

Background

1. The key objectives for the fire and rescue service during the pandemic period are to:
 - a. ensure that its operational response provision remains resilient and effective;
 - b. support the broader public sector response to the pandemic, particularly in relation to supporting Local Authorities and NHS and Ambulance Trusts;
 - c. maintain to the highest standards possible the health, safety and welfare of all its FRS personnel.
2. The fire service National Employers, Fire Brigades Union and the National Fire Chiefs Council reached an agreement on 26 March which, together with National Joint Council agreement around any necessary temporary changes to terms and conditions, has meant that to date 14 additional areas of work have become available to the fire and rescue service to assist in meeting the challenges posed by the Covid-19 crisis. Previous circulars provide information on implementing this agreement.
3. At the outset all parties had recognised the Covid-19 Pandemic is a UK-wide crisis that will increasingly test the capacity of the Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) and other public sector service providers to protect the public from the impacts of the pandemic, particularly those groups who are most vulnerable and isolated, whilst mindful of the requirement to maintain the delivery of core responsibilities.
4. The 26 March Agreement was initially set up for a period of two months, subject to variation by mutual agreement between the parties. Continuation of the agreement has been periodically reviewed with the current duration being to 29th October 2020.
5. All national best practice risk assessments/statements for the additional work activities were issued by 23 July (Tripartite statement 12) and as part of the periodic review of duration at that time Tripartite 12 stated:
 8. *In line with the renewal agreement the attached risk assessments should now be reviewed at local level and any necessary local variations agreed through the local health and safety structures by 30 September 2020.*
 9. *The Tripartite Group has agreed to further extend the Tripartite Agreement to 30 September 2020 during which time the reviews indicated in paragraph 8 above will need to take place.*
6. Towards the end of September it became clear that an extension to the end of October would be necessary and in Tripartite 13 we further explained that a renewal agreement beyond 29 October 2020 was dependent upon local risk assessments by FRSs (for tripartite additional work activities) being consistent with the national best practice risk assessments, still recognising the potential for any necessary variations to be agreed through local health and safety structures.

5. It was recommended (referring to Tripartite 12) that in line with the renewal agreement the risk assessments listed above should be reviewed at local level and any necessary local variations agreed through the local health and safety structures by 30 September 2020.

9. For the avoidance of doubt, where an FRS has not produced risk assessments for the nationally-agreed Tripartite activities as a result of there being no request (or no anticipated request) from LRFs or similar bodies, local risk assessments should be produced that are consistent with the best practice risk assessments/risk statements for those activities. This will ensure such activities are ready for use if a service wishes to do so.

7. All three parties are committed to renewing the tripartite agreement again, mindful of the need for local preparedness to deal with requests for assistance as quickly and smoothly as possible.
8. It is recognised that the vast majority of fire and rescue services have accepted the Tripartite best practice risk assessments, which have been reviewed, adopted or adapted where tripartite activities are currently in place. However, with the fast-moving scenario of the pandemic, the parties re-iterate that the local risk assessments need to be produced for all activities in anticipation of a challenging winter and continuing pandemic.
9. Accordingly, there will be a further and final extension to allow managers and union officials in the remaining FRSs to complete these reviews **by no later than 19 November 2020**. Subject to completion of this work, the parties will renew the Agreement until 31 March 2021.