



## **Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004 – Key Factsheet 5: Strategic guidance and support**

The Fire and Rescue Services Act requires the Government to give a lead to the Fire and Rescue Service. This is a direct response to the recommendation made in Sir George Bain's independent report on "*The Future of the Fire Service*" (see [www.irfs.org.uk](http://www.irfs.org.uk)), which specified the need for Government to set out a clear and strategic direction for the Service.

Under the Act, the Secretary of State must therefore produce a "Fire and Rescue National Framework" for the Service. Following consultation, the Framework for 2004-05 was published on 16 July 2004 and the Act allows for this and future editions to be given statutory force.

The Framework represents a "contract", embodying a partnership approach between Government and fire and rescue authorities to ensure a modern and effective Service. It sets out the Government's strategic objectives for the Service and provides guidance on what fire and rescue authorities should do to meet them, as well as the support they will receive from the Government to do so. It will be for fire and rescue authorities to decide themselves how the objectives of the Framework are best achieved, in line with local needs and risks.

But it is important that fire and rescue authorities meet the public service expectations set out in the Framework. This is why the Act includes provisions that allow for Government intervention where authorities are clearly failing to meet those expectations. Any use of the intervention powers will be governed by an Intervention Protocol, which was issued for consultation on 31 August 2004.

In the future, as required by the Act, the Government will continue to ensure that the Framework remains current. The Government will consult widely before making any significant changes to the Framework.

The proposed changes to the current National Framework, which will inform the 2005-06 Framework, were also issued for consultation on 31 August. The aim is to publish the 2005-06 version of the Framework later this Autumn in time for it to be fully reflected in fire and rescue authority budget setting processes.

Copies of the Framework and all associated consultation papers can be found on the ODPM website – see [www.odpm.gov.uk/fire](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/fire).