supports the government's national mission for Safer Streets (as set out in the Plan for Change) and forms part of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.

The programme, delivered through both online resources and intensive classroom learning, will include:

- Community engagement.
- Partnership working for crime prevention.
- Tackling persistent offenders.
- Protecting communities from serious and organised crime.

The College of Policing is additionally developing training for staff who lead neighbourhood teams to provide a pathway for career development.

Crime and Policing Bill

Legislation to provide a dedicated “National Crime Agency (NCA) barred and advisory list” was introduced by the Home Office, as part of the Crime and Policing Bill. The legislation will ensure that individuals dismissed from the NCA for gross misconduct are prevented from re-entering policing or other law enforcement roles. Barred and advisory lists will also be established for other special police forces (such as the British Transport Police and Ministry of Defence Police) as a requirement of the legislation.

Additional measures announced as part of the Bill include better protection for emergency workers from violence and abuse when visiting homes. A loophole currently exists which enables people to get away with racial and religious abuse towards police, fire and ambulance workers in a private home, although this is illegal in public. The change would result in offenders facing a maximum sentence of two years imprisonment.

Observations, learning and good practice from 2024 force management statements

Following the assessment of 60% of the force management statements (FMS) submitted by forces in England and Wales in 2024, HMICFRS has published the ‘Observations, learning and good practice from 2024 force management statements’ to outline the findings and provide advice to forces when writing future versions. The document outlines 12 high-level learning points, together with providing advice and good practice examples.

The document outlines that forces should use the FMS to inform both their strategic planning and budget setting and making sure that all demand areas are risk assessed.

The observations were shared with forces at the FMS practitioners meeting in September 2024.

Operation Spotlight

During July 2025, operation Spotlight, a nationally coordinated enforcement operation led by the NPCC, aimed to disrupt criminal activity on the roads and raise awareness of the risks associated with speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, failure to wear a seatbelt, and being distracted at the wheel (e.g due to mobile phone use) – “the fatal four.”

The operation was an initiative to address the four significant factors in road traffic collisions, many of which could be avoided, which result in deaths and serious injuries.



Questions for committee’s consideration

- Is the Audit Committee assured that the observations, learning and good practice outlined by HMICFRS were incorporated into the 2025 force management statement?



Questions for committee's consideration

- Was the Audit Committee assured by the initial response made by the Force?
- Is the Audit Committee assured by the steps being taken to respond to the 18 recommendations?
- Is the Audit Committee confident in the governance structure around any response plans?

Joint thematic inspection of the building of prosecution cases by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

Following a joint thematic inspection of the building of prosecution cases by the police and the CPS carried out by His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) and HMICFRS a final report was published in July 2025 which explores the identified themes in further detail. An interim report had been previously published in January 2024 after phase one of the inspection. The final report focused on the strategic oversight and development of the working relationship between the police and the CPS, evidenced from the inspection of a further 80 cases across four CPS areas and eight police forces.

The interim report identified a number of high-level themes, highlighting areas of concern that had an impact of the relationship between the CPS and the police, including differing priorities, bureaucratic systems and processes and a lack of shared performance metrics.

However, despite activity in the sector to consider and address the issues identified in the interim report, the final report identified that the fundamental issues remained unchanged, and the key issue remains the effectiveness of the communications between the police and CPS. The report summarised that there was no clear strategy for improvement being driven across the system and a lack of shared performance metrics. Additionally, the report highlighted that the data used by police and the CPS to measure performance is not trusted, incomplete and has a negative impact on relationships at a local level.

The report raised 18 recommendations to drive improvements in the efficiency of the criminal justice system.

Oversight newsletter

The June 2025 Oversight newsletter, published by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), has provided an update on its work. The newsletter highlights several new investigations into serious incidents involving police conduct. It also emphasises the IOPC's commitment to learning from these investigations to improve policing practices.

The newsletter includes answers to questions raised about the submission of death or serious injury (DSI) reports and sharing DSI investigation findings with coroners. Additionally, the results of a survey to track the public perception of the IOPC and the police complaints system are highlighted.



Fire

Fire and rescue incident statistics

Statistics of the incidents attended by fire and rescue services (FRS) for the year ending March 2025 have been published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The statistics published include comparable figures as far back as they are available. The reported statistics include:

- FRS attended 603,942 incidents in the year ended March 2025, a 0.6% increase from the previous year.
- 142,494 fires were attended by FRS, which was a 2.5% increase from the previous year and accounted for 24% of the incidents attended.
- The number of fire false alarms (250,226), which made up 41% of the incidents attended during the year ended March 2025, decreased by 1.5% compared to the previous year.
- FRSs attended 211,222 non-fire incidents, the largest number in a single year since the introduction of the online Incident Recording System (IRS). This was an increase of 1.8% from the previous year and an increase of 69% from 10 years ago.
- There was 271 fire-related fatalities reported for the year, an increase of 8% from the previous year.

Fire Minister's address to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)

Alex Norris, the Fire Minister, addressed the NFCC Spring Conference in Oxford to set out the government's priorities for fire and rescue services. The Minister outlined the four key priorities as:

- Strategic direction for the sector, through a revision of the National Framework and improved reporting to Parliament.
- Establishment of a College of Fire and Rescue, in line with the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 2 report.
- Driving productivity in the sector through identifying best practices, workforce development and reviewing statutory duties where needed.
- Leveraging opportunities from devolution and local government reorganisation to enhance governance, accountability and delivery.

Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 recommendations progress update

The government has published the first quarterly update report on the progress made to implement the 58 recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 2 report. The report detailed that the NFCC had developed an action and delivery plan to implement the recommendations from the report.

The progress report provided an update on what the government had committed to achieve and what had been done to date against the 13 recommendations assigned to fire and rescue services. At the time of reporting all 13 recommendations were reported as in progress.

The report detailed that the timeline for implementation would be included within the September 2025 update report, although it was anticipated that it would take at least four years for all recommendations to be completed.



Questions for committee's consideration

- What role is your Service taking, where applicable, in progressing recommendations aligned to fire and rescue services?



References



[Spending Review 2025](#)



[Backing Operation Spotlight: Targeting 'Fatal Four' offences on the roads](#)



[National Policing Digital Strategy 2025-2030](#)



[Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service](#)



[Working together to make communities safer: A memorandum of understanding between His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#)



[Oversight Newsletter - June 2025](#)



[New training to transform neighbourhood policing launched](#)



[Fire and rescue incident statistics, year ending March 2025](#)



[Unfit officers to be banned from major law enforcement agencies](#)



[NFCC welcomes Fire Minister's vision for fire and rescue services and calls for continued support and recognition](#)



[Emergency workers to be better protected from racial abuse](#)



[Progress report: summary update](#)



[Observations, learning and good practice from 2024 force management statements](#)

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