

Institution: Nottingham Trent University (NTU)		
Unit of Assessment: C17 - Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Improving policy, delivery and assurance in Fire and Rescue Services.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Names: Peter Murphy Katarzyna Lakoma Peter Eckersley Kirsten Greenhalgh Russ Glennon	Roles: Principal Lecturer/Professor Research Associate Senior Research Fellow Senior Lecturer Research Fellow/S. Lecturer	Periods employed by submitting HEI: 2010 – present 2017 – present 2018 – present 2010 – 2013 2016 – 2019
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact <p>The organisation, configuration and delivery of Fire and Rescue Services in England and the experience of the public who are protected by the service has been significantly changed by NTU research since 2010. The research has directly generated substantial changes in: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary and secondary legislation; central and local public policy and government guidance explicitly (but not limited to) Chapters 2-4 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 which relate to Fire Services. • Public assurance, accountability and transparency arrangements within the sector, including (but not limited to) the creation of new national institutions, and new national delivery frameworks. 		
2. Underpinning research <p>Since 2010, research led by Murphy has established that national and local policy, the configuration and delivery of fire and rescue services and the level of public assurance that citizens have the right to expect have all (collectively) significantly deteriorated, were sub-optimally configured, and were not meeting statutory obligations as a result of central government policy decisions and long-term financial reductions [R1, R2, R3].</p> <p>HMT and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) reduced their financial resources, facilitated marginal income generation but mandated fire service changes via a new national framework in 2012. Between April 2011 and March 2016, funding was reduced by an average of 28% in real terms despite fire and rescue services having a statutory duty to continuously improve their activities, to protect the public and to provide value for money.</p> <p>In 2015, Murphy was commissioned by the National Audit Office (NAO) to undertake research to review the performance of 4 major locally delivered services between 2010-2015 namely, local authority services, healthcare, the police, and fire and rescue services [R2]. He was then specifically commissioned to research and evaluate all available evidence (academic, official and empirical) on the policy, performance and assurance of fire and rescue services [R3], and in particular the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the performance management regime in place from 2010-2015. He found that:</p>		

- The evidence and information available for decision making had deteriorated
- The performance regime for co-ordinating effective action was no longer fit for purpose
- External scrutiny, inspection and assurance arrangements were ineffective

His research and findings scoped, framed and directed the NAO and Public Accounts Committee reports; he personally quality-assured the NAO's research, provided new independent evidence and reviewed and revised the conclusions and recommendations in the NAO's final draft report and presentation slide pack for publication [R3]. The NAO report established that national (and local) public policy lacked assurance; and credible evidence upon which to base decisions. Fire services were not strategically aligned with other emergency services or with other key stakeholders such as local government and the NHS [R1, R2]. He found:

- The configuration and deployment of services was sub-optimal, inefficient, and less effective than it could (and should) have been
- This was primarily the fault of central government (primarily DCLG but also HMT) as policy makers and co-deliverers, rather than the local FRS.
- The research demonstrated systematic and systemic failure as a result of inadequate performance and financial management arrangements at national and local levels [R4].

These fundamental inadequacies were further underlined by counter-factual research led by Murphy in Scotland [R5, R6]. This research was corroborated by parallel research by Audit Scotland. Following devolution Murphy showed Scottish services continued to improve with better outcomes and continuous efficiencies despite equivalent financial constraints and that the English experience could have been both avoided and/or significantly mitigated.

3. References to the research

The quality of the underpinning research has been evidenced by rigorous externally peer reviewed outputs, both books and articles, and by multiple commissions by national and local key stakeholders across the sector.

R1. Murphy, P., Ferry, L., Glennon, R. and Greenhalgh, K., 2019. Public service accountability: rekindling a debate. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

This book brings together research findings on the four services individually and collectively since 2010. It evaluates them against a conceptual framework developed originally as part of the research for the NAO but subsequently refined in this book.

R2. Ferry, L., and Murphy 2015 A Comparative Review of Financial Sustainability, Accountability and Transparency of Local Public Service Bodies in England Under Austerity.

This is the first report commissioned, and part funded by the NAO, immediately prior to NAO assuming responsibility for local services on the closure of the Audit Commission on 31st July 2015. Confidential when submitted but now available on NTU Website.

R3. Murphy, P. 2015. Briefing Paper: Comments on forthcoming NAO national report on the financial sustainability of fire and rescue services. The draft Local Government report, the draft Value for Money Report and the proposed NAO presentation draft slide pack to accompany publication and dissemination.

This is one of the series of NBS reports (the process was iterative by nature) commissioned by the NAO. Confidential when submitted but now available on NTU Website.

R4. Murphy, P., Lakoma, K., Eckersley, P. and Glennon R., (2020). Rebuilding the fire and rescue services: policy, delivery and assurance. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited.

This book identifies the key issues that are the 'golden threads' that runs from Murphy's original research to the NAO and Public Accounts Committee reports, Chapter 2-4 of the Act and their subsequent implementation.

R5. Taylor, L., Murphy, P. and Greenhalgh, K., 2018. Scottish fire and rescue services reform 2010–2015. In: P. Murphy and K. Greenhalgh, eds., *Fire and rescue services: leadership and management perspectives*. London: Springer, pp. 191-205.

R6. Murphy, P., Lakoma, K., Greenhalgh, K., and Taylor, L. 2019. A comparative appraisal of recent and proposed changes to the fire and rescue services in England and Scotland. In P. Wankhade, L. McCann and P. Murphy. *Critical Perspectives on the Management and Organization of Emergency Services*. Abingdon Oxon: Routledge, 2019, pp. 217-231.

This journal article and book chapter demonstrate the counterfactual nature of the evidence from the experience of policy, delivery, and assurance in Scotland. Devolution of responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services took place in 2011 and Scotland adopted radically different policy delivery and public and government assurance arrangements to those in England.

4. Details of the impact

Murphy's research demonstrated that government policy and fire service practice between 2010 and 2015 significantly reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of the services and compromised the safety of the public. Services were less effective individually and when collaborating with other services. This reduced the safety of the public and the 'value for money' achieved from public spending [S1, S2]. It facilitated the biggest and most significant overhaul of the sector since the 2004 Fire and Rescue Act.

"It is widely known and appreciated that he [Murphy] provided the research evidence, the advice and scrutiny to enable the NAO (and hence the PAC) to produce their seminal reports on the financial sustainability of Fire and Rescue Services in 2015. This highlighted the three issues that became the subjects of Chapters 2-4 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the core of the new Fire and Rescue Framework in 2018 and led to the establishment of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services" [S3].

Uniquely the government accepted every recommendation of the reports and explicitly recognized the problems as the responsibility of central government, and that they required specific action from government [S4]. In 2016, responsibility for the service was transferred to the Home Office. The Home Secretary announced.

"it is currently almost impossible to scrutinise your local fire and rescue service. There is no independent inspectorate; no regular audit of performance; and only limited available data on performance over time or between areas"

These three strategic issues were the central conclusions of the NTU research and were enshrined in the NAO and PAC reports. The impact was immediate

"I will shortly table amendments to the Policing and Crime BillI will put in place the right framework of institutions and processes to ensure operational integrity...I intend to bring forward proposals to establish a rigorous and independent inspection regime [and]...I will publish transparent fire and rescue information". (Home Secretary)

Substantial amendments were included in the Crime and Policing Bill (then) before parliament for its final stages. Chapters 2-4 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 together with secondary legislation and government guidance directly addressed fire and rescue services and the inadequacies found by Murphy and reported by the NAO and PAC.

The Act promised a new national policy and performance management regime; proposals for new databases; and a national Standards Authority (to develop and quality assure data) new arrangements for improving public assurance including a new independent inspectorate, all explicitly based on NTU's research and recommendations [S5].

The 2018 National Framework

The research demonstrated the fundamental inadequacy of the 2012 National Framework and the government introduced the 2018 Framework to implement the act and give effect to NTU recommendations to.

- improve governance and accountability.
- establish HMICFRS and an external inspection regime
- introduce a national Standards Board and new professional standards
- develop new performance data and improve transparency [S3, S6, S7].

Improving Evidence and Information

A national 'Standards Board' was established in 2019; and a new data and information research programme established in 2018. NTU was commissioned to provide a national review of local community risk methodologies and this currently underpins all seven projects in the NFCC research programme on re-assessing community risks. [S6].

"He [Murphy] is the most influential management scholar active within the fire sector. His impact has been evident in policy development, service delivery and public assurance and has led to the improvement of the service at national and local service levels as well as internationally and in the devolved administrations of the UK" [S5].

A new independent inspectorate and inspection regime

Murphy had called for the establishment of an independent external inspectorate since 2011 [S5]. This recommendation was reflected in Murphy's report for the NAO and the subsequent PAC report. England and Wales (though not Scotland and N Ireland) were the only developed countries without an inspectorate. In July 2018, the government created Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. The first inspections of all fire services were in 2018/2019. They provided detailed evidence at the local level that confirmed Murphy's findings at national level [S8].

Scotland

The English research was complemented by counter factual evidence from Scotland. Since 2011, Scotland had developed radically different policy, delivery and assurance arrangements. NTU's comparative evaluation of the two regimes strengthened the evidence in England and informed the legislative and policy review in Scotland.

"Murphy provided very powerful evidence to support and shape the future direction and the continued momentum in the development of Scotland's FRS. The development of the Service in Scotland had been radically different from the development of the English services since that time" [S9].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1. National Audit Office. (2015). Financial sustainability of fire and rescue services. HC 491. London: NAO.

S2. Public Accounts Select Committee. (2016). Financial sustainability of fire and rescue services. Twenty-third Report of Session 2015–16. London: TSO. This stated

“Government must properly understand the local implications of budget decisions made in Whitehall and in our view that simply hasn’t been happening.The Home Office should write to us, setting out how it is improving central government’s understanding of the impacts of ongoing funding reductions on fire and rescue authorities.....[it] should have begun to strengthen local governance and accountability.... ensure there is a coherent approach to external scrutiny across the sector, capable of providing independent assurance [and] take a rigorous approach to gathering information”

S3. Hon Secretary and Adviser to the All-Party Parliamentary Fire Safety & Rescue Group (APPG). Former Chief Fire Officer London Fire Brigade and Treasurer of the Fire Sector Federation.

S4. HMT Treasury Minutes. (2016). Government responses on the Twenty-First to the Twenty-Sixth reports from the Committee of Public Accounts: Session 2015-16. Cm 9260 TSO.

S5. Editor of ‘FIRE’ magazine and ‘International Fire Professional’– the most prominent professional journals in Fire and Rescue Services (the former since 1908). *FIRE* is the journal of the National Fire Chiefs Council (the former Chief Fire Officers Association), It is the only fire service periodical subscribed to by the fire policy team at the Home Office, HMICFRS and every FRS command suite. It sponsors national and international awards and holds regular national policy summits. The Editor is also a Board Member of the Fire Sector Federation, Chair of the Firefighters Charity and Co-founder in 2004 of the International Joint Operations Command Conference.

S6. Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and member National Fire Chief’s Council.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer attests to significant and widespread impact on policy and practice at local and national levels supporting these views with examples from 2010-2020. Most recently Nottinghamshire FRS like all 45 local FRS were sent the NTU report “National review of community risk methodology across the UK fire and rescue service” (2019) by the National Fire Chiefs Council and HMICFRS in April 2020 with a mandatory questionnaire to submit their responses.

S7. Home Office. (2018). Fire and Rescue National Framework for England London: TSO.

S8. HMICFRS. (2020) State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019. London HMICFRS.

This is the summary report following the completion of the cohort of inspections of all 46 fire and rescue services. It articulates the inadequacy of the evidence base and evaluation of information for planning and deployment purposes by services both individually and collectively

S9. Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Communications. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The Director was involved in NTU research for the Scottish Government and the Scottish FRS. He confirms NTU influence on both policy and the reconfiguration and delivery of fire and rescue services in Scotland.