

## LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting to be held on 23 April 2018

### OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

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#### **Executive Summary**

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) undertake a continual process of Operational Assurance within which, operational readiness and operational performance is routinely assured. This process makes up the Service's 'Operational Assurance Framework' [the Framework].

In an emergency service context 'assurance' can be described as the actions that are taken, to give confidence that policies, procedures, training, equipment etc all come together to deliver a safe and effective emergency response. The Framework is designed to focus on the opportunities to learn and improve which exist *before*, *during* and *after* incidents and joins together all three, to create a cohesive and continuous cycle of learning and improvement. This ensures that the lessons identified become the lessons learnt. This approach continually drives improvement which is underpinned by robust evidence.

The Kerslake Report [An independent review into the preparedness for, and response to, the Manchester Arena attack on 22 May 2017] was published on 27 March 2018. Whilst Lord Kerslake identified a number of areas that went well, he also identified a number of major areas for learning inclusive of recommendations.

LFRS have a robust process in place, to ensure that operational learning at both a local [Lancashire], regional and national level is considered in detail, in the context of LFRS own policies and procedures, and where appropriate acted upon.

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a broad overview of LFRS Operational Assurance Framework, and to give confidence that the Kerslake Report, will be subject to review by LFRS, as per any other form of operational learning.

#### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note and endorse the report.

#### **Introduction**

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority (CFA) has a legal duty to ensure the provision of a safe and effective Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

To contribute to meeting this duty, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) undertake a continual process of Operational Assurance, within which operational readiness and operational performance is routinely assured. This process makes up the Service's 'Operational Assurance Framework' [the 'Framework'] within which a range of assurance activities are undertaken by a dedicated Operational Assurance

Team (OAT), Area based Officers and the Training and Operational Review Department.

The Framework is based upon requirements detailed in the Fire and Rescue Authorities: Health Safety & Welfare Framework Document<sup>1</sup> which states:

*“Fire and Rescue Services should have in place appropriate arrangements for monitoring and measuring health, safety and welfare performance against pre-determined plans and standards, including learning from incidents and using this information to improve operational performance”.*

The methodology used within the Framework is built around two key elements of the document:

### **1. Operational assurance at incidents:**

The guidance states:

*Operational assurance at incidents deals with the effectiveness of the Fire and Rescue Services arrangements for implementation of guidance contained in generic hazard and risk statements and standard operational procedures, incident command, operational training and the maintenance of competence. By observing operational performance, Fire and Rescue Services can maintain and improve their ability to manage risks in the operational environment by learning from experience through the use of audits, monitoring and performance reviews.*

*Measuring performance at incidents against pre-determined plans and standards informs those managers responsible for strategic and systemic risk assessment how effectively they are controlling risks; how well they are developing a positive health, safety and welfare culture; and provides feedback that influences organisational learning and the decision making processes.*

### **2. Post incident / event learning and support:**

The guidance states:

*Post incident/event learning and support involves reactive methods of monitoring that consider how Fire and Rescue Services manage the outcomes of their performance monitoring, incident management, and individual learning and development, at incidents. This should also take into account the nature and timing of the actions necessary to share good practice and remedy deficiencies at the incident, strategic and generic levels of risk-management and a Fire and Rescue Services arrangements for ‘closing the loop’.*

Thus in practical terms the Framework aims to provide a process of continuous improvement through a formalised system of audit and review. These measures contribute towards making Lancashire safer, and the overall attainment of the Service’s corporate priorities, specifically: **Responding to fires and other emergencies quickly and competently.**

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Department for Communities and Local Government: Fire and Rescue Authorities: Health, Safety and Welfare Framework for the operational environment June 2013.

## What is assurance?

In an emergency service context 'assurance' can be described as the actions that are taken to give confidence that policies, procedures, training, equipment etc all come together to deliver safe and effective emergency response.

Thus, in an LFRS context, we aim to continually ask '*are we assured that we are operating as safely and effectively as we can be?*' An active and open learning environment has to be something that is embedded and must therefore be an ongoing feature of the operating environment. As the operational environment continually evolves so therefore must the approaches used. It is important that the Service's assurance processes generate genuine learning from lessons recognised through our own experiences, or from those of others (where we are able to identify improvements that can be made to our own approaches without the need for us to go through that 'learning experience' ourselves).

Embedding assurance means that LFRS truly does learn from our findings and that we have the confidence that the lessons identified become the lessons learnt, and that this approach continually drives improvements which are underpinned by robust evidence.

## LFRS Operational Assurance Framework

The Framework considers the opportunities to learn and improve which exist *before*, *during* and *after* incidents and joins together all three to create a cohesive and continuous cycle of learning and improvement:

Although the Incident Command System is fundamental to safe and effective emergency response it does not exist in isolation. To be successful it must be integrated with other factors such as equipment, training and assessment (of individuals and teams), and the gathering of risk information beforehand. Thus the Service takes a rounded approach to operational assurance which is based around three pillars:

### Pillar 1: Operational Preparedness

This is the '*before*' aspect of our assurance framework delivered through station based assurance visits conducted by the Operational Assurance Team which focus on core work that is aligned to reducing risk and our capability to respond effectively and efficiently when the need arises.

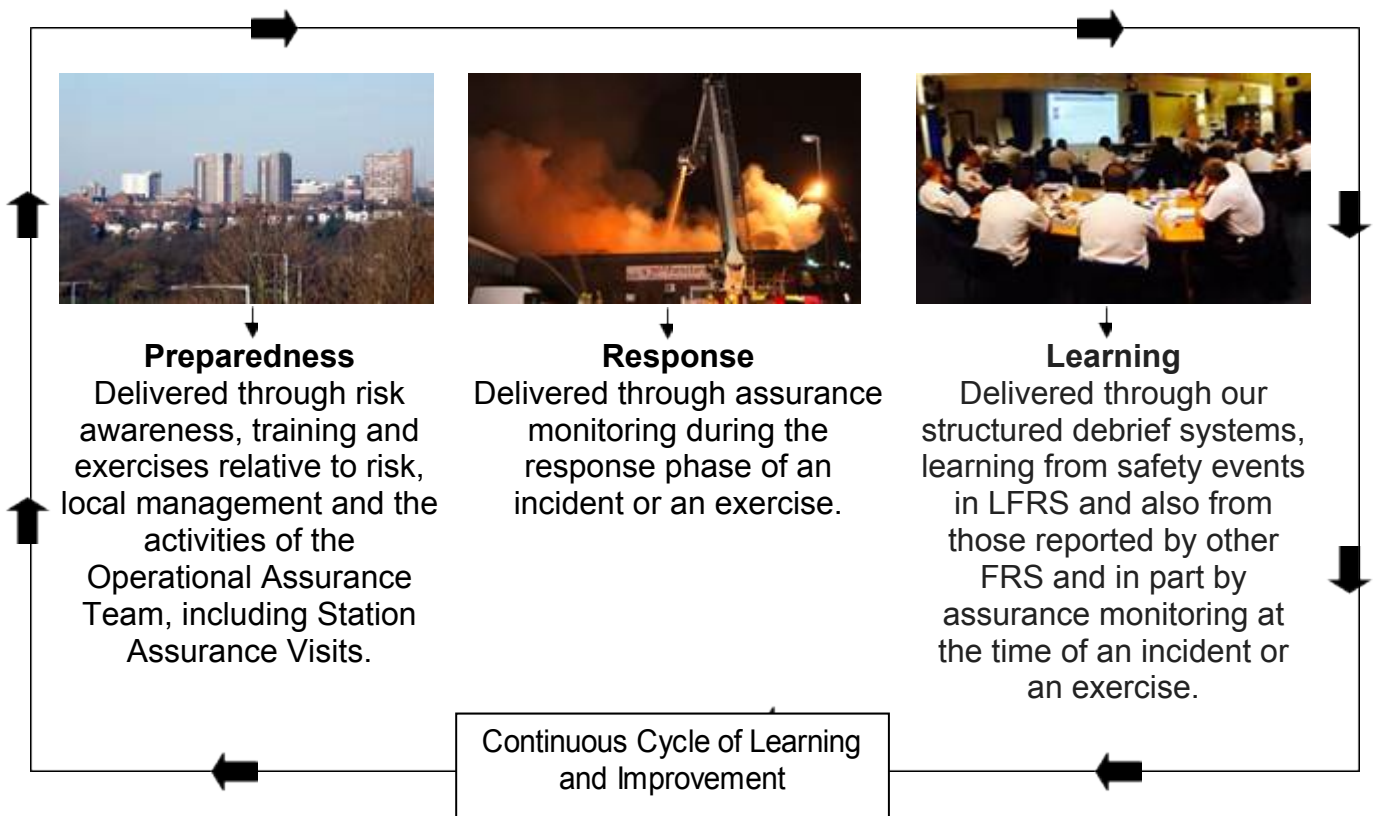
### Pillar 2: Operational Response Assurance

This is the '*during*' aspect of our assurance framework delivered through assurance monitoring during the response phase of an incident or exercise.

### Pillar 3: Operational Learning

This is the '*after*' aspect of our assurance framework delivered through our debrief systems and by learning from safety events in LFRS and other FRS.

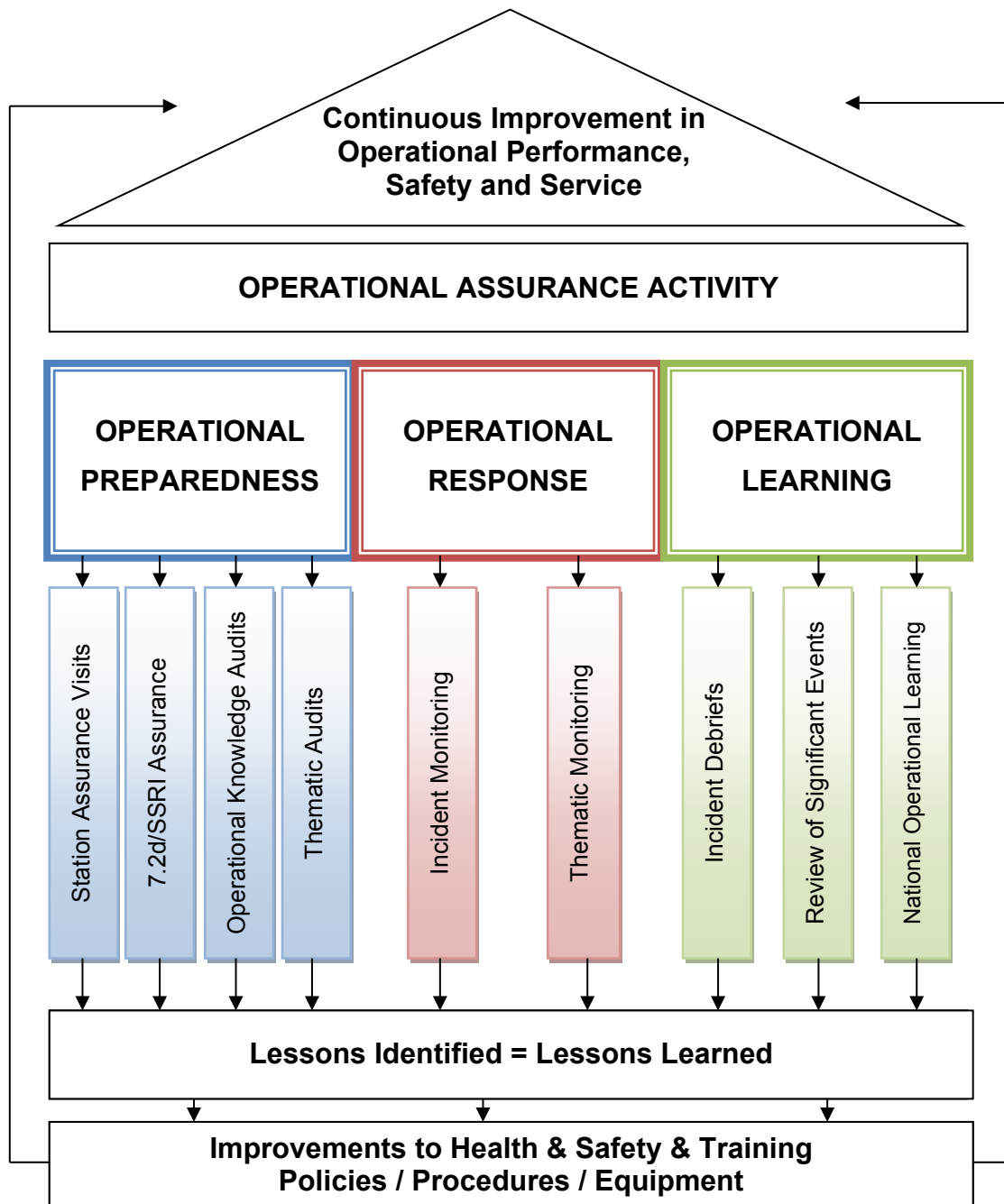
Figure 1: LFRS Emergency Response Assurance Framework



The illustration above shows the three pillars of preparedness, response and learning and how they all interact to develop a continuous cycle of learning and improvement.

In developing the Framework and importantly its application and delivery 'in the field', the Service has worked hard to ensure that it is not viewed merely as a "checking tool". Moreover, that it is a process which adds value and is used to support the development and improvement of individuals and teams within the operational environment. The Service has invested significant time in aiming to get the culture right and considers that it has succeeded.

Figure 2: Components of the LFRS Operational Assurance Cycle



Operational Preparedness:

Operational Preparedness includes station/watch/group assurance visits undertaken by the Operational Assurance Team. Visits are planned in advance and may include professional discussion, drills and audit/review of relevant systems and processes. Operational Preparedness also includes members of the Operational Assurance Team observing training and exercises.

### Operational Response:

Operational response monitoring is the process wherein suitably qualified officer/s, usually but not necessarily of a higher rank than the Incident Commander, monitor incidents and exercises.

Response monitoring focuses on the performance of the Incident Commander and crews against National Occupational Standards, National Operational Guidance and our own policies/procedures relevant to the incident type. Operational Assurance Team members, supported where necessary by suitably qualified staff from across the Service, will carry out response monitoring in accordance with parameters set and agreed by the Prevention, Protection and Response Strategy Group (PPRSG). There will be occasions where 'Thematic' Operational Response Monitoring is required if a specific area of focus has been identified that needs to be assured.

### Operational Learning:

Debriefs provide a constructive and supportive environment where the performance of teams, individuals, processes and equipment can be openly discussed with the objectives being to recognise good practice and identify where performance can be improved. The information obtained from debriefs feeds back into the organisation to assist in the ongoing management of risk. The nature of the 'Lesson Learned' will determine the scope on which they are addressed i.e. whether improvement actions are necessary within:

- Stations or Area/s
- All of LFRS
- Lancashire's Resilience Forum [LRF]
- Blue light partner through Joint Operational Learning
- Nationally through National Operational Learning

The National Operational Guidance [NOG] Programme has recently published a good practice guide for Fire and Rescue Services regarding National Operational Learning [NOL] which has been incorporated into the Framework.

## Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service – Response to the Kerslake Report

Following the Manchester Arena Terrorist Attack, on 22 May 2017, the Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham, commissioned a non-statutory independent review of the events and aftermath of the attack in July 2017.

The **Kerslake Report**: [An independent review into the preparedness for, and response to, the Manchester Arena attack on 22 May 2017] was published on 27 March 2018.

Whilst Lord Kerslake identified a number of areas that went well, he also identified a number of major areas for learning inclusive of recommendations, by saying “it is vital that we also learn the lessons of what went less well”.



The publishing of the Kerslake Report is a reminder to everyone in the emergency services that we must review and learn from every incident to ensure public safety.

The Chief Fire Officer and wider leadership of LFRS have for many years now stressed the need for risk awareness as opposed to risk aversion. This has led to an operational culture which supports staff who assess risk, taking into account experience and core knowledge, and interpret and adapt policies in the context of the situation in front of them

As referenced earlier in the paper, an integral part of LFRS Operational Assurance Framework is operational learning [pillar 3] as illustrated in figure 2. A robust process is in place, to ensure that operational learning at both a local [Lancashire], regional and national level is considered in detail, in the context of LFRS own policies and procedures, and where appropriate acted upon.

LFRS will continue to review its service in light of all recommendations arising from the above, and will make further improvements in the service delivered if required. In practical terms, lessons identified become lessons learned, and this will be no different with the Kerslake Report. Members can be assured that this work is already underway and the Service has, through the Lancashire Resilience Forum with other emergency services and partners worked jointly, to further ensure delays would not happen in Lancashire should a similar incident occur here.

All operational learning is taken through and managed by the Services Operational Assurance Group [OAG], which formally reports into the Prevention Protection Response Strategy Group [PPRSG]. The Kerslake Report, will take this same route,

which is consistent with all other national reports published following significant national incidents, which have resulted in operational learning for example:

- Harrow Court [Hertfordshire]
- Atherstone-on-Stour [Warwickshire]
- Shirley Towers [Hertfordshire]
- Balmoral Road [Edinburgh]
- Oldham Street [Greater Manchester]
- Training Incident [East Sussex FRS]

The Operational Assurance Group utilise a tracker report which captures and monitors the progress of all operational learning local to Lancashire, regional [North West] or national. This ensures the Service provides visibility in one place, of all operational learning captured, inclusive of and where appropriate the response/s the Service is taking to any recommendations including timeframes. The process is fully auditable.

**Business Risk**

LFRS Operational Assurance Framework and under-pinning processes are intrinsic to improving firefighter and public safety. Without continued investment in this area of the Service the risks to the Service and Authority are significant.

**Environmental Impact**

None.

**Equality and Diversity Implications**

None.

**Financial Implications**

There will always be the potential for new investment as a result of operational learning undertaken, for example in equipment or training. Any needs identified to date are already included in existing budgets.

**Human Resource Implications**

None.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

**List of Background Papers**

Paper:	Date:	Contact: David Russel Tel. 01772 866801
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate: N/A		