

Fire & Rescue Service

Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19

An inspection of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service



Contents

About this inspection	1
Service in numbers	2
Overview	4
Effectiveness	7
How effective is the service at keeping people safe and secure?	8
Summary	8
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	9
Preventing fires and other risks	11
Protecting the public through fire regulation	13
Responding to fires and other emergencies	15
Responding to national risks	18
Efficiency	20
How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure?	21
Summary	21
Making best use of resources	22
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	25
People	27
How well does the service look after its people?	28
Summary	28
Promoting the right values and culture	29
Getting the right people with the right skills	31
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	32
Managing performance and developing leaders	33
Annex A – About the data	35
Annex B – Fire and rescue authority governance	40

About this inspection

This is the first time that HMICFRS has inspected fire and rescue services across England. Our focus is on the service they provide to the public, and the way they use the resources available. The inspection assesses how effectively and efficiently Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service prevents, protects the public against and responds to fires and other emergencies. We also assess how well it looks after the people who work for the service.

In carrying out our inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services in England, we answer three main questions:

1. How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
2. How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
3. How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

This report sets out our inspection findings. After taking all the evidence into account, we apply a graded judgment for each of the three questions.

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

Good is our 'expected' graded judgment for all fire and rescue services. It is based on policy, practice or performance that meet pre-defined grading criteria, which are informed by any relevant national operational guidance or standards.

If the service exceeds what we expect for good, we will judge it as **outstanding**.

If we find shortcomings in the service, we will judge it as **requires improvement**.

If we find serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, we will judge it as **inadequate**.

Service in numbers



Public perceptions

Cheshire

England

Perceived effectiveness of service
Public perceptions survey (June/July 2018)

90%

86%



Response

Cheshire

England

Incidents attended per 1,000 population
12 months to 31 March 2018

7.4

10.2

Home fire risk checks carried out by FRS per 1,000 population
12 months to 31 March 2018

40.2

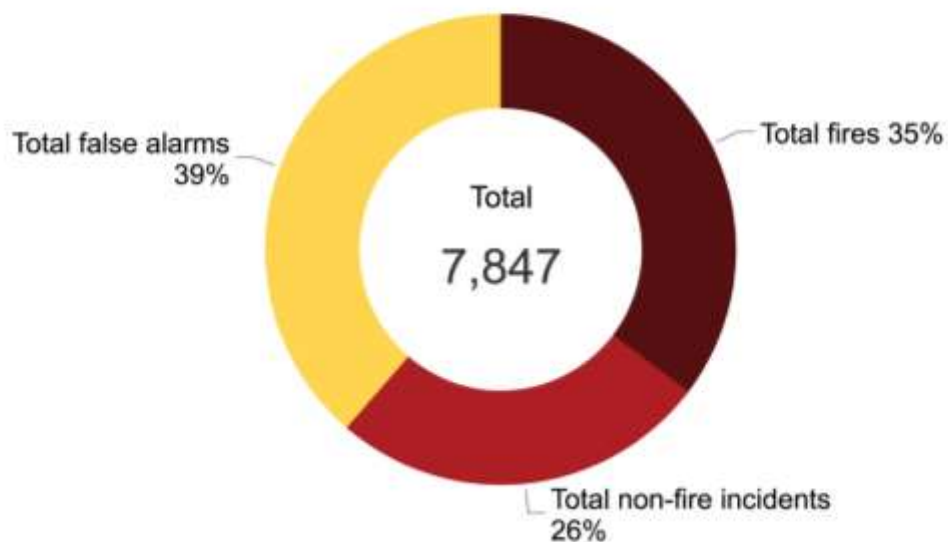
10.4

Fire safety audits per 100 known premises
12 months to 31 March 2018

4.8

3.0

Incidents attended in the 12 months to 31 March 2018





Cost

Cheshire

England

Firefighter cost per person per year
12 months to 31 March 2018

£20.30

£22.38



Workforce

Cheshire

England

Number of firefighters per 1,000 population
As at 31 March 2018

0.5

0.6

Five-year change in workforce
As at 31 March 2013 compared with 31 March 2018

-16%

-14%

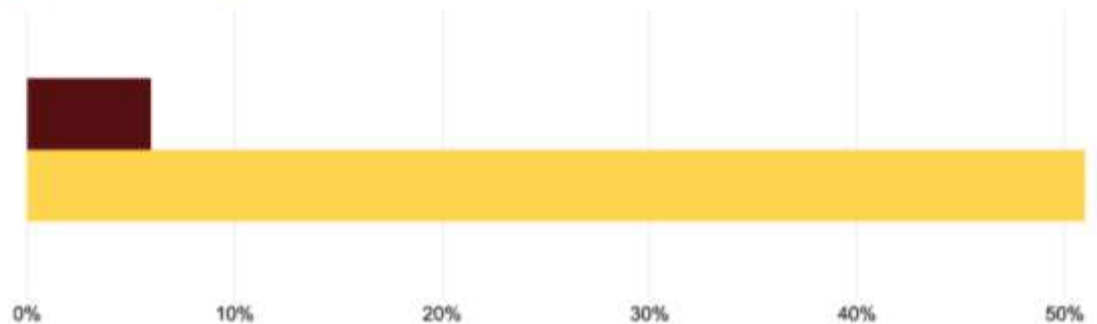
Percentage of wholetime firefighters
As at 31 March 2018.

69%

70%

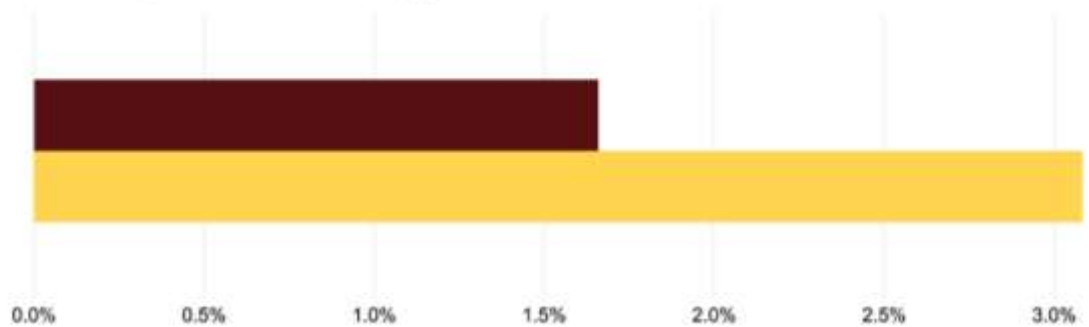
Percentage of female firefighters as at 31 March 2018

● Female firefighters ● Female residential population



Percentage of black, Asian and minority ethnic firefighters as at 31 March 2018

● BAME firefighters ● BAME residential population



Please refer to annex A for full details on data used.

Overview

 Effectiveness	 Good
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	 Good
Preventing fires and other risks	 Good
Protecting the public through fire regulation	 Good
Responding to fires and other emergencies	 Good
Responding to national risks	 Good
 Efficiency	 Good
Making best use of resources	 Good
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	 Good



People



Requires improvement

Promoting the right values and culture



Requires improvement

Getting the right people with the right skills



Good

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement

Managing performance and developing leaders



Good

Overall summary of inspection findings

We are pleased with most aspects of the performance of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure. But it needs to improve how it looks after its people, to give a consistently good service.

The service is effective at keeping people safe and secure. It understands risk and is good at preventing it. The service makes good use of fire regulation to protect the public. Its response to fires and emergencies locally is good, and it responds well to national risks, too.

The service is efficient. It uses resources well and it is affordable.

The service should improve the way it looks after its people. In particular, it must do better at:

- promoting the right values and culture; and
- ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

But it is good at getting the right people with the right skills and at managing performance and developing leaders.

We are encouraged by the positive aspects we have identified. We look forward to seeing a more consistent performance over the coming year.

Effectiveness



How effective is the service at keeping people safe and secure?



Good

Summary

An effective fire and rescue service will identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks its community faces. It will target its fire prevention and protection activities to those who are at greatest risk from fire. It will make sure businesses comply with fire safety legislation. When the public calls for help, the fire and rescue service should respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness is good.

The service is good in each of the five areas to do with keeping people safe and secure. It has a well-developed system for understanding and managing the risks faced by the local community. It works with partner organisations to predict likely risk and demand for fire and rescue services.

The service has an effective risk-management plan. [Wholetime](#) staff review risk information regularly, and update it.

The service has a range of community safety activities. These are aimed at preventing fires, promoting community safety and improving the health and wellbeing of local people. Operational firefighters and specialist fire prevention staff visit schools to teach children life skills about risk and safety.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at protecting the public through fire regulation. It uses a risk-based audit and inspection programme, with monitoring according to risk level. The service takes a robust approach to enforcement action.

At present, the protection team has insufficient capacity. Additional staff are being trained. The service has taken measures to successfully reduce the number of unwanted fire signals.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service benefits from its control room collaboration with Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cumbria fire services. Cross-border [mobilisations](#) are used to achieve the fastest speed of response. Fire engines and

other resources have been redeployed to consistently meet the service's ten-minute attendance standard. The response model uses a pre-determined attendance policy for various types of incident.

Staff command incidents safely and assertively. However, the concept of [operational discretion](#) for commanders to make their own decisions in certain situations is not yet fully understood and accepted everywhere in the organisation. Operational learning between the collaborating fire and rescue services is clearly happening. The service has adopted the national [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles](#) (JESIP), working together with other organisations when responding to major multi-agency incidents. The service makes effective use of social media to communicate with, and work with, the public.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Good

All fire and rescue services should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks. They should also prevent and mitigate these risks.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Understanding local and community risk

The service has a well-developed process for understanding the risks the community faces. It consults with the public to develop its four-year [integrated risk management plan](#) (IRMP) and annual IRMP delivery plan. The service explores the needs of the community by holding face-to-face meetings with community groups. When developing the IRMP for 2018/19 the service held ten roadshows in major centres of population. The service contacts various black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), disability and community groups to inform them of the consultations. It also uses [fire and rescue authority](#) members to extend its reach into local communities.

The service is keen to ensure it includes the views of the public in its decisions about changes to services. For example, when considering removing the second fire engine at Ellesmere Port, it held an initial public consultation. This was followed by the engagement of an independent consultant to review the evidence. Consequently, the fire and rescue authority has now asked for further work, to see what alternatives are available.

The service uses a range of data, some drawn from local authorities and NHS bodies, to understand the community risks in Cheshire. The IRMP is based on the service's knowledge of risks. It is used to develop community safety and operational response strategies. The service tests the possible impact of decisions it makes on the basis of the IRMP, using five years of past incident data. Its data modelling includes the location and availability of support to Cheshire from neighbouring services' resources. It then uses this information to prioritise fire engine locations and community safety activity.

The service also aligns its plans with the community risk register. It works constructively with partner organisations to develop the community risk profile using local authority planning and population data, road and traffic accident data and [Mosaic data](#) to predict likely risks. The service also carries out an annual analysis of the political, economic, societal, technological, environmental, legal and organisational factors affecting the county which may have an impact on risk and community safety. Using this analysis, it looks at possible future changes and predicts future demand for fire and rescue services.

The service is taking steps to engage better with hard-to-reach communities, especially those who may be [vulnerable](#). It has worked with partner organisations in Cheshire East to access details of unregistered houses in multiple occupation, where many migrant workers live with their families.

Having an effective risk management plan

Each fire and rescue service must produce an IRMP, based on its assessment of risk. The plan sets out the priorities and nature of the risks faced by the various communities. It also details the steps and resources needed to manage those risks. This risk management plan gives overall direction to the service.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's IRMP focuses on risk. This has clear links to prevention, protection and response activity through the annual activity plan. The service's financial and workforce plans are intended to ensure that it can continue to maintain the right level of operational response to manage the risks effectively within the resources it has available.

The service has a response standard of attending house fires and road traffic collisions within ten minutes on 80 percent of occasions. The data supplied by the service during fieldwork shows that for the 12 months ending 31 March 2017 it achieved this on 87 percent of occasions. It targets its prevention and protection activity in areas where it is harder to achieve a ten-minute operational response. An established sprinkler campaign encourages registered social landlords to install sprinklers in high-rise buildings, using funding set aside by the fire authority.

Maintaining risk information

Firefighters require up-to-date information about complex buildings and those where there are hazards such as chemicals. This helps them to respond with the right people and equipment effectively, should there be an incident.

The service has a good understanding of risk. Staff regularly review risk information from high-risk sites and carry out site visits to ensure they are familiar with them. The Cheshire resilience forum actively exchanges information, and statutory partner organisations such as the planning authority share new risk information when developments are planned. Information from these sources is added to the database regularly and shared quickly when changes are made.

Firefighters receive information from the [fire control](#) room when they are mobilised and sent out to an incident, and through computer terminals on fire engines. Important changes to information are communicated to staff by email. The service undertakes dip-sampling to ensure the information is accurate and sufficient.

The IRMP planning process uses this information in its assessment of risk.

On-call staff do not carry out the same range of site visits as their wholetime colleagues, due to time limitations. Instead, wholetime staff will update the risk information. The service uses table-top and video presentations to keep on-call staff up to date on relevant risks. If there are significant changes, site visits are arranged.

Preventing fires and other risks



Good

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Prevention strategy

The service has a broad programme of community safety activity. It aims its activities at preventing fires and improving the health and wellbeing of local people. The service uses local and national incident data to target resources and activity at those who are at most risk. It has a clear rationale for targeting its fire prevention activity. The service also seeks to make the most of its face-to-face contact with the public, working with local commissioning groups to identify how partner organisations can benefit when firefighters meet the public. Figures demonstrate the service's effectiveness in targeting activity. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service carried out 36,379 [home fire safety checks](#) targeted at the elderly (age 65 and over) and 1,465 home fire safety checks targeted at those registered as disabled. Respectively, this represented 85.8 percent and 3.5 percent of all home fire safety checks completed by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The service has a Safe and Well programme. This is aligned to risk and is given by both local station-based and specialist fire prevention staff. The Safe and Well programme provides home fire safety checks and health and wellbeing checks. These include, where required, stroke reduction (atrial fibrillation) checks and referrals to:

- 'warmer homes' affordable warmth advice;
- bowel cancer screening kits;
- alcohol reduction advice; and
- advice on giving up smoking.

The service has been prioritising people over the age of 65 for Safe and Well visits. It is carrying out a review using incident data to see whether this is still the best group to target.

Several well-established joint community safety programmes are in place across the county, to reduce the risk of fire and improve the lives of local people. An example of this is work with the NHS Innovation Agency, screening people to provide early

warning of any risk of stroke. Although the service has some evidence of the benefits of community safety activity (76 people have been signposted to their GP), no systematic cost/benefit evaluation has been made.

The organisation carries out customer satisfaction surveys after Safe and Well visits, to identify improvement. However, this follow-up activity does not attempt to measure how far behaviours may have changed because of the intervention.

Senior officers are active in national working groups on road safety, assistive technology (which helps vulnerable people in the event of fire) and fire prevention.

Promoting community safety

The service has adopted the national campaigns calendar to make the most impact from national publicity. In addition, there is an established programme of local community safety activities.

The prevention team, as well as operational crews, undertake Key stage 2 school visits for children aged 7–11 years. Operational crews carry these out in urban areas, while the prevention team covers rural areas. Older pupils are taught life skills in a realistic setting called Safety Central. Using a range of technology and computer simulations, they receive immersive education on:

- Safer Choices – consequences of decisions (cyber safety to police custody);
- Safe as Houses – causes of accidents and fires;
- Street Safe – road, railway and canal safety; and
- Rural Risk – dangers in the countryside.

Some schools find arranging attendance at Safety Central is limited by their ability to fund transportation. The service is examining whether funding could be made available to support the schools in most need. It has invested in an online area for children on its website, called Sparkton. The area has games, videos, tests and other resources to teach children about hazards in the home.

The service works with police community support officers in an 'on the streets' initiative. This team engages with local children and young people to target and prevent anti-social behaviour and fire-setting. The community safety team is trained in counselling children and young people who indulge in fire-setting behaviour. An arson reduction manager works with local fire stations and police, making sure that prosecutions proceed where appropriate. An action plan is in place, and there has been a reduction in deliberate fires.

Road safety

The service is an active member of the Cheshire road safety partnership.

The service encourages staff to develop new projects. The Be Safe – Be Seen project targets young people and their parents in Cheshire East. It involves firefighter crews going to schools at the start of the day. Children who cycle are given road safety advice and have lights fitted to their bikes; those walking to school are given reflective tags to attach to their school bags. In the winter months of 2017/18, the crews distributed 500 high-visibility beanie hats.

Watch managers spoke positively about how the service had set realistic targets for road safety initiatives, such as ‘think drive survive’, and summer drink-drive prevention events.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Good

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at protecting the public through fire regulation. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.

All fire and rescue services should assess fire risks in buildings and, where necessary, require building owners to comply with fire safety legislation. Each service decides how many assessments it does each year. But it must have a locally-determined, risk-based inspection programme for enforcing the legislation.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service’s performance in this area.

Risk-based approach

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service uses a risk-based and intelligence-led approach to achieve its audit plan. Specialist fire protection staff carry out audits of complex high-risk premises. Local station-based staff make thematic inspections, such as shops which have sleeping accommodation above them.

The service has analysed incident data and has found that the majority of non-domestic fires come from preventable electrical fires. Frontline staff have been trained to provide advice to businesses through the course of their work.

Officers use a risk-scoring system to prioritise the audits according to the risk found at each site. The risk level determines how often inspections happen at the property; for example, a sample of high-risk properties is visited annually. Risk can be upgraded or downgraded after a fire safety audit, because of an incident, or because of enforcement activity.

Monitoring of national risks takes place regularly. After the Grenfell Tower fire, all protection activity focused on auditing and providing advice in high-rise buildings. The service sets a maximum five-day response standard for reactive work like complaints or requests for advice. This varies according to the risk associated with the type of premises. For example, if there is a complaint about a high-risk sleeping premises such as a care home, an officer attends by the end of the day.

The service has a target of 1,800 fire safety audits per year. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service carried out protection audits on 1,317 of the 27,374 known premises (excluding single private dwellings) in the service area. This equates to 4.8 percent of known premises and is a decrease when compared to the 12 months to 31 March 2017, where 6.0 percent (1,629 premises) of the 27,235 known premises were audited. This decrease in audits was due to a change in focus caused by the Grenfell Tower fire. The service has a plan to achieve the target for these audits in 2018/19.

The level of resources within the protection department is sufficient to meet its statutory duties within the fire safety legislation. However, there is very little capacity to monitor compliance following an incident, or to achieve the planned inspection target. The protection team currently does not have sufficient capacity, as eight of the staff are still being trained. When all eight are qualified, the department will be able to meet all its planned targets. The service recognises this and has plans to increase the capacity of the teams.

Enforcement

The service follows the [Regulators' Code](#), engaging and working with businesses to achieve compliance. For those who fail to comply with fire safety regulations, the service has a robust approach to enforcement action. When the service has taken action, there is a similarly robust approach to those who fail to comply with fire safety orders and enforcement notices. The service follows the national enforcement management model and uses the full range of prohibition and enforcement notices. Recently a persistent offender was prosecuted and sentenced to 20 months' imprisonment. The corporate communications team engages with local news and media outlets to publicise the outcome of prosecutions, to act as a deterrent to others.

Before proceeding to prosecution, the protection team consults its legal team and sees whether the case passes the legal and public interest tests. Having consulted with the legal team, the protection team sometimes recommends that prosecution is not the best course of action. Operating in this way has meant that all prosecutions so far have been successful.

The service has regular meetings with the four local councils (Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington), the planning authorities and environmental health teams. At these meetings, information and areas of concern are shared. The service also conducts joint inspections with local authorities and housing.

Working with others

The service has been monitoring unwanted fire signals from automatic fire alarms since 2008, when over 3,000 were received. The service has introduced a policy of call challenge, and where appropriate, non-attendance. The policy is to no longer go to automatic fire alarms unless they are out of hours, there is sleeping risk, and/or a caller makes a 999 call. Data supplied by the service shows that this combination of measures has seen the number of unwanted fire signals fall to 554 in the 12 months to 31 March 2018, of which almost 200 originated from hospitals. The service has established a dedicated hospital liaison role, working with hospitals to improve their systems, plans and policies. The protection team proactively reviews all fire signal incidents, and visits premises where repeat unwanted fire signals occur. During these visits, they give advice about how to reduce the number of unwanted fire signals.

The service runs business seminars on different topics. Recently the service gave a free half-day seminar to care-home businesses, outlining their legislative duties regarding fire safety. The feedback, with 60 people attending, was positive.

The service recognises that many business owners do not have time to attend seminars. The protection teams now collaborate with local authorities to run Impact Days. For example, in Chester, local authorities and other services, including fire, visit businesses to provide advice. Unless they identify significant problems, they do not take enforcement action. Local protection teams carry out two smaller impact days in their area. Across Cheshire, six events are carried out each year.

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Good

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Managing assets and resources

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service mobilises its resources through the North West Fire Control (NWFC). This is a collaboration between Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria fire services. One benefit is that the NWFC control room knows the location of appliances over the border. This helps the control operator to send the fastest response possible, regardless of the region of origin.

Cheshire has made some changes to its operating methods to meet its attendance standard consistently. This has involved removing and redeploying the second fire engine in some urban areas. There have also been some changes to the duty systems staff work, to match resources more closely to risk. This spreads resources to meet the ten-minute attendance standard across Cheshire. The average attendance time for [primary fires](#) in Cheshire in the 12 months to 31 March 2017, is nine minutes 56 seconds.

The number of firefighters on duty at any one time is often close to the minimum number required to operate, as determined by the service. Staff working overtime are used to cover absences and to keep some on-call appliances available. This provides an effective method of maintaining fire cover, but relies on the availability of staff prepared to work overtime. The alternative would be to employ more wholetime staff.

The service has a well-understood process for attaching markers to incident records to provide information to crews about vulnerable residents. These may include risk factors such as extreme hoarding, those who might have physical difficulty in leaving their home, or those using oxygen therapy. Providing the right information about an incident enables the service to respond appropriately, using the right level of resource.

Response

Central to the response model is the pre-determined attendance policy. This sets out the type and number of fire engines needed to respond to different incidents (such as house fires). This policy uses information from task analysis, risk-assessment, site plans, together with professional judgment to decide what resources will attend. Certain sites have specific pre-determined attendances. The service reviews these regularly.

One member of staff is dedicated to ensuring that service policy and practice conform with [national operational guidance](#). Operational debriefing, incident monitoring and attendance at mandatory central training all serve to check the crews' understanding of changes to policy. We found staff had a good understanding of national operational guidance.

Operational risk information is available on [mobile data terminals](#) and laptops on all fire engines. The service prioritises updates to operational risk information. The scheduling of updates depends on the level of risk. But each [watch](#) can publish material without delay if needed.

The NWFC is able to command assets from all its four fire and rescue services. It can direct fire engines into Cheshire from outside if they can get there faster than an engine from Cheshire. It can do this because it knows the locations and availability in real time. Cross-border mobilisations ensure the fastest response for the community.

Command

Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely and assertively. However, there are areas where procedural changes are not routine practice across the service. Most staff understand the concept of operational discretion for commanders to make their own decisions in certain situations, but it is not fully part of routine practice everywhere. The service has drafted an operational discretion statement. This has been circulated to everyone in the service.

The service has worked to adopt JESIP. These are national principles helping all emergency services to work together at incidents. All incident commanders must undertake training and assessment to national standards. Senior managers must attend relevant strategic incident command training and assessment. Staff are confident and well trained to command incidents. Many spoke with pride about the command training and development available within the service.

Keeping the public informed

The service makes effective use of social media. It uses Twitter and Facebook to communicate with the public, particularly about road closures and road traffic collisions. It uses some analytics to evaluate the success of broader communications campaigns. The service recognises there is scope for further use of social media channels and targeting of local communities.

Some fire stations have received training to use Twitter, although some staff are concerned to use it, fearing they will get it wrong. The service issues updates about ongoing incidents on its website and on social media relating to public interest issues. Communications staff will only attend major incidents, or when there is media presence. Officers receive training on the use of social media and can tweet from low-risk incidents.

The organisation has measures in place to [safeguard](#) vulnerable people. There is evidence of this taking place throughout the organisation. Most staff were clear about what circumstances would require a safeguarding referral, but some staff would benefit from refresher training.

Evaluating operational performance

A system is in place for gathering learning at a debrief immediately after an incident. Supervisory managers record this, along with incident data. The incident recording system prompts operational learning at certain incident types. The outcomes are reviewed centrally and shared with relevant departments. Staff were very positive about the way of sharing information, good practice and learning, known as [safety flashes](#).

When someone provides feedback, a process is in place to keep them informed about progress. We found this was used to good effect in some areas. In cases where outcomes took longer to achieve, the value of the progress report was lost, as it became a holding email.

Staff understand the process of incident command assurance. This is applied at pre-determined incident types, or whenever two or more fire engines are sent to an incident. On arrival, the officer makes an assessment and will either monitor the incident or, if circumstances dictate, take command. The officer completes an operational audit, recording his or her observations. Any training needs are discussed with the incident commander and his or her line manager, to agree a development plan. The process works well as a mentoring mechanism, but it was not clear how managers record poor performance at operational incidents.

We found evidence of operational learning between fire and rescue services. For example, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service realised they had different approaches to making the scene safe for emergency responders on the roads. That difference has now been resolved, and learning shared by both services.

All lessons learned through [local resilience forum](#) (LRF) activity and exercises are initially collated and used to structure the multi-agency debrief. The debrief must be attended by all LRF partners. The learning is shared, along with any action points for

the future. The service also monitors and contributes to the national JESIP [joint organisational learning](#) database.

During mandatory operational training courses, there is an update on national learning. Here staff discuss the incident, what happened, and where improvements have been made as a result.

Responding to national risks



Good

All fire and rescue services must be able to respond effectively to multi-agency and cross-border incidents. This means working with other fire and rescue services (known as intraoperability) and emergency services (known as interoperability).

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Preparedness

The NWFC updates the national resilience-reporting tool every day. It records the availability of national assets, such as high-volume pumps and swift water rescue teams. Control operators monitor this system regularly, highlighting any changes immediately. The control room can mobilise national assets from all four services regionally and nationally.

The service has requested and deployed a variety of national assets, including national strategic advisors, to incidents ranging from the woodmill fire at Bosley, a chemical tanker fire on the M56, and a light aircraft crash during a classic car festival.

The LRF has multi-agency plans in place for all the sites controlled by legislation requiring co-ordinated planning for the control of major accident hazards (COMAH). Multi-agency plans are stored online to ensure information is up-to-date, secure and available to all relevant organisations.

Staff are able to access information on mobile data terminals and laptops on all fire engines. However, the information about sites outside Cheshire that is available on the mobile data terminals is limited to up to 3km. The service may want to consider whether limiting the availability of operational information in this way is appropriate in all cases.

Working with other services

The organisation has effective arrangements in place to ensure a successful cross-border response. At the time of the inspection, the service was providing five appliances and crews per day to another fire and rescue service in the north west, to help tackle large-scale moorland fires. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has learnt from previous national deployments. As a result, it mobilised on-call crews from out of the area, which meant it had enough resources available to meet any risk across Cheshire.

Working with other agencies

The service plays a central role in the Cheshire LRF, providing expertise in multi-agency exercises and debriefing. It organises and participates in multi-agency exercises at [COMAH sites](#) every three years. It also carries out yearly table-top exercises to do with COMAH sites, flood plans and counter-terrorism. An annual exercise events calendar is shared across the LRF. All exercises are designed to test preparedness and response to such incidents.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's local arrangements take into account the requirements of the [national co-ordination and advisory framework](#). The service takes an active part in this forum and is the lead agency for the JESIP protocols.

The service has been the lead on planning and arranging multi-agency exercises in public entertainment venues. These exercises have involved the management teams from these venues and all partner organisations within the LRF. The service was the lead for the exercise at Manchester airport in July 2018.

Efficiency



How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure?



Good

Summary

An efficient fire and rescue service will manage its budget and spend money properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to its risk. It should try to keep costs down without compromising public safety. Future budgets should be based on robust and realistic assumptions. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency is good.

The service is good in each of the areas inspected to do with efficiency in keeping people safe and secure.

The service is good at making the best use of resources. However, the benefits of collaboration and partnership should be evaluated, to make sure resources are being used productively.

The service's medium-term financial plan is based on sound assumptions. However, financial forecasting has not considered a wide enough range of possible future scenarios.

Areas of possible savings have been identified. These include vacant posts, [priority-based budgeting](#), collaboration with the police, and estate modernisation.

The service has struggled to recruit sufficient on-call firefighters.

The service has introduced flexible working; the benefits of this have not yet been reviewed.

The service is involved in extensive partnerships and collaborations with other agencies. These include shared back-office services with the police, and the North West Fire Control, which is shared with neighbouring fire and rescue services. However, there is scope for more formal arrangements to monitor, review and evaluate collaborative activities.

The service has funded the building of four new fire stations and a safety centre using capital [reserves](#) and central grants. This has helped it to revise the deployment of its resources, making a significant saving. It also plans to redevelop its training centre.

Although the service has done some [benchmarking](#), comparing goods and services procurement, it is not systematic. There is scope for further benchmarking of costs and performance against other fire and rescue services.

Making best use of resources



Good

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making best use of resources. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure there is effective monitoring, review and evaluation of the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration.
- The service should ensure it has sufficiently robust plans in place to secure the right level of savings in the medium term by widening its scenario planning and testing for future financial forecasting.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

How plans support objectives

A medium-term financial plan (MTFP) is in place for the period to 2021, based on sound assumptions on grant funding, levels of council tax and inflation. It links to the IRMP through the service's efficiency plan. The MTFP has examined the effect of different levels of council tax funding and inflation in order to estimate different levels of savings that might be needed. The financial forecasting has not adequately considered possible future scenarios beyond the expiry of its current financial settlement with government. This means that the service may not have sufficiently robust plans in place to secure the right level of savings in the medium term.

Areas of potential saving have been identified by the service in the short to medium term. These include reviewing vacant posts, and the use of priority-based budgeting to scrutinise current spending and performance. The service is reviewing savings from blue-light collaboration and estate modernisation, and plans to make wider use of benchmarking and performance information. To ensure the early development of potential options, it recognises that it needs the right opportunities for early consultation with staff and the public.

We noted that the allocation of resources between prevention, protection and response is currently looked at annually in response to the needs of the IRMP activity plan. It is not clear how the service's planned use of priority-based budgeting will develop a clear rationale for how levels of activity will link to the IRMP.

Productivity and ways of working

To help with flexible working, many support staff have tablets/laptops with the ability to work from anywhere with wi-fi access, improving work-life balance. There is wi-fi access at all fire and police stations. Flexible working has not yet been reviewed to see whether efficiencies have been achieved.

The service has struggled to recruit on-call firefighters and ensure their availability. The service had taken a number of steps to address this shortfall. These have included taking its recruitment pod to high footfall areas such as shopping centres and supermarkets within a five-minute travel distance of on-call fire stations. The service has reviewed existing on-call contracts for non-operational and uniformed staff and is reviewing the reward and recognition scheme for stations that meet the on-call availability targets. At Wilmslow station, crewing is supplemented with wholetime operational staff. The service has six managers dedicated to providing support to on-call crews.

The service has reviewed the shift system and duty arrangements and has introduced a variety of fixed and flexible shift systems. It uses the traditional wholetime, two days followed by two nights shift pattern. However, it operates the wholetime system on a 12-hour shift pattern and rides with four firefighters on a fire engine as standard. It also uses a mix of day crewed stations and flexible on-call arrangements. Data supplied by the service shows that between the 12 months ending 31 March 2014 and the 12 months ending 31 March 2018 these changes have seen the number of wholetime staff required reduce by 77. At the same time the number of on-call staff required has increased by 33. The service recognises that these changes may hamper relations between firefighters and managers.

Targets for Safe and Well visits take into account the number of hours available to each station and duty system. The target is that teams contact 100 percent of the most vulnerable residents allocated to them, with 65 percent receiving a Safe and Well visit. This can result in crews having to try on more than one occasion to contact some residents, to achieve the 65 percent target. It is not clear how the target of 65 percent has been arrived at. We would urge the service to consider matching the target to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Collaboration

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's collaboration with Cheshire Constabulary to share a single support function providing back-office services is at an advanced stage. In April 2018, the final planned staff transfers from the fire and rescue service to work for the police in this joint function were made. At the outset, the benefits were expected to be:

- reduced frontline support costs;
- improved service; and
- environmental benefits (leading to cost savings).

Indications in the 2015 business case were that estimated financial savings would be in excess of £1.4m. The total savings forecast in January 2017 was just over £670,000. The service was preparing to evaluate the expected benefits later in 2018.

We saw extensive partnerships and collaborative activities with fire and other agencies. Some of these – such as the North West Fire Control – had been subject to post-implementation reviews or other evaluations. However, this is not systematic, and there is scope for more formal arrangements for the service to monitor, review and evaluate the benefits and outcomes of its principal collaborative activities.

Continuity arrangements

The service has business continuity arrangements in place for critical areas such as IT and mobilising through fire control. The IT recovery strategy clearly defines roles and responsibilities of managers and staff in the event of IT systems failure. The policy gives clear guidance and identifies arrangements in the event of cyber-attack and other threats. The policy is subject to regular review and auditing.

Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future



Good

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making itself affordable now and in the future. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- The service needs to demonstrate sound financial management of principal non-pay costs. It should use benchmarking data more widely and effectively.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Improving value for money

The service set aside capital reserves to fund a large building programme: four new fire stations and a community safety centre. This allowed the service to revise its crewing models, making a significant contribution to the £6.7m savings between 2013/14 and 2016/17.

Part of the proposal for future expenditure is the development of a new training facility and a new joint station with the police in Crewe. The cost of the new station at Crewe will be shared between both partners.

The redeveloped training centre will create an immersive and realistic training environment, while also reducing reliance on external training venues. Plans are in place for this to begin in 2018/19.

The service is aware that savings originally expected from blue-light collaborative work were likely to prove over-optimistic. This applies to both the amount and the timescale in which savings could be achieved.

We saw evidence of benchmarking, comparing the procurement of some goods and services, but it was not systematic for all non-pay costs. There is further scope for the use of benchmarking to review the service's costs and performance relative to other fire and rescue services. The service should continue to explore saving opportunities in order to further invest in innovation and better ways of working.

Innovation

One of the early benefits of sharing resources with Cheshire Constabulary has been the additional capacity in support services. For example, the service's previous team could not provide consistent support out of hours. Having access to greater shared resources has increased the technical skills available to both services, and out-of-hours support for the fire service.

The service is at the early stages of developing a financial protocol with Cheshire Constabulary to support changes in their joint estate. This protocol is a set of principles by which the organisations will assess sharing all their combined premises. It will consider factors such as land value, and how implementation and ongoing costs and benefits should be apportioned fairly. This is the first step in using combined assets and assessing efficiency for the public. The service could extend this to other areas such as fleet and some IT infrastructure.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is reviewing both the amount and purpose of its financial reserves during 2018/19. There is a plan to reduce the unallocated general reserves to £2.2m of budget by 2020. In doing this, the service plans to set up a separate reserve for innovation. Through this, it plans to identify resources to allow innovation and support new ways of working.

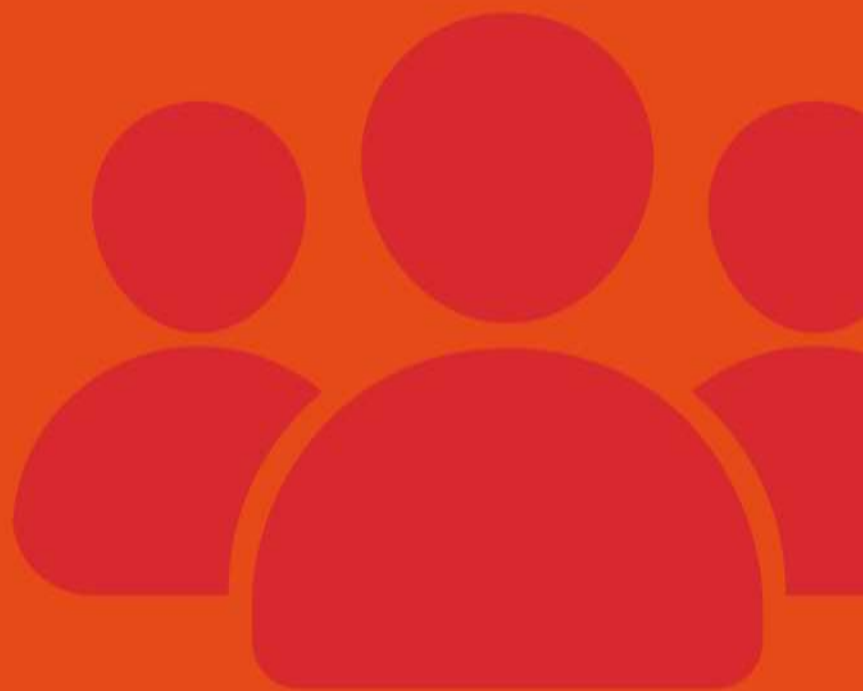
Future investment and working with others

The service has a good track record of working with others. An agreement is in place with police and the ambulance service for firefighters to provide help at incidents that require a forced entry to enable a medical response to be administered.

We spoke to crews returning from an incident where they had gained entry. They felt it had been worthwhile and could give examples where their attendance had saved lives or greatly improved the wellbeing of the public.

Because of joining forces with police support service systems, the service should also benefit from the multi-force shared service centre. This began as a collaboration of several police forces sharing support systems. It provides access to payroll, accounting, purchasing and human resources IT systems. Having common systems should save money through economies of scale in buying and operating IT systems, also avoiding duplication of effort and reducing the range of skills required to operate the systems.

People



How well does the service look after its people?



Requires improvement

Summary

A fire and rescue service that looks after its people should be able to provide an effective service to its community. It should offer a range of services to make its communities safer. This will include developing and maintaining a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse. The service's leaders should be positive role models, and this should be reflected in the behaviour of the workforce. Overall, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at looking after its people.

The service requires improvement in two of the areas to do with looking after its people. In the other two areas, it is good.

The service's promotion of the right values and culture requires improvement. Station-based staff do not have regular access to senior managers. This means that these managers are not able to role model the behaviours which the service expects in the organisation to their staff.

Staff have little faith that leaders will act on feedback from the staff survey. However, the service has recognised this, and now has a more inclusive approach to dealing with the survey findings.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity need improvement. The service also needs to improve communication between staff and senior managers.

The service knows that it needs to improve recruitment of under-represented groups. It is reviewing its recruitment processes and is using several tactics to increase diversity.

The service is good in two areas: getting the right people with the right skills, and managing performance and developing leaders.

The service has a good understanding of workforce planning, and a strong culture of learning and improvement. Training records and the system used to monitor competence are comprehensive.

The service's approach to performance management is well developed. The annual appraisal system is recognised by staff as a means to access progression and development. It is the primary means for identifying future leaders.

Promoting the right values and culture



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself that staff understand and have confidence in the purpose and integrity of wellbeing policies, especially sickness.
- The service should take early action, such as monitoring overtime, to improve the wellbeing of staff.
- The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible to act as role models by demonstrating their commitment to service values through their behaviours.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Workforce wellbeing

The service has a wellbeing programme, and occupational health practitioners are routinely used to manage staff back to work after periods of ill health. However, staff are not clear about the role of occupational health and line managers. They view the sickness policy as focused on getting staff back to work, rather than supporting staff through sickness.

The service undertakes operational fitness testing in accordance with national guidelines. Provision is in place to support staff following traumatic incidents. The service monitors incidents that may cause distress to crews. Staff who have had training in debriefing will offer support. Staff are also shown how to access professional support services.

The service has several teams in place who are responsible for health and wellbeing. These teams provide advice on workplace health and the provision of health, medical and fitness screening. Advice is also available on providing reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities and facilitating employees' rehabilitation and return to work.

Health and safety

The service has a comprehensive health and safety policy, and there is a positive safety culture within the service. Several groups within the organisation provide oversight on health and safety.

We found evidence that monitoring arrangements for allocating overtime are not understood by all staff. Each fire station manages the use of overtime to cover shortfalls 'in house'. Firefighters can be called to work overtime, particularly where specialist skills are required to ensure availability of special appliances. Once triggers had been exceeded, some alerts appear to have been given as a consequence but there is no overall, consistent management.

Culture and values

We found significant evidence that station-based staff are disconnected from the senior team. Staff have not had regular access to senior managers. Staff spoke of a ceiling above which managers were required to sever ties with frontline firefighters. This means that managers are not effectively communicating the behaviours which the service expects in the organisation to their staff. Some staff reported a feeling of 'us and them' between station-based staff and those above them. This has led to a breakdown in trust in the leadership team, reflected in the most recent staff survey.

The service has recognised that staff have little faith that leaders will act on feedback from the staff survey. The service has learned lessons from the way in which it dealt with the findings from the 2015 staff survey. Consequently, it has adopted a wide-ranging and inclusive approach to deal with the findings and outcomes from the 2017 survey. These include:

- using the external company which developed the survey to help with providing the feedback to the workforce;
- during the last five months the service has undertaken 13 road shows across the organisation;
- seeking feedback from staff through the roadshows, inviting them to be part of the solution;
- personal briefings by the senior team and the external company to representative bodies;
- conducting briefings to all station managers and above; and
- focusing more on the important messages, such as going from 'good' to 'great'.

This has resulted in a staff engagement action plan, 'Your opinion our future', dated April 2018 but only recently launched. As part of the action plan, the service has commissioned a complete review of its reward and recognition process, having asked staff what 'good reward' looks like. The service is also reviewing its values, which have been in place for eight years, to see if they are fit for purpose, together with a plan to improve the visibility of the senior team across the service.

The service has recognised that it needs to improve the trust staff have in leaders by meeting staff more regularly to listen to their concerns. It is taking proactive steps to achieve this.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Good

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Workforce planning

The service appears to have a good understanding of workforce planning. It has relevant management processes in place, and recruits according to operational need. Staff competence is managed by the watch manager to ensure skills gaps are identified and appropriate training is provided.

Quarterly meetings are held at which the service examines its retirement and recruitment plans and assesses the rate at which people are leaving and retiring. It uses a broad range of data. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, 161 members of staff left the service. More than half of these were support staff who took other opportunities for employment prior to the move to the police. The service encourages exit interviews with all staff.

All staff have had mandatory online training for equality and diversity, and an input regarding dementia that has assisted with their Safe and Well visits. Staff are up to date with safeguarding training for adults and children.

On-call staff spoke positively about the electronic availability system. They like the system which can be accessed from home or via an app. It has the capability to show all [retained](#) firefighters' availability, and allows them to update their status regularly. This enables the service to always know the availability of fire engines and other resources.

Learning and improvement

The service has a strong culture of learning and improvement. An example of this is fire protection. Fire protection officers have their work audited and quality-assured every year. This results in a personal report for the individual, while a collective annual report identifies themes that emerge. As an example of learning from the last report, auditors were able to obtain and review the fire risk-assessment prior to their visit.

The organisation has a process for complaints to be investigated by a relevant person. Following the investigation, the findings are reviewed to see if any wider organisational learning can be put in place.

Training records and the system used to monitor competence are comprehensive. Proficiency in the use of firefighting and safety equipment is logged from practical training, and e-learning activities are carried out on areas of technical understanding. The system identifies areas that are incomplete. The manager can then review for any gaps on an ongoing basis. There is a requirement to complete 100 percent of training. Extra training frequency is built into the system as a safety net, to ensure compliance.

It is not clear how operational managers are currently using the electronic competence recording system to effectively record or manage poor performance.

Staff undertake a considerable amount of operational training and take part in many exercises each year. Watch managers are subjected to incident audits whereby their command skills are tested with no prior notice at an incident. We spoke to staff who consider this to be good practice, as it enables them to receive immediate feedback.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure leaders can demonstrate that they act on and have made changes as a direct result of feedback from staff.
- The service should improve communications between staff and senior managers, so queries and suggestions are responded to in a timely and appropriate way.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Seeking and acting on staff feedback

Weaknesses in the flow of communication through the organisation sometimes cause blockages between local stations and the senior leaders making decisions. For example, on-call staff have asked through their line management arrangements if they could be used to take over from crews at protracted incidents. But nothing happened. After raising this with the chief fire officer at an on-call station visit, their idea was implemented within a week.

The service has well-used feedback mechanisms through representative bodies and during change programmes. For example, when new stations have been developed, working groups are set up. These groups allow staff to provide feedback and allow issues to be raised. However, informal feedback mechanisms outside consultative practices are not effective and the service does not always listen to staff.

The service communicates survey outcomes and ongoing associated work to the workforce. It does this through the staff newsletter (called Green Bulletin), as well as the staff engagement action plan, which it updates regularly.

The organisation is making changes as a result of feedback. It has acknowledged the negativity surrounding informal records of discussion. Recently the service made changes to enable managers to apply a common-sense approach to performance matters. These changes should be more widely understood.

Some operational staff are reluctant to share concerns, due to the perceived reaction of management. Some staff feel that managers see feedback as negative, or staff being unwilling to change. However, we found grievances were handled in accordance with policy, and staff were aware how the process worked.

Diversity

The service aspires to be an employer of choice, and has processes in place to address inequality in the workplace. The service has received national recognition for the work associated with attracting and retaining staff from LGBT communities, is an accredited disability confident employer and has also authored the national NFCC Ageing Workforce Toolkit.

As at 31 March 2018, 6 percent of firefighters in Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service were female. In the same period, 1.7 percent of firefighters were from black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, compared to a BAME population of 3.1 percent in the service area as a whole.

The organisation is reviewing its recruitment processes to make language and process more fit for purpose. The service recognises that it needs to improve recruitment of underrepresented groups. It has an attraction strategy in place and a positive action steering group. It holds several events each year that target the recruitment of females. The service's ambition is to be a fair and inclusive employer with a 50 percent female workforce in both uniformed and non-uniformed roles. The service has a generous maternity policy. Although we applaud the service having high ambitions for improving the diversity of its workforce, we would wish to be reassured that plans are tempered by a rather greater degree of realism and financial affordability.

It uses a number of tactics, including a buddy system, together with a female physical training instructor who advises on fitness and diet, to encourage more females through the process. The service also has an internal female network for all staff, called 'Limitless'. Current membership includes a small number of male staff who have become advocates. Despite significant work in this area, the organisation is struggling to increase diversity.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Good

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Managing performance

The service's approach to performance management is well developed. It uses an annual appraisal system which staff recognise as a means to access progression and development. Managers are encouraged to set performance objectives for staff. These objectives are monitored at regular meetings.

While the appraisal is an effective process for those seeking development, it is seen as 'box-ticking' for those staff whose needs are met through mandatory operational training. For these staff the element of 'how well am I doing my job?' is in many cases superficial.

There is a well-understood system for setting performance targets for Safe and Well visits and site-specific risk information. Watch managers are clear about how to meet expectations. We found examples of regular one-to-one meetings between watch and station managers to discuss performance. This performance is reported on and discussed at a higher level in the organisation.

For staff seeking promotion or new role-related skills, there are good development opportunities. The organisational development team reviews all applications for development, and arranges opportunities for staff seeking promotion. The service runs workshops to help staff in completing mandatory exams. We saw an example of an individual with English as a second language who was sponsored through a formal English qualification.

The recent collaboration with Cheshire Constabulary has opened up additional opportunities for non-uniformed staff who support operational service to apply for a greater variety of jobs in both fire and police.

Developing leaders

The service uses its appraisal scheme as the primary means for identifying talent and potential senior leaders. There is a talent management framework in place which includes a dedicated 'Step Up' development programme. This is aimed at those progressing to watch manager, but is extended to crew managers and support staff equivalents. Several staff told us the programme has given tangible benefits for their prospects for progression.

Promotion processes are well documented and transparent. We spoke to staff who clearly understood what they needed to do to access leadership positions. Assessment processes are overseen by HR and are subject to Equality Impact Assessments. The process uses set criteria to avoid bias. All staff who attend an assessment centre are given feedback. Those who are successful are given a specific development plan.

Since 2014, the service has operated a scheme to recruit operational firefighters who are existing undergraduates. Such individuals have been recruited as having the potential to move into leadership positions. We are interested to see how this scheme is evaluated moving forward.

The service acknowledges it needs to do more to assist the development of senior leaders. It holds two senior management team development days each year and recognises these needs to be more structured. The service does offer several personal development tests, e.g. psychological assessments and 360-degree feedback, and senior staff have the opportunity to apply for the sector executive leadership programme.

Annex A – About the data

Data in this report is from a range of sources, including:

- Home Office;
- Office for National Statistics (ONS);
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA);
- our inspection fieldwork; and
- data we collected directly from all 45 fire and rescue services in England.

Where we use published Home Office data, we use the period to 31 March. We selected this period to be consistent across data sets. Some data sets are published annually, others quarterly. [The most recent data tables are available online.](#)

We use different data periods to represent trends more accurately.

Where we collected data directly from fire and rescue services (FRSs), we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with services and with other interested parties such as the Home Office. We gave services several opportunities to validate the data they gave us, to ensure the accuracy of the evidence presented. For instance:

- We checked and queried data that services submitted if notably different from other services or internally inconsistent.
- We asked all services to check the final data used in the report and correct any errors identified. Data that services submitted to the Home Office in relation to prevention, protection and workforce figures was published in November 2018. This data was updated after reports had been checked by services, so we haven't validated it further.

We set out the source of Service in numbers data below.

Methodology

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use [ONS mid-2017 population estimates](#). This is the most recent data available at the time of inspection.

BMG survey of public perception of the fire and rescue service

We commissioned BMG to survey attitudes towards fire and rescue services in June and July 2018. This consisted of 17,976 interviews across 44 local fire and rescue service areas. This survey didn't include the Isles of Scilly, due to its small population. Most interviews were conducted online, with online research panels.

However, a minority of the interviews (757) were conducted via face-to-face interviews with trained interviewers in respondents' homes. A small number of respondents were also interviewed online via postal invitations to the survey. These face-to-face interviews were specifically targeted at groups traditionally under-represented on online panels, and so ensure that survey respondents are as representative as possible of the total adult population of England. The sampling method used isn't a statistical random sample. The sample size was small, varying between 400 and 446 individuals in each service area. So any results provided are only an indication of satisfaction rather than an absolute.

[Survey findings are available on BMG's website.](#)

Service in numbers

A dash in this graphic indicates that a service couldn't give data to us or the Home Office.

Perceived effectiveness of service

We took this data from the following question of the public perceptions survey:

How confident are you, if at all, that the fire and rescue service in your local area provides an effective service overall?

The figure provided is a sum of respondents who stated they were either 'very confident' or 'fairly confident'. Respondents could have also stated 'not very confident', 'not at all confident' or 'don't know'. The percentage of 'don't know' responses varied between services (ranging from 5 percent to 14 percent).

Due to its small residential population, we didn't include the Isles of Scilly in the survey.

Incidents attended per 1,000 population

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, '[Incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England, by incident type and fire and rescue authority](#)' for the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- There are six worksheets in this file. The 'FIRE0102' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and fire and rescue authority (FRA) for each financial year. The 'FIRE0102 Quarterly' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and FRA for each quarter. The worksheets 'Data fires', 'Data fire false alarms' and 'Data non-fire incidents' provide the raw data for the two main data tables. The 'Figure 3.3' worksheet provides the data for the corresponding chart in the statistical commentary.
- Fire data, covering all incidents that FRSs attend, is collected by the Incident Recording System (IRS). For several reasons some records take longer than others for FRSs to upload to the IRS. So totals are constantly being amended (by relatively small numbers).
- We took data for Service in numbers from the August 2018 incident publication. So figures may not directly match more recent publications due to data updates.

Home fire risk checks per 1,000 population

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, '[Home fire risk checks carried out by fire and rescue authorities and partners, by fire and rescue authority](#)' for the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Each FRS's figure is based on the number of checks it carried out and doesn't include checks carried out by partners.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.
- The England total hours figures for 'Number of Fire Risk Checks carried out by FRS' include imputed figures to ensure a robust national figure. These imputed figures are: '2016/17 – Staffordshire'.
- Figures for 'Fire Risk Checks carried out by Elderly (65+)', 'Fire Risk Checks carried out by Disabled' and 'Number of Fire Risk Checks carried out by Partners' don't include imputed figures because a lot of FRAs can't supply these figures.

Home fire risk checks may also be referred to as Home Fire Safety Checks by FRSs.

Fire safety audits per 100 known premises

Fire protection refers to FRSs' statutory role in ensuring public safety in the wider built environment. It involves auditing and, where necessary, enforcing regulatory compliance, primarily but not exclusively in respect of the provisions of the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005 \(FSO\)](#). The number of safety audits in Service in numbers refers to the number of audits FRSs carried out in known premises.

According to the Home Office definition, “premises known to FRAs are the FRA’s knowledge, as far as possible, of all relevant premises; for the enforcing authority to establish a risk profile for premises in its area. These refer to all premises except single private dwellings”.

We took this from the Home Office fire statistics, [‘Fire safety audits carried out by fire and rescue services, by fire and rescue authority’](#) for the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- Berkshire FRS didn’t provide figures for premises known between 2014/15 and 2017/18.
- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.
- Several FRAs report ‘Premises known to FRAs’ as estimates based on historical data.

Firefighter cost per person per year

We took the data to calculate firefighter cost per person per year from the annual financial data returns that individual FRSs complete and submit to CIPFA, and [ONS mid-2017 population estimates](#).

You should consider this data alongside the proportion of firefighters who are wholetime and on-call / retained.

Number of firefighters per 1,000 population, five-year change in workforce and percentage of wholetime firefighters

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, [‘Total staff numbers \(full-time equivalent\) by role and by fire and rescue authority’](#) as at 31 March 2018.

Table 1102a: Total staff numbers (FTE) by role and fire authority – Wholetime Firefighters and table 1102b: Total staff numbers (FTE) by role and fire authority – Retained Duty System are used to produce the total number of firefighters.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- We calculate these figures using full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers. FTE is a metric that describes a workload unit. One FTE is equivalent to one full-time worker. But one FTE may also be made up of two or more part-time workers whose calculated hours equal that of a full-time worker. This differs from headcount, which is the actual number of the working population regardless if employees work full or part-time.
- Some totals may not aggregate due to rounding.

Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

Percentage of female firefighters and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) firefighters

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, '[Staff headcount by gender, fire and rescue authority and role](#)' and '[Staff headcount by ethnicity, fire and rescue authority and role](#)' as at 31 March 2018.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- We calculate BAME residential population data from ONS 2011 census data.
- We calculate female residential population data from ONS mid-2017 population estimates.
- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

Annex B – Fire and rescue authority governance

These are the different models of fire and rescue authority (FRA) governance in England. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is a combined FRA.

Metropolitan FRA

The FRA covers a metropolitan (large urban) area. Each is governed by locally elected councillors appointed from the constituent councils in that area.

Combined FRA

The FRA covers more than one local authority area. Each is governed by locally elected councillors appointed from the constituent councils in that area.

County FRA

Some county councils are defined as FRAs, with responsibility for fire and rescue service provision in their area.

Unitary authorities

These combine the usually separate council powers and functions for non-metropolitan counties and non-metropolitan districts. In such counties, a separate fire authority runs the fire services. This is made up of councillors from the county council and unitary councils.

London

Day-to-day control of London's fire and rescue service is the responsibility of the London fire commissioner, accountable to the Mayor. A Greater London Authority committee and the Deputy Mayor for Fire scrutinise the commissioner's work. The Mayor may arrange for the Deputy Mayor to exercise his fire and rescue functions.

Mayoral Combined Authority

Only in Greater Manchester. The Combined Authority is responsible for fire and rescue functions but with those functions exercised by the elected Mayor. A fire and rescue committee supports the Mayor in exercising non-strategic fire and rescue functions. This committee is made up of members from the constituent councils.

Police, fire and crime commissioner FRA

The police, fire and rescue commissioner is solely responsible for the service provision of fire & rescue and police functions.

Isles of Scilly

The Council of the Isles of Scilly is the FRA for the Isles of Scilly.

DECEMBER 2018 | ©HMICFRS 2018 | ISBN: 978-1-78655-746-9

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs