



Anne Clarke AM
Chair of the Fire Committee

Samantha Dixon MBE MP
Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Democracy

Dear Minister,

(Sent by email)

15 July 2026

Response to the consultation ‘Developing a new College of Fire and Rescue’

I am writing to respond to the Government’s consultation on developing a new College of Fire and Rescue, on behalf of the London Assembly Fire Committee. The Fire Committee reviews the work of the London Fire Commissioner and examines fire and rescue matters across Greater London.

The current Committee and our predecessors have long supported the creation of a College of Fire and Rescue, as recommended in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. So, we welcome the broad intent set out in this consultation. A College with the authority to set mandatory standards and provide coordination and training in key areas, has the potential to reform and support the fire and rescue sector such that it is genuinely fit for the future.

Our Committee has carried out several investigations over recent years, which touch on several areas this consultation addresses, most notably looking into London Fire Brigade’s (LFB’s) culture,¹ firefighter exposure to fire contaminants,² and the wellbeing of London’s firefighters.³ The evidence gathered as part of these investigations forms the basis of this submission.

¹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade’s culture](#), April 2025

² London Assembly Fire Committee, [Exposure to fire contaminants in London: A hidden, growing risk?](#), February 2026

³ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Wellbeing of London’s firefighters](#), 12 November 2025

We have responded only to those questions where the Committee has gathered direct evidence, rather than across the full range of questions in the consultation. Therefore, our answers have focused specifically on the sections looking at culture and integrity, and health, safety and wellbeing.

Culture and Integrity

Question 40: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the College should collect and share anonymised data on culture and misconduct from and with other fire and rescue services and authorities?

Strongly agree.

Our investigation into LFB's culture looked in detail at LFB's Professional Standards Unit (PSU), the first of its kind in the FRS sector.⁴ We found that it is currently difficult to compare data around culture and misconduct between FRS's, because there is limited publicly available data on grievances and disciplinarys.⁵ We were not able to compare this against equivalent data from other fire and rescue services, since no such national dataset currently exists.

The Committee believes it would be beneficial to the improvement of FRS's across the country to have the College collecting and sharing anonymised culture and misconduct data across services in order to allow individual services, and related bodies, to assess whether issues are local or nationwide. In our report '*Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade's culture*' we recommended that LFB should continue to survey its workforce at least annually, and publish the findings of the surveys.⁶ As part of the College's anonymised data collection, we support a commitment to data being made publicly available, where appropriate. The Committee heard concerns from firefighters about the confidentiality of grievance and disciplinary processes. Any national data-sharing function would need to overcome similar concerns to uphold trust and support of firefighters.⁷

Question 41: How else could the College of Fire and Rescue promote positive culture within the fire and rescue service?

The Fire Committee has previously recommended that LFB creates an independent Standards Commissioner, to oversee its PSU.⁸ The College of Fire and Rescue could fulfil a comparable role across all services, helping to address the structural concern identified by London's former Fire Commissioner, who told us, that an internally-run professional standards function "is never going to be completely independent."⁹

We also heard that the promotion and maintenance of a positive culture at LFB required middle managers to have improved confidence and training to resolve minor matters locally. Anna Snelson, a firefighter with LFB and member of Women in the Fire Service UK, told the Committee "to make people feel more confident in their leadership roles and what it is expected, [more training] would be

⁴ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade's culture](#), April 2025

⁵ London Assembly, [Culture in the London Fire Brigade \(LFB\) \(11\)](#), 15 October 2024

⁶ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade's culture](#), April 2025

⁷ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade's culture](#), April 2025

⁸ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade's culture](#), April 2025

⁹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Meeting transcript: Panel 2](#), 3 December 2024, p.12

really beneficial.”¹⁰ The Committee has previously recommended a new curriculum of procedural training using mentoring, real-time advice and scenario-based training.¹¹ A College could develop a consistent national version of this, rather than leaving every service to build this capability independently, reducing variation and inequality between services.

The College could also offer real value by publishing comparable culture and trust metrics nationally, by establishing a consistent, College-coordinated approach to examining disproportionality in misconduct processes, and by allowing for more effective sharing of best practice.¹²

Question 42: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the establishment of a barred list?

Strongly agree

The Committee has previously called for a national barred list for firefighters, in correspondence with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), in January 2024,¹³ and repeated this call in our April 2025 report on LFB’s culture.¹⁴ We found that without such a list, “staff dismissed by one brigade can simply move to another brigade, with no way of sharing misconduct information with each other.”¹⁵ This is a particular issue we have seen at LFB which, given it is the largest fire service in England, often helps neighbouring fire services, with firefighters from one brigade working closely with those in another. London’s then Fire Commissioner told us that becoming a regulated profession, with the kind of “open, transparent, recorded individual cases” that exist in policing, “would definitely shift the landscape” on trust.¹⁶ A barred list is a necessary step in building trust in and across fire services.

Question 43: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the College should host the barred list?

Strongly agree

In our 2025 report on LFB’s culture, we made the following recommendation:

“By the end of this Parliamentary term (2024-2029), the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue and pass the necessary legislation to make firefighting a regulated profession. The College of Fire and Rescue should be tasked with developing and managing a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct.”¹⁷

We believe that the College, rather than the NFCC, is the appropriate body to hold this list, both because the NFCC has previously told us that it lacks the “appropriate statutory basis and supporting

¹⁰ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Meeting transcript: Panel 2, 24 October 2024](#), p.8

¹¹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade’s culture](#), April 2025

¹² London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade’s culture](#), April 2025

¹³ London Assembly Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee, [Letter to Chair National Fire Chiefs Council](#), January 2024, p.17

¹⁴ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade’s culture](#), April 2025

¹⁵ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade’s culture](#), April 2025, p.24

¹⁶ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Meeting transcript: Panel 2](#), 3 December 2024, p.28

¹⁷ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Action and ambition: London Fire Brigade’s culture](#), April 2025, p.26

regulations” to “assess an individual’s suitability to work for the FRS”,¹⁸ and because a body with no operational fire and rescue function of its own offers greater independence and avoids further issues that could arise from holding sensitive data about staff across the whole sector.

Question 45: What benefits or concerns do you see with the introduction of a barred and/or advisory list?

One of the clearest benefits of a national barred list would be closing the information gap that currently allows individuals dismissed for gross misconduct to move between brigades undetected.

The Committee also heard concerns around the introduction of a barred list. Gareth Cook from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) told the Committee that there “are complexities and the complexity is in the detail” of a barred list.¹⁹ He highlighted issues around the remit of the barred list, questioning whether a list would capture matters unrelated to professional conduct, and convictions outside of a professional setting.²⁰ We also heard concerns raised by Paula Lyons of Women in the Fire Service UK, of the “implications on not just themselves but other people within that family” of being publicly identified.²¹

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Question 46: To what extent do you agree or disagree that a health, safety and wellbeing function should be part of the College?

Tend to agree

Our Committee has previously carried out two investigations related to health, safety and wellbeing, these explored exposure to fire contaminants and firefighter wellbeing in LFB. The Committee heard examples of good practice both within LFB and at other brigades, but found that there is a need for a consistent UK-wide programme for setting national standards for exposure data collection and long-term health surveillance.²² The Committee previously called for this to be established by the Government and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). If this function was to be held by the College, it must be supported by expert scientific and occupational health input and developed in partnership with devolved governments, Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) and workforce representatives.²³

On contaminants, we heard that LFB’s own Fire Contaminants Policy was considered by the FBU to be “one of the leading contamination policies in the UK,”²⁴ yet the FBU also told us that there remained a “disconnect between the policy - what is written - and what happens on fire stations.”²⁵ Our investigation heard about factors affecting implementation of effective policies including local building capacity, training and culture. A newly established College could be effectively positioned

¹⁸ National Fire Chiefs Council, [Mark Hardingham reply to Anne Clarke AM Chair of FREP 14 February 2024](#), 14 February 2024, p.1

¹⁹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Meeting transcript: Panel 2](#), 24 October 2024, p.10

²⁰ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Meeting transcript: Panel 2](#), 24 October 2024, p.10

²¹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Meeting transcript: Panel 2](#), 24 October 2024, p.11

²² London Assembly Fire Committee, [Exposure to fire contaminants in London: A hidden, growing risk?](#), February 2026

²³ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Exposure to fire contaminants in London: A hidden, growing risk?](#), February 2026

²⁴ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Meeting transcript: Panel 1](#), 2 December 2025, p. 4

²⁵ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Meeting transcript: Panel 1](#), 2 December 2025, p.4

to address these differences and provide national coordination to ensure consistently high standards around firefighter safety.

On wellbeing, Nottingham Trent University's 2023 study identified the importance of data as a key priority for an effective health and wellbeing approach: to measure impact, inform strategic priorities and highlight where offers of support should be targeted.²⁶ Given the shared nature of firefighters' experiences across the UK, collecting and analysing wellbeing data at a national level would enable trends to be identified, lessons to be shared between services, and a more nuanced understanding of the challenges facing the workforce to emerge. The College has the opportunity to play an important role in gathering, analysing and interpreting this data, ensuring brigades are well informed in their responses.

Question 47: To what extent do you agree or disagree that this function should also focus on decontamination?

Strongly agree

Our investigation into fire contaminants identified a key role to be played by national bodies in holding a UK-wide firefighter exposure and health monitoring programme.²⁷ We heard through this investigation that there was a growing risk to firefighters, but still some uncertainty over the most impactful interventions to address these risks.

Should the College take on this responsibility, it will be essential that it builds upon the work of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) working group on contaminants, and exemplars of good practice across the sector. This could include identifying where national standards are required, providing a central data source on exposure monitoring and research, informing decontamination best practice and allowing for consistent, comparable data across services.

Question 49: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the College should support work intended to address the fire community's physical, emotional and psychological needs?

Tend to agree

Our wellbeing investigation found experiences of stress, anxiety and depression have been increasing among LFB firefighters,²⁸ and heard that more than three-quarters of firefighters would be interested in more mental health training.²⁹ We also found that while LFB's wellbeing strategy and mental health policy are comprehensive, they focus heavily on individual and leader-level support but largely omit the 'Group' element of the IGLOO framework (Individual, Group, Leader, Organisation, Outside), meaning peer support can often be overlooked.³⁰

²⁶ Nottingham Trent University, [Recommended Key Priorities for the Next Fire and Rescue Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#), March 2023, pp.11-12

²⁷ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Exposure to fire contaminants in London: A hidden, growing risk?](#), February 2026

²⁸ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Letter to London Fire Commissioner: The wellbeing of London's firefighters](#), 4 March 2026

²⁹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Wellbeing of London's firefighters – Panel One](#), 13 January 2026

³⁰ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Letter to London Fire Commissioner: The wellbeing of London's firefighters](#), 4 March 2026

However, given our remit and the scope of our scrutiny to date, we can only speak to the current provision in London. While we found London has made significant progress in strengthening its wellbeing support, there remains scope for further improvement. In our view, the College's role should therefore be to complement, rather than duplicate, existing provision by developing and disseminating evidence-based guidance, promoting best practice across the sector, and supporting consistent approaches to areas such as peer support, data-informed wellbeing interventions, and targeted mental health training.

Question 50: What benefits and challenges could the establishment of a College health, safety and wellbeing function bring?

The College offers the potential for a national evidence base on contaminant exposure and cancer risk, consistency of decontamination standards and station design guidance, a mechanism for spreading targeted, data-informed wellbeing interventions, and cost efficiencies from centralised procurement of mandatory training, allowing FRS's to provide more tailored support.

In LFB's response to our contaminants report, it highlights specific challenges around exposure monitoring, stating that it is "not straightforward" and "require significant funding and specialist support."³¹ The NFCC's response to the report also highlighted that "any UK-wide firefighter exposure and health monitoring programme (while welcomed) would require careful consideration, including agreement on scope, governance, scientific methodology, data standards, funding and the respective roles of Government, NFCC, fire and rescue services and workforce representatives. It would also need to align with existing occupational health arrangements and respect devolved responsibilities across the UK."³² If the College were to take on this role, these are all challenges that would need to be responded to.

Yours,



Anne Clarke AM
Chair of the Fire Committee

³¹ London Fire Brigade, [LFB Response - Exposure to Fire Contaminants in London](#), 19 March 2026, p. 2

³² National Fire Chiefs Council, [NFCC Response - Exposure to Fire Contaminants in London](#), 16 March 2026, p.2