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# PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

2025-2028



**SCOTTISH**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Protection Framework 2025-28 outlines how the Protection Function will evolve over the next three-year period to support the delivery of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) strategic priorities through integrating the disciplines of Fire Safety Enforcement (FSE), Fire Engineering (FE), and Fire Investigation (FI) in the wider Prevention agenda.

This revised framework recognises that effective delivery of Protection disciplines cannot be delivered by enforcement activity alone. In response to internal and external reviews, national learning, and changes in the risk environment, this framework repositions Protection as a dynamic, preventative discipline within the wider context of public safety.

The Framework supports the ambitions of the **SFRS Strategy 2025–28** and the **Prevention Directorate Strategy 2025–28**. It also aligns with SFRS's commitment to innovation, partnership working, and evidence-based decision making.



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## 2. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

SFRS have a statutory responsibility under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 to promote fire safety and enforce fire safety legislation. In addition, Fire Investigation plays a vital operational role in supporting these statutory functions. This Framework builds on that legal foundation, embedding a balanced model of:

- Enforcement of compliance with the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005
- Fire engineering expertise to enable safe, performance-based design methodology, and
- Investigating fires to support organisational and community learning outcomes and strategic foresight.



The integration of these functions ensures Protection activity is fully embedded within the wider SFRS Prevention strategy and is targeted, risk based, evidence-led, and proportionate.

Scotland's fire risk profile is evolving. There are fewer domestic fires, but greater challenges posed by decarbonisation technologies, modern methods of construction (MMC), conversions of traditional buildings, vulnerable populations, and climate-driven events. The lessons from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and other national incident reviews reinforce the need for a Protection Function that is proactive and analytically driven.

This Framework also supports the proposed Scottish Government's Public Service Reform agenda by driving preventative approaches, enhancing community resilience, and embracing integrated partnership working across local and national delivery landscapes by driving preventative approaches, enhancing community resilience, and embracing integrated partnership working across local and national delivery landscapes.

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## 3. VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### 3.1 VISION

We will aim to deliver a modern, integrated and adequately resourced Protection model that ensures Firefighter safety, and enables safer communities through proactive engagement, technical competence, and proportionate regulation. Through the integrated delivery of FSE, FE and FI, we will ensure Scotland’s communities are safe, resilient and ready for the future.

“A modern, integrated Protection model that delivers safer communities through proactive engagement, technical competence, and proportionate regulation.”

### 3.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Protection Framework is underpinned by a set of guiding principles that reflect our commitment to reducing risk, supporting communities, and delivering high-quality fire safety outcomes. These principles provide a clear foundation for decision-making and operational delivery, ensuring our approach remains evidence-based, collaborative, and adaptable to local needs while maintaining national consistency.



#### 3.2.1 Prevention First

Our primary objective is to reduce fire risk at its source through a preventative approach. This includes supporting safe design within the built environment, delivering targeted fire safety education, engaging proactively with duty holders and communities, and acting upon lessons learned from incident reviews. Where required, fire safety enforcement remains an essential mechanism for securing compliance; however, it is exercised only when efforts to educate, advise, and engage through constructive dialogue and partnership have not achieved the necessary outcomes.



### 3.2.2 Evidence-Led Practice

Operational and strategic decisions are rooted in high-quality evidence. We will harness insights from fire investigation, data analytics and other forms of intelligence to identify emerging risks, target resources effectively, and continuously improve operational delivery. This evidence base ensures that our interventions are proportionate, justified, and outcome focused.



### 3.2.3 Consistency with Flexibility

We will apply nationally consistent policies and standards to ensure fairness and transparency in our approach, while allowing flexibility to reflect local risks, operational demands, and community needs. This principle ensures that Protection is both consistent and responsive to the unique characteristics of each local authority area.



### 3.2.4 Collaboration

We will continue to work in partnership with Scottish Government, other regulators, emergency services, local authorities, and industry partners to deliver shared outcomes as well as across SFRS Directorates. Internally, we will foster cross-discipline integration across FSE, FE, and FI to maximise impact, avoid duplication, and provide a unified Protection function.



### 3.2.5 Professional Competence

We are committed to developing and sustaining a highly skilled Protection resource. We will develop role-specific development pathways to ensure that protection staff acquire, maintain, and apply the technical expertise required for their role. Recruitment and retention strategies will be reviewed to safeguard critical competencies and ensure organisational resilience. We will also work in partnership with academia to support research, enhance learning opportunities, and strengthen the evidence base that underpins our professional practice.



### 3.2.6 Continuous Learning and Improvement

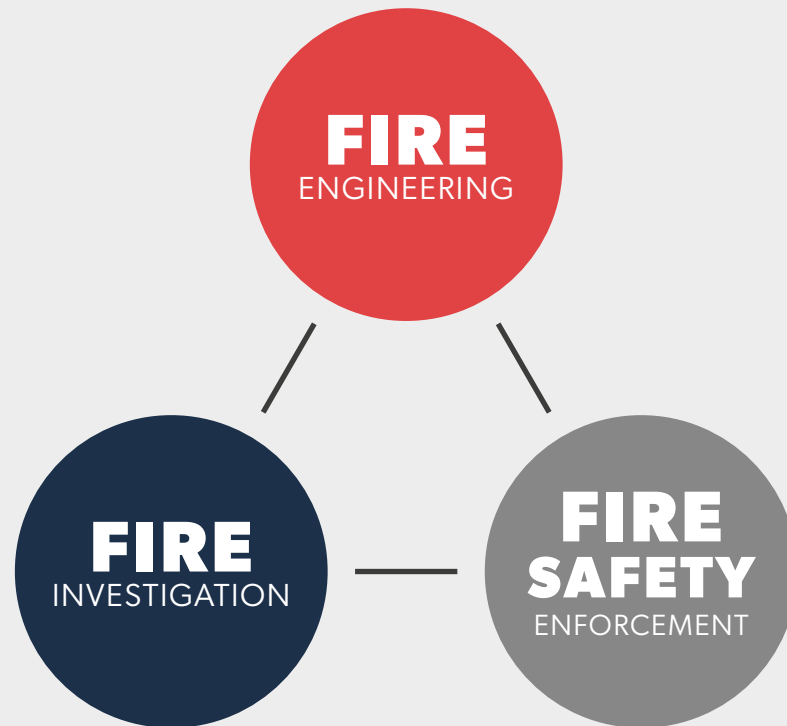
We will systematically capture and apply learning from operational incidents, fire investigations, fire safety audits, and other regulatory activity. This learning will be embedded into our planning, training, and quality assurance processes, driving continuous improvement across all areas of the Protection Function and Local Senior Officer (LSO) areas. This approach will support firefighter safety by identifying and addressing risks within the built environment before incidents occur. By analysing trends, understanding root causes, and sharing insights across the Service, we will help ensure that our frontline crews are better protected, better informed, and better prepared.



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## 4. THE PROTECTION MODEL

Our Protection Model represents a tripartite approach incorporating Engineering, Enforcement and Investigation. Each component plays a distinct but interdependent role in reducing risk to communities and firefighters across Scotland's built environment.



### 4.1 FIRE ENGINEERING

FE is a proactive and forward-facing discipline that applies scientific and engineering principles to the design, evaluation, and assurance of fire safety in buildings. Early engagement in the design process enables the delivery of safe, compliant and innovative developments, reducing the likelihood of life safety failures and supporting long-term resilience.

#### 4.1.1 Key Responsibilities

The FE section:

- Participate in statutory consultations, including Building Warrant applications under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Provide technical assurance on complex and performance-based fire strategies.
- Influence safer outcomes at the pre-construction phase through critical analysis of design proposals.
- Support LSOs and operational staff in assessing complex or high-risk premises within their respective areas.

Fire Engineers increasingly collaborate with local authorities, architects, developers and regulators to embed fire safety principles from the outset, avoiding reliance on retrofit solutions or post-occupancy enforcement. This proactive approach aligns with the findings of major public inquiries, including the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, which highlighted the devastating impact of regulatory failure, poor design scrutiny and unclear responsibilities.

#### **4.1.2 Broader Value to the Service**

FE can enhance regulatory compliance and risk reduction, and it also supports operational preparedness by improving understanding of complex building behaviours. It informs incident response, post-incident analysis and strategic planning. By influencing the built environment before occupation, FE can reduce risk to the public and firefighters, strengthens organisational resilience and contributes to the long-term safety of communities across Scotland.



## **4.2 FIRE INVESTIGATION**

FI is a critical function that plays an important role following significant fire incidents. The specialist technical knowledge gained and shared with our partner agencies remains key to the legal process within Scotland. In addition, our FI Search Dog asset can enhance investigation processes and provide reliable, corroborative evidence to inform enquiries. This specialised unit enables SFRS to further understand how and why fires occur, allowing for more targeted risk reduction and improved public safety outcomes.

### **4.2.1 Key Responsibilities**

FI units:

- Determine the origin, cause and development of fire incidents through systematic, evidence-based investigation.
- Identify fire trends, emerging risks and contributing factors that inform prevention strategies.
- Support enforcement action where deliberate fire setting or regulatory breaches are identified.
- Contribute to national learning through formal reporting, liaison with partner agencies and data sharing.

#### 4.2.2 Broader Value to the Service

The broader value of FI is demonstrated through prevention activities, tailored for delivery from intelligence obtained through incident findings. Insights gained from investigations and Incident Learning Reviews inform not only legal processes, but local and national prevention strategies. Outcomes can contribute to building design, product and material evaluations, and support wider sector learning. High profile investigations have also highlighted the importance of robust, post-incident investigation, holding people and processes to account and improving safety standards. Within SFRS, FI is a key enabler of risk-informed decision-making, continuous improvement and organisational learning.

### 4.3 FIRE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT

FSE personnel ensure that duty holders meet their legal obligations under Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. Through a risk-based, proportionate approach, FSE works to secure compliance, protect life, and reduce the likelihood of fire in non-domestic premises.



#### 4.3.1 Key Responsibilities

FSE personnel:

- Assess compliance with fire safety legislation through audits and inspections of relevant premises.
- Engage with duty holders and partners to support understanding of legal responsibilities.
- Take enforcement action where compliance cannot be achieved through supportive engagement.
- Provide operational staff with risk information, particularly in high-risk or complex premises.

#### 4.3.2 Broader Value to the Service

The FSE regulatory responsibility of the Service provides a critical lever in securing compliance, protecting life, and upholding fire safety standards within communities. It contributes directly to community and Firefighter safety, operational readiness and public confidence through reducing risk from fire in relevant premises. Audit and investigation outcomes inform current and future national technical standards which can also be informed by the lessons of significant incidents.

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## 5. FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

Over the next three-year period the Protection Framework sets out the delivery of the following objectives in line with the Prevention Strategy 2025-2028:

### 5.1 OBJECTIVE 1

Review our approach to Prevention and Enforcement to include consideration of findings from major incident reviews such as Grenfell and focus on effectively resourcing its delivery, including options for operational crews to support this approach within the diverse geography and communities in Scotland.

#### How will we do this?

- Develop and implement a revised risk-based delivery model to guide the planning and execution of FSE activity.
- Strengthen liaison between Operational Delivery and FSE, including Operational Assurance and Operational Intelligence. This will enhance learning from incidents, coordinate management of ongoing issues, and improve sharing of emerging risks.
- Consider and evaluate the effectiveness of fire engineering principles and strategies in buildings following their application during operational incidents.

### 5.2 OBJECTIVE 2

Develop a strategy to recruit, develop and retain competence for all Protection activity in line with a dedicated career pathway.

#### How will we do this?

- Introduce a bespoke promotion pathway that maintains and strengthens professional competence within the Protection Function.
- Design and implement a structured development pathway for both uniformed and non-uniformed personnel within the Protection Function.
- Consider the impacts of re-employing retired personnel with specialist skills and experience.
- Ensure promotion processes recognise the balance between technical Protection competence and operational competence, with clear criteria for both.
- Consider the introduction of dedicated Protection training posts to build and sustain skills across FI, FSE and FE and integrate such skills within Operational Delivery.

### 5.3 OBJECTIVE 3

Implement a competency-based framework embedded with national fire standards that will maintain competence, demonstrate excellence and contribute to a more consistent national approach in reducing risk and maximising effective delivery.

#### How will we do this?

- Embed the principles outlined within the NFCC Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators into SFRS specific standards and role requirements.
- Develop and implement a structured assessment tool to measure, record, and maintain competence across the Protection Function.
- Expand the use of Virtual Learning Environments and Continuing Professional Development opportunities to support consistency, accessibility, and professional growth across Scotland.

### 5.4 OBJECTIVE 4

Engage with academia and key partners to consider how we further enhance the skills and training abilities of our specialist FSE, FI and FE teams, considering legislative changes, modern technology and innovative practices.

#### How will we do this?

- Strengthen existing academic partnerships and identify reciprocal opportunities to support the development of students and SFRS personnel.
- Continue to raise Scotland's profile and influence within the NFCC.
- Identify and pursue opportunities to engage with key partners on emerging risks and new technologies, particularly in relation to Battery Energy Storage Systems and lithium-ion batteries.
- Progress work with Legal Services to ensure effective support and training for Protection Officers during legal processes.

## 5.5 OBJECTIVE 5

Seek to enhance our FI capabilities and utilise new technologies and practices for more informed investigation outcomes whilst further developing our close relationships with partners, so we timeously inform prevention efforts to meet current and emerging challenges.

### How will we do this?

- Drive collaborative opportunities with partners to access realistic training environments and scenario-based learning that directly supports operational research and continuous improvement.
- Utilise modern techniques, digital tools and technology to enhance Fire Investigation capabilities and maximise learning from operational incidents.
- Identify and implement sustainable pathways for maintaining Fire Investigation competence among Flexi-Duty Officers, ensuring effective support and informed decision-making at incidents.

- Remain agile, flexible, proportionate and evolving in response to Scotland's changing risk landscape and the increasing impacts of climate change. In partnership, we will strengthen wildfire investigation capability through specialist training and advanced data analysis, ensuring resilience and enabling the Service to adapt and enhance its approach as required.

## 5.6 OBJECTIVE 6

Endeavour to further assess the role that SFRS undertakes in responding to consultations with Local Authorities and other key agencies, including assessing potential for recovering costs where appropriate.

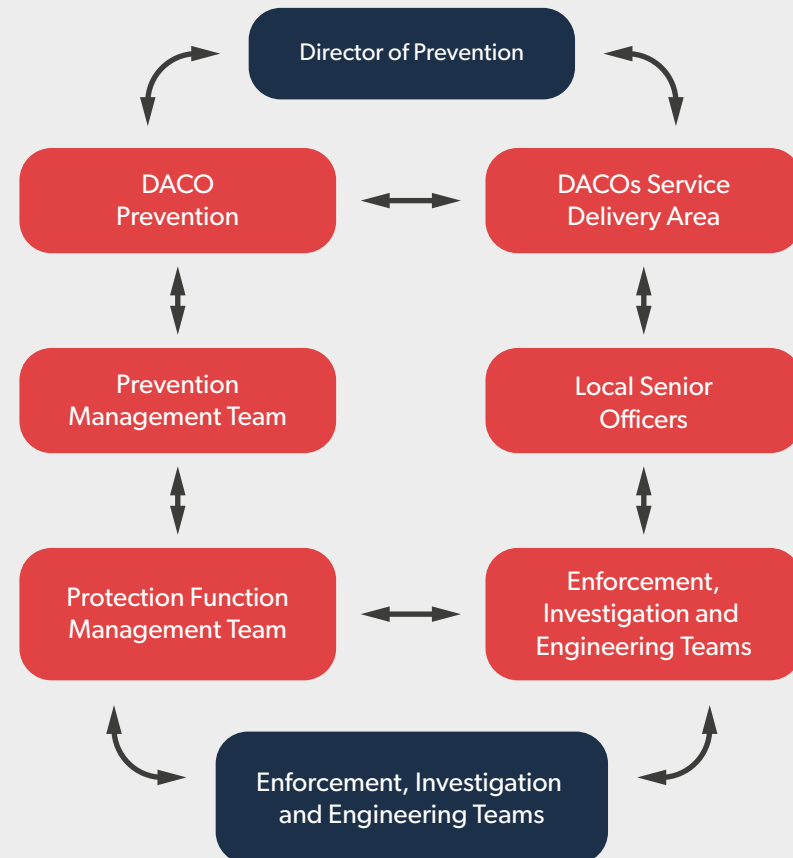
### How will we do this?

- Establish clear boundaries and responsibilities by determining what is statutory and where SFRS can appropriately support partner organisations.
- Assess and develop viable cost-recovery mechanisms, with any revenue reinvested into targeted Prevention activity to maximise community safety outcomes.

## 6. OPERATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY

Effective delivery of the Protection Framework is dependent on a clear governance structure, robust performance management, and integrated planning across both local and national structures. Our Risk Based Inspection Program will focus on premises where risk to relevant persons is considered highest. Whilst life safety will be the foundation to support that model, premises that have demonstrated a potential failure in their risk assessment, such as following a fire incident or upon receiving other emerging intelligence, will be prioritised for audit and engagement. These principles are embedded within our Local Enforcement Delivery Plans (LEDPs) which are developed on an annual basis and focussed on local risks. LSOs are responsible for annually reviewing their delivery plans and remain accountable for their performance.

Each LEDP is informed by local risk profiles, resourcing, and thematic priorities, while maintaining alignment with national standards, policy expectations, and the overarching objectives of the Service. LEDPs enable flexibility in delivery to reflect the diversity of Scotland's built environment and community needs, ensuring that resources are targeted where they will have the greatest impact.



The SFRS Good Governance Framework lays out the principles of good corporate governance, and LSOs are empowered to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to effectively deliver organisational responsibilities supported by these delivery plans. Performance is scrutinised both internally through the Directorate and Service Delivery Boards, and externally through Local Authority scrutiny committees in line with Local Fire and Rescue Plans.

We will maintain a regular evaluation of our Protection delivery models to ensure they remain effective, efficient, and aligned to community risk. This dynamic approach secures best value, promotes adaptability, and equips the Service to meet existing and emerging priorities.

### **6.1 National Oversight and Integration**

A central Protection management team supported by dedicated and experienced officers will provide strategic oversight of policy implementation, performance assurance, and consistency across the Service. This team will ensure the effective integration of technical advice and intelligence into local planning and decision-making. It will also maintain national reporting mechanisms and lead on the development of policy, guidance, learning frameworks, and quality assurance processes.

### **6.2 Strategic Partnerships**

Collaborative working with key partners is essential to delivering effective Protection outcomes. Targeted workstreams will further enhance joint working arrangements with academia, Local Authorities, Building Standards departments, Police Scotland, British Transport Police, the Health and Safety Executive, and other relevant partners. These partnerships will support a shared understanding of risk, improve information sharing protocols, and enable coordinated action to address complex or cross-sector challenges.

### **6.3 Strategic Alignment**

All Protection activity will be clearly aligned to the Prevention Strategy and will actively contribute to national objectives on prevention, community safety, and community resilience detailed in the overarching SFRS Strategy. It also aligns with Scotland's wider public safety and regulatory reform agenda, as well as relevant recommendations from public inquiries and independent reviews. This Framework reinforces the Service's commitment to delivering a professional, risk-based, and outcomes-focused Protection function that strengthens public trust and delivers measurable safety improvements.

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## 7. PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION

The success of the Framework will be measured through tangible outcomes and not just activity volumes. Evaluation will be structured around:

### 7.1 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Protection-related KPIs will be established and embedded in the SFRS Performance Management Framework. Quantitative data analysis in relation to these KPIs assist in ensuring our resources are deployed against the right risk profile and will demonstrate effective outcomes as a result of measuring dutyholder compliance.

### 7.2 QUALITATIVE MEASURES

In addition to measurable outputs, the value of the Protection Function is demonstrated through qualitative outcomes that reflect meaningful impact on safety culture, regulatory behaviour, and organisational learning. These indicators signal the effectiveness of our approach in influencing duty holder behaviour, improving design standards, and informing change across the Service. Examples of this may include:

- Increased compliance without formal enforcement.
- Uptake of fire engineering advice in early-stage design.
- Post-incident investigation insights leading to policy or operational change.

Recent activity that demonstrates such positive indicators are achievable include the proactive engagement around the Edinburgh Fringe Events involving dutyholder engagement, auditing and supportive operational planning. Heightened awareness and education, reduced risk intervention through audits and visits and concurrent resilience arrangements maintain a successful and safe event with few resulting incidents.

### 7.3 PERFORMANCE ASSURANCE CYCLE

Quarterly review of LEDPs and Protection activity is undertaken through established performance dashboards and accompanying qualitative reporting. This ensures that progress against planned inspection, audit and engagement activity is clearly measured, areas of emerging risk are identified early, and local teams are supported to maintain a consistent and risk-based approach. Findings are fed into Directorate-level performance discussions, enabling transparent governance and continuous improvement across LSO areas.

## 8. PROTECTION FRAMEWORK ON A PAGE

### OUR VISION

“A modern, integrated Protection model that delivers safer communities through proactive engagement, technical competence, and proportionate regulation.”

### THE THREE PILLARS



DESIGN-STAGE COLLABORATION TO FUTURE-PROOF BUILDINGS



POST-INCIDENT INTELLIGENCE DRIVING POLICY AND AUDIT



PROPORTIONATE, RISK-BASED REGULATION SUPPORTED BY EDUCATION

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES



### GOVERNANCE

- National oversight and consistency
- Locally tailored LEDPs aligned to strategic priorities

### WORKFORCE

- Competency frameworks and specialist recruitment and development pathways
- Training, retention, and leadership development

### EVALUATION

- KPIs and qualitative metrics
- Annual assurance cycle; Real-time performance dashboards

### INNOVATION

- Data-driven targeting and inspection tools
- Knowledge exchange and academic collaboration

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