

# Fire and Rescue Service inspections 2018/19

Summary of findings from Tranche 1



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# Foreword

This report sets out the findings from our first tranche of inspections of fire and rescue services in England.

It is important to emphasise that this report is only based on our findings from 14 fire and rescue services – less than a third of the sector in total. So it doesn't give a complete national picture of how fire and rescue services are doing; it is only a reflection of what we have inspected so far. We will need to see more before we can reach conclusions that apply nationally.

## **Most fire and rescue services are good at responding to emergencies**

This is the first time in 12 years that the fire and rescue sector has been independently inspected. The tragedy at Grenfell Tower brought into sharp relief for the public how important the fire and rescue services are in keeping them safe.

We pay tribute to the bravery and dedication of firefighters, and the broader fire and rescue workforce, day in, day out. The public hold them in high regard; this message came through loud and clear in our public perception survey.

We designed our inspection methodology to focus on the things that matter most to the public. We assessed how well fire and rescue services prevent fires and other emergencies, protect the public through the regulation of fire safety and respond when the public need help.

Overall, we found most of the fire and rescue services we inspected are good at providing these services. In particular, the ability of fire and rescue services to respond to emergencies is the thing the public care about most; the sector deserves great credit for doing this well.

## **Protection, efficiency and diversity are areas of concern**

Fire and rescue services provide education, business support and if necessary, use enforcement powers to make premises as safe as possible. This helps to protect people, property and the environment by preventing fires from occurring in the first place or limiting the effects of fires when they do occur. Protection work was an area of concern in our inspections.

We found that, too often, it is under-resourced and not always as effective as it could be. In many of the fire and rescue services we inspected, budget reductions have disproportionately fallen in protection teams. Services told us they are struggling to recruit, train and retain staff with the specialist skills they need to carry out the more complex technical protection work. This means that important protection work to improve standards of fire safety in premises such as hospitals and care homes isn't always being done as often as it should.

We went into our inspections hoping to find modern organisations that have transformed themselves because of austerity. What we found instead, in half of the services we inspected, was outdated technology, under-investment and lack of proper resourcing to risk. Fire and rescue services will continue to face difficult financial circumstances in the future and need to be prepared for this.

We have concerns about how some fire and rescue services support their staff. Our inspectors found some disappointing practices in this respect. We also found a striking lack of diversity in fire and rescue workforces. Too often services do not have the networks or structures to give people who are different a voice in the organisation. This needs to get better.

Having worked with leaders of the fire and rescue service over the last 18 months, I have every confidence they will respond to our findings. I know they will work together, through the National Fire Chiefs Council, to bring about the improvements needed to make sure the public are well served by fire and rescue services, and the people who work there are well looked after.



**Zoë Billingham**

HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services

# Summary and main findings

We answer three principal questions through this inspection of fire and rescue services:

- How effective is the service at keeping people safe from fire and other risks?
- How efficient is the service at keeping people safe from fire and other risks?
- How well does the service look after its people?

These questions are the three pillars of our inspection. We gave each service a graded judgment for each pillar and a graded judgment for the diagnostic questions that sit beneath each pillar question.

## Effectiveness

### Overall most fire and rescue services are operationally effective

Our inspection found that most fire and rescue services we inspected are effective at keeping people safe from fire and other emergencies. This pillar consists of five questions which cover:

- understanding risk;
- preventing fires;
- protection through regulation;
- responding to fires and other emergencies; and
- preparing to respond to national incidents.

Overall we judged ten services to be good and four as requiring improvement. In arriving at the overall effectiveness judgment, we examined a range of operational practices, including: fire prevention; protection through regulation; emergency response; and responding to national risks.<sup>1</sup>

We commend all those employed by fire and rescue services for working to keep the public safe and performing acts of considerable bravery when the public need them most. Fire and rescue services need to train, equip and support all those work for them to do this important work. This is reflected in how we graded fire and rescue services in relation to their ability to respond effectively to fire and other emergencies. We graded 11 services as good at responding to fire and other emergencies. Two services require improvement and one service was graded as inadequate.

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<sup>1</sup> See '[How we inspect](#)' section for more information.

## **But we have significant concerns about protection**

We are concerned to find that eight out of 14 services require improvement and one is inadequate in the way they protect the public through the regulation of fire safety. All fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, which includes fire prevention. This means they should conduct audits, to ensure that the people responsible for fire safety in buildings comply with fire safety legislation. And they should, where necessary, use available legal powers to enforce fire safety legislation.

The consequences of long-term under-investment in this critical area are too often evident. Protection teams often are not given a sufficiently large share of the service's resource to do their work. We saw this reflected in the 42 percent reduction in the number of fire safety audits over the last seven years. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, services across England conducted 49,423 fire safety audits. This has decreased by 42 percent when compared with the 12 months to 31 March 2011, where 84,575 fire safety audits were carried out.

There has been a shift towards engaging with businesses rather than using legal powers, because of the *Regulators' Code*<sup>2</sup> published in April 2014. While engaging with business is an important part of the protection work fire and rescue services do, it should not come at the expense of using enforcement powers when they are necessary to keep the public safe.

## **Understanding risk to keep the public and firefighters safe**

Fire and rescue services have to maintain more response capacity within the organisation than is used by the public every day. This is so they can respond to major incidents as and when they occur and meet their local attendance standards. The *Fire and Rescue National Framework for England*<sup>3</sup> requires services to understand the risks the public face and allocate their resources according to those risks. In other words, fire and rescue services need to ensure that sufficient firefighters and equipment are available to respond to fires and other emergencies at the times, and in the places, where they are most likely to occur.

### **Most services have a good understanding of local risk**

Most of the fire and rescue services we inspected are good at understanding risk in their local areas. For example, they know where vulnerable people live and have identified where high-risk premises are located, such as waste plants and chemical factories. Each fire and rescue authority must publish an integrated risk management plan (IRMP) covering at least a three-year time span. The IRMP is the statement to the public about how the service and authority will manage risks the public face in its area. And it should say how the service proposes to allocate its resources according to the risks it identifies.

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<sup>2</sup> *Regulators' Code*, Better Regulation Delivery Office, April 2014. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code)

<sup>3</sup> *Fire and Rescue National Framework for England*, Home Office, May 2018. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2)

While the fire and rescue authority is responsible for publishing the IRMP, the fire and rescue service, under the leadership of the chief fire officer or chief executive, is responsible for operational activity. Chief fire officers are not afforded the same operational independence provided to chief constables. An equivalent provision for fire and rescue, as with the police, may help clarify who is responsible for what. And it could help chief fire officers and authority members work together to modernise the fire and rescue service.

### **Services could improve how they engage with communities**

While all the fire and rescue services we inspected have published an IRMP, the quality, quantity and timeliness of the information contained within them varies significantly. Services could improve the way they model and predict risk, and how they explain these risks to the public.

We would particularly like to see fire and rescue services improving the way they use this information to determine allocation of resources across the organisation according to risk. For example, each service should make sure there are enough people working in their protection team so they can visit all high-risk premises within a reasonable period of time. Services could also do more to engage consistently with communities. This would help build the public's understanding of risk and manage their expectations of the fire and rescue service. We welcome the work of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) through the community risk programme to support this improvement.

### **Some fire and rescue services could handle site risk information better**

It is essential that fire and rescue services collect risk information from high-risk sites. This intelligence helps them fight fires and carry out rescues safely.

We found that site risk information is generally collected effectively and made available to operational crews responding to emergencies on mobile data terminals (MDTs). However, we did find some services that need to make risk information available to crews more quickly. In some services MDTs didn't always work. And in other cases, the right information wasn't being made available quickly enough to crews.

## **Preventing fires and other emergencies**

We graded nine services as good at preventing risks of fires and other emergencies. Five services require improvement.

### **Fire and rescue services are generally targeting prevention work at those who need it most**

Home fire safety checks are just one of the methods fire and rescue services use to help reduce the risk of fire and other emergencies in the community. These checks involve fire and rescue service staff visiting someone at home to give them fire safety advice and either fit or check their smoke alarms.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, services carried out 576,040 home fire safety checks. The number of checks carried out has reduced slightly (590,198 were completed over the same timeframe in 2017). But we found evidence that in the majority of services, prevention work is targeted at the people who need it most.

People most at risk of dying in fires are smokers, older people, people with disabilities and those with alcohol dependency. Fire and rescue services use data, including health data, to identify people who most need prevention activity and to make sure those people get support. This could include someone living alone who is dependent on alcohol and is unable to fit their own smoke alarms.

We also found good evidence of fire and rescue services working with other public-sector organisations, such as housing services, to exchange relevant information about people who need support and make sure they receive a visit from the person best placed to help them.

Fire and rescue services are running prevention campaigns – including those promoted by the NFCC and the Home Office – relating to issues such as water safety and road safety. Every service we inspected hosts open days or community days which the public like and find useful. Our public perception survey shows that 16 percent of respondents had had contact with their local service in the past 12 months. Most commonly (5 percent of respondents), people saw them at a community event or open day.

Some services are evaluating the benefit of prevention work themselves or with help from academic institutions, but many are not. All fire and rescue services should evaluate their prevention activities to establish the effect they are having. This will also help make sure resources are targeted where they are needed most.

### **Specialists are more confident in carrying out prevention work**

Unsurprisingly, dedicated prevention teams are more confident and competent than operational crews when carrying out prevention work. Prevention work includes traditional home fire safety checks as well as welfare or ‘safe and well’ checks.

Operational crews are confident and competent in carrying out traditional home fire safety checks. But prevention specialists described feeling more confident in their ability to:

- talk to people from a diverse range of backgrounds;
- discuss sensitive matters, such as alcohol use and stopping smoking; and
- identify someone whose behaviours, circumstances, or health condition might make them vulnerable to fire and other risks.

Fire and rescue services should make sure all staff carrying out prevention activities can provide a full range of prevention support and advice to the whole community they serve.

### **Protection through the regulation of fire safety**

Five services are good at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety. Eight services require improvement and one service is inadequate in this area.

In discharging their statutory responsibilities, fire and rescue services provide education and business support and, if necessary, use enforcement powers to make premises as safe as possible. This helps to protect people, property and the environment by either preventing fires from occurring in the first place or limiting the effects of fires when they do occur.



Fire and rescue services must carry out a range of protection activities to meet their statutory duties. These include:

- responding to local authority planning application consultations;
- conducting audits, to ensure that the people responsible for fire safety in buildings comply with fire safety legislation; and
- using enforcement powers where necessary to ensure compliance with fire safety legislation.

Fire and rescue services have a range of legal powers available to use if a building owner fails to comply with fire safety regulations.

The tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 brought a renewed focus on fire safety. The independent review of building regulations and fire safety, led by Dame Judith Hackitt, assessed the effectiveness of current building and fire safety regulations and related compliance and enforcement issues.<sup>4</sup> The concerns we have identified in protection have been reflected nationally in this review, of which fire and rescue services are just one part.

### **Protection teams are understaffed and under-resourced**

We are concerned that eight services require improvement in the way they protect the public through the regulation of fire safety, and one service is inadequate in this area. Many of the protection teams we spoke to describe themselves as understaffed and under-resourced. Some fire and rescue services we inspected told us they are struggling to recruit, train and retain staff with the specialist skills they need to carry out the more complex technical work. Protection teams are not often given a sufficiently large share of the service's resource to do their work.

Fire and rescue services are free to define what constitutes high-risk premises – there is no national definition of this. This means that in different areas of the country, the public may receive different levels of fire safety protection because of the way the service defines risk. All too often, we saw evidence of services planning their risk-based inspection activity based on staff availability to carry out the work rather than the actual level of risk posed to the public. We also saw that the work services have committed to doing isn't always being done in practice. Too often, protection teams aren't equipped to carry out the level of work needed.

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<sup>4</sup> *Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety – terms of reference*, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2017. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-terms-of-reference](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-terms-of-reference)

## **Most services have moved to compliance through engagement, rather than enforcement**

Fire and rescue services audit those responsible for premises to ensure they comply with fire safety legislation.<sup>5</sup> Many fire and rescue services see formal enforcement as a last resort, and the exercise of enforcement powers varies from service to service. If all other work to ensure fire safety compliance fails, fire and rescue services have the powers to prosecute building owners. Some services haven't used their prosecution powers for over two years.

Most services said they had moved from enforcement to focusing on engaging with businesses to increase fire safety compliance. This shift in focus came about because of better regulation advice from the government.<sup>6</sup> We are pleased to see many services working with businesses and providing seminars to promote fire safety. But if fire and rescue services choose to focus only on engagement, they will struggle to keep up the skills and competence they need to use the full range of enforcement powers.

## **Responding to fires and other emergencies**

We judged 11 fire and rescue services to be good at responding to the risk of fires and other emergencies. They arrive quickly when the public need them, with skilled and trained firefighters who do their best to help people.

However, we are very concerned that two services require improvement in this area and one service is inadequate. The services that need to improve in this area can still respond to calls from the public, but the speed and quality of their response could improve. We have returned to the services we had concerns about and are pleased to see they are already putting improvements in place.

A prompt response to an emergency gives those affected a better chance of surviving an incident. If crews arrive quickly, they can limit the spread of fire and reduce damage. This means that a service needs to have a good understanding of risk and current risk information to make its response as effective as it can be. For example, it needs to know where hazards such as gas cylinders are located and how to access fire hydrants.

### **Response times are varied**

Each fire and rescue service sets its own response time standards. Services also have different ways of measuring those standards. The set emergency response times vary from service to service according to geography, demography and risk. It is understandable why there will be differences in, for example, the set response times in urban versus rural locations. However, it is also the case that very similar towns, cities and villages across England may have different set response times, depending on the decisions taken by individual fire and rescue authorities.

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<sup>5</sup> All fire safety legislation in England and Wales is gathered under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. See: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1541/contents/made)

<sup>6</sup> *Regulators' Code*, Better Regulation Delivery Office, April 2014. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code)

## **Firefighters have the right equipment and training**

In every service we inspected, firefighters told us they had the right vehicles and equipment to do their job. Firefighters are confident in their ability to respond effectively, thanks in part to regular learning and training which is well managed in most of the fire and rescue services we inspected. This is reassuring and a sign that leaders prioritise the safety of their workforce.

Most services we inspected have either already adopted or are in the process of adopting national operational guidance. The national operational guidance exists to improve standards of operational activity and ensure operational crews – including control room staff and firefighters, regardless of their location – act in a safe and consistent way.

## **Most fire and rescue services have well-trained incident commanders**

Every incident is overseen by an incident commander. The commander is responsible for keeping the public and the operational crews safe during the response.

We talked to incident commanders about their knowledge of how to command an incident. As part of this, we also examined important aspects of the national operational guidance such as ‘operational discretion’. We found that most fire and rescue services have well-trained and knowledgeable incident commanders who are ready to lead operational teams. The more senior the incident commander, the better their knowledge about what to do when commanding an incident.

Given that the first commander at a scene is unlikely to be a senior incident commander, services should make sure all incident commanders have a sound working knowledge of what is expected of them.

## **Fire and rescue services need to match availability to risk**

Services need to determine the appropriate level of response they make available according to the risk to the community. Demand for services varies throughout the day and depends on the demography of the area. Fire and rescue services in England are most likely to attend a fire between 7pm and 8pm (8.8 percent of the fires services attend). The time when people are most likely to die in a fire is between midnight and 1am (in the year ending 31 March 2018).

Fire and rescue services don’t collect consistent data about fire engine availability. This makes it difficult to compare service to service. Some services vary the level of availability they aim to provide according to the time of day or day of the week, while others aim to offer a single level of availability regardless of the day or time.

Fire and rescue services need to make sure that the level of availability promised to the public is designed to meet the known risks in the area. Many of the fire and rescue services we inspected told us they struggle to maintain availability of engines crewed by on-call firefighters. We will return to this issue in the next tranche of inspection reports.

We found many fire and rescue services have reduced the numbers of firefighters riding on fire engines. This reduction is intended to reduce costs while maintaining an appropriate ability to respond. Some services have experienced success in varying their response availability at different times of the day to different types of risk, with firefighters crewing a range of fire engines to match fluctuating resources to risk changes. We talk more about workforce reform in the efficiency section.

### **The effectiveness of learning varies considerably**

All fire and rescue services we inspected conduct operational debriefs of large and small-scale incidents to review performance and promote learning. But the effectiveness of this debrief process varies considerably between services.

Good fire and rescue services have systems and processes in place to make sure that useful learning is provided across the organisation. For example, some services pass on learning to the whole service through alerts and flashes. We saw the benefits of this in the way operational learning helps influence training provision.

Fire and rescue services that require improvement in this area do conduct debriefing exercises after incidents, but the learning from these debriefs tends to stay only with those who had been involved in the incident. This limits the ability of those who work for the fire and rescue service to learn, improve and stay safe in the face of changing threats.

In contrast, we found that most fire and rescue services can show how they learn from national incidents and events. Services have a clear desire to exchange information and learn from each other to improve the way they respond to national incidents and can do so through the NFCC national operational learning system.

### **Responding to national risks**

All fire and rescue services we inspected are good at responding to national risks. We examined how well prepared services are to respond to national risks and their ability to work with other fire and rescue services, and other emergency services during a national incident.

#### **Most fire and rescue services are ready for large-scale incidents**

The fire and rescue services we inspected are well practised and prepared for large-scale and national incidents, such as flooding or terrorist attacks. The only exception is Isles of Scilly FRS, which does not have a national response requirement. The services we inspected understand how to access both support from neighbouring services and national equipment, such as high volume pumps, in times of need.

When we spoke to people who work with fire and rescue services, such as within the police and ambulance services, they were very positive about the role fire and rescue services play in testing and exercising contingency plans for large-scale incidents.

We also found that most services have good access to risk information held by neighbouring services. This would help them to work safely in the event of a national risk.

## Efficiency

### **Fire and rescue services could be more efficient**

We graded over half (eight) of the fire and rescue services we inspected as good for efficiency. This pillar consists of two questions:

- how well the service uses resources to manage risks; and
- how well the service is using resources to ensure the service it provides is affordable now and in the future.

Five of 14 services require improvement in the way they use resources to manage risk; we found one service to be inadequate. Ten out of 14 services are good at securing an affordable service now and in the future.

Almost everyone we spoke to described the difficulties of working through austerity. We saw how austerity has reduced some of the protection activity and, to a lesser degree, the prevention activity carried out. We also saw poor investment in technology. Most of the emergency response teams told us they feel well equipped and can meet the demands of the public. We did, however, hear complaints that resources are being allocated in a way that is not proportionate to risk, with response teams being well resourced but protection teams struggling to do what's required in some services.

We saw evidence of proportions of annual budgets left unspent and vacancies unfilled. We also saw outdated and possibly costly resourcing decisions, such as having a cook on every station or using fax machines to communicate daily information about the availability of firefighters.

We will report on this in more detail when we have inspected a larger proportion of the fire and rescue services in England. Our current sample may not represent what is being done elsewhere.

### **Fire and rescue services need better financial data**

All fire and rescue services would benefit from better access to accurate and robust financial data that is consistent across services. Fire and rescue services governed by county councils can't always understand their true costs because support functions (and therefore costs) are part of the operations of the wider county council.

We are working with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the sector to address these problems for 2019. We hope to see better financial data by September 2019.

## Allocation of resources to risk

Fire and rescue services need to determine how to use resources available to them and how to make sure the allocation of resources helps to reduce risks to the public. This means making sure that appropriate resources are available across the range of responsibilities including response, prevention and protection.

### **Services aren't always resourcing based on risk**

All too often, we found services deploying staff to activities in the same way they always have. But this may not be appropriate where fire and rescue services are facing new and emerging risks and now have fewer staff than before.

Good fire and rescue services explain in their IRMPs what they see as an organisational priority (based on an effective assessment of risk to local communities). They are then able to allocate the right number of staff to prevention, protection and emergency response duties. Good services can show how they use risk information to shift resources to areas of highest risk and can explain their rationale for doing so. We also saw evidence that services are exploring new ways to increase the productivity of their workforces. For example, some are managing risk and improving efficiency through new crewing arrangements or shift patterns.

But we also found fire and rescue services that weren't clear how many people they need. And we saw services basing workforce planning on factors other than risk. For example, we saw plans that aim to maintain the same number of firefighters each year.

Good fire and rescue services make sound use of all their people and allocate work so that staff can work across response, prevention and protection. For example, some services have their fire crews carry out home fire safety checks while also being able to respond to emergencies. This is an effective use of time when crews aren't responding to emergencies but need to be available to do so.

### **Most services need to evaluate better the benefits of collaboration**

All of the fire and rescue services we inspected are participating in some form of collaboration, whether with other fire and rescue services or with other public-sector organisations. Collaborations range from sharing buildings to fully collaborative functions such as shared control rooms.

Fire and rescue services are using collaboration as an opportunity to reduce costs and improve services to the public. The North West Fire Control centre – an arrangement that serves four services and is overseen by the relevant local authorities – has led to improved mobilisation of fire engines. This helps make sure the public gets the engine that will arrive quickest, regardless of county boundaries.

Most fire and rescue services could, however, improve the way they evaluate the benefits of their collaborative efforts. All too often, services didn't know what benefits (including financial savings) they were getting out of collaboration.



## Securing an affordable future

### Using financial reserves

We reviewed evidence that fire and rescue services have planned how to use their reserves and that the reserves will be used to help the sustainability of the service in the future.

We found some fire and rescue services with very high levels of reserves. Financial reserves held by the 28 standalone fire and rescue authorities increased by 80 percent to £545.1 million between 31 March 2011 and 31 March 2018. This is equivalent to 42 percent of their main spending power in March 2018.<sup>7</sup> Fire and rescue services should be using reserves to invest in the things that will help them to be efficient in the future. Examples include innovative technology and buildings located in the right places for the service to respond to risks.

While most fire and rescue services use their reserves appropriately, a small number of those we inspected are using reserves to pay for new staffing models without a longer-term sustainable funding plan. We also saw reserves being used to pay for stations that have been earmarked for closure (because the community would be better served by stations elsewhere). Services need to be sure that reserves are being used appropriately and are helping to modernise the way people work to protect the public.

### Scenario planning for the future needs to improve

Along with all other public-sector organisations, fire and rescue services have had their budgets reduced over the last eight years. Future financial settlements are likely to remain difficult. As such, service leaders should be planning for a range of financial scenarios now. This will make sure they can continue to provide a good service to the public even if their budgets do not increase, or reduce further.

We were surprised to find several services with very limited financial planning in place beyond 2020. If service leaders are to understand the potentially tough decisions they may need to make to reduce costs further, the planning work needs to start now.

### Workforce modernisation and reform isn't always evident

Given the reductions in budgets over the last eight years, we expected to see modernisation of working practices and workforce reform to address those problems. Also, times have changed, and fire and rescue services have a vital role to play with other emergency services in responding to threats such as terrorist attacks.

In many fire and rescue services, that modernisation and reform isn't evident. Services are continuing to do what they have always done, with less resource. Service leaders told us about barriers to reform and modernised working practices. They said these barriers include complex negotiating machinery and the strength of the Fire Brigade Union's ability to protect its members' jobs.

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<sup>7</sup> *Fire and Rescue Authority financial reserves: March 2018*, Home Office, November 2018. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-authority-financial-reserves-march-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-authority-financial-reserves-march-2018)

### **Too often, staff are using outdated systems**

Although most fire and rescue services have invested in technology to improve the way their staff operate, we are very concerned that too often staff are using antiquated, unreliable or, at worst, paper-based systems to transfer vital information. Staff described to us their frustrations at having to use poor technology or paper-based systems. They told us it made them less productive.

We are even more concerned that on occasions firefighters are attending incidents without access to all the information that might help keep them, and the public, safe. Fire and rescue services need to make use of available technology and invest now to make sure their workforces are safe, and the public are well protected.

### **Some services are actively exploiting external funding**

Fire and rescue services can generate income. We note the work many services have done to generate extra income that can be invested in improving how they keep the public safe. Six of the services we inspected are actively exploiting external funding and income generation opportunities. Examples include:

- providing vehicle maintenance to a neighbouring service;
- providing training to the public, county councils and private businesses; and
- charging for CCTV monitoring.

In a small number of fire and rescue services, we are concerned that, on occasions, these activities are prioritised over primary duties. For example, staff are sometimes dedicating time to generating income instead of carrying out statutory duties such as fire protection work.



## People

The third pillar against which we inspected is how well the service looks after its people. This includes how well they train, manage, treat and support the people who work for them.

Overall, we graded only three out of 14 fire and rescue services as good at looking after the people who work for them. We graded ten services as requiring improvement and one service as inadequate. This is by far the most worrying set of grades within this inspection. Fire and rescue service leaders should take swift and sustained action to remedy these problems and create a truly inclusive working environment.

We are reassured to see that most of the services we inspected are taking appropriate steps to make sure their staff are competent in risk-critical safety training. This means that staff are adequately and appropriately trained to carry out roles where people's lives may be at immediate risk. However, we are concerned that some services can't be sure that this is the case due to poor information-management systems.

## Values and culture

### **Too few of the services we inspected have achieved a positive culture**

We graded three services as good at promoting values and culture and one service as outstanding. Nine services require improvement and one service is graded as inadequate. These results show that while it is possible to create a positive culture in fire and rescue services, too few services have achieved this.

Good or outstanding fire and rescue services we inspected have a clear statement of the values and culture of the organisation to guide the behaviour and decisions of all those who work for them. In the services we judged to be good in this area, we found that staff not only understand what is expected of them but say that leaders are visible role models of those behaviours.

In other fire and rescue services, we saw that leaders knew the values and behaviours they wanted but haven't yet communicated them effectively, so staff don't understand them well enough. We witnessed staff behaving poorly towards each other. For example, we heard staff using insensitive and inappropriate language. And some staff told us about autocratic and domineering behaviour by middle and senior managers.

### **Staff don't always understand what wellbeing services are available**

We reviewed evidence that fire and rescue services have effective arrangements to support the wellbeing of their own staff, with help in place for those who need it, when they need it. Firefighters and other people who work for fire and rescue services are asked to do difficult and dangerous work, supporting members of the public through sometimes their darkest hours.

Those who work for fire and rescue services also need to have a way of expressing concern about the way they are treated at work by leaders, managers and colleagues. We examined both issues through our inspection.

We found that most fire and rescue services have put in place good support structures including trauma counselling and occupational health provision. But all too often, staff do not fully understand what is available to them, or lack confidence to use these services.

### **There is a lack of trust in the grievance process**

We assessed the way grievances are handled. We found that, while all fire and rescue services we inspected have a grievance policy in place, proper records of how grievances are resolved aren't always available. In some services, staff told us this meant they lacked confidence in raising concerns about treatment.

The results of our survey of staff from Tranche 1 showed just over a quarter of the 1,002 people who responded felt they had been bullied or harassed in the last 12 months. If people who have been victims in this way don't trust the procedures in place to report this kind of behaviour, it will be difficult to improve the situation.

### **Training and skills**

Workforce plans should include the skills and capabilities needed now and in the future to manage risks to the public. Fire and rescue services need to track and monitor the skills and capabilities in their workforces. They need a culture of learning and improving that encourages staff development. And they need a performance management system that supports the individual and monitors their competence and performance.

Most fire and rescue services we inspected perform well in this area, with only four services requiring improvement.

### **Staff are appropriately trained in risk-critical safety skills**

Most of the fire and rescue services we inspected can show how they make sure staff are appropriately trained in risk-critical safety skills. This is positive and should give the public confidence that the fire and rescue service staff they encounter can keep them safe.

All services we inspected provide training and learning opportunities for their staff, including practical training, such as using breathing apparatus in a controlled fire environment. Services also use e-learning or online training to help their workforces learn.

### **Fire and rescue services need to improve their workforce planning**

Services need to improve their workforce planning. Fewer than half of the services we inspected have effective workforce planning processes.

While most fire and rescue services have recruited wholetime firefighters in recent years, a small number of services have carried out little or no recruitment. The ageing workforce and retirement profile of many services mean leaders need to anticipate their future recruitment needs and plan for these accordingly.

## Fairness and diversity

### Too few services are good at promoting fairness and diversity

We graded nine services as requiring improvement in this area and one service as inadequate. Four services were graded as good at promoting fairness and diversity in the workplace.

Fire and rescue services should be inclusive and meet the needs of their workforces. Nationally, no fire and rescue service is close to being representative of its community in terms of disability, gender, and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) diversity.

This was reflected in what we heard about the behaviours of people towards colleagues who are in some way different from most of the workforce. All too often, fire and rescue services are an echo chamber for those of the same gender, age and ethnicity. This means staff who are different often don't have a voice or are reluctant to use their voice to influence positive change. Fewer than half the services we inspected have set up staff support networks.

### Fire and rescue services are taking steps to recruit a more diverse workforce

Most fire and rescue services are now recruiting whole-time firefighters again and have taken steps to increase the diversity of the workforce, in particular operational crews. We welcome this. We also welcome the work the NFCC is doing to improve the diversity of on-call recruits and the work the Home Office is doing to increase diversity of the whole-time workforce through its national awareness campaign, 'Join the team: become a firefighter'. These campaigns target those from under-represented groups who may not have previously been interested in the role.

It is one thing recruiting a more diverse workforce; it is quite another to make sure individuals thrive within a service. Unless services tackle fundamental cultural problems, they will struggle to be diverse employers.

## Leadership and capability

### Most services need to be better at performance management

Fire and rescue services should operate effective performance management processes to support and develop individuals. They also need to identify and support those with the talent and capacity to become future leaders. Most fire and rescue services need to improve in this area. Only three services are graded as good.

All fire and rescue services we inspected have a performance management process, but participation in this process varies within and across the services. Staff told us they think the process is a means for those who wish to get promoted but they consider it of limited value otherwise.

We welcome the NFCC's upcoming leadership framework. It recognises the need to tailor development to the individual, rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach.

## **Promotions and selections are often deemed unfair by staff**

Staff in more than half the fire and rescue services inspected told us they see the promotion and selection processes as unfair or not clear and open enough. Staff often feel the process and selection criteria are poorly communicated. Fire and rescue services need to do better at explaining their promotion processes to staff.

## **Identifying and developing talent**

### **Too few services have a process for identifying future leaders**

Only two services we inspected have a process for identifying and developing staff with high potential to become senior leaders.

In some fire and rescue services, we found staff who are reluctant to engage with the idea of investing in a small number of individuals who show the potential to become service leaders in the future. Some staff fear being stigmatised for joining the scheme, and some are reluctant to 'put their head above the parapet'.

We are pleased that service leaders, through the NFCC, are addressing this problem. Service leaders have access to national talent schemes such as the executive leadership programme, which is open to all services.

We are encouraged that a small number of services have looked outside the fire and rescue sector to bring in talented people at senior management level. Such leaders will bring diversity of thought and experience. This is an important opportunity for services that must provide a modern public service in financially constrained times.

## **Future inspections**

We have inspected 14 services in the first tranche of fire and rescue service inspections. We will publish a similar national summary when we publish the next tranche of inspection findings. We will publish our first 'State of Fire' report in December 2019 along with the final 15 fire and rescue service reports. We expect to make recommendations about the changes needed across the service in these future reports.

### **Data needs to improve**

We are concerned about the absence of consistent, comparable and good quality data available within each fire and rescue service and across services in England. The lack of data makes it hard for services to be sure they are providing the right support to the public.

This problem, combined with the absence of existing national standards, has resulted in local variations in almost every aspect of what each fire and rescue service does. The public can't always be sure they will receive the same quality of support from fire and rescue services or understand the justification for variations between areas. This situation needs to improve.

# How we inspect

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This is the first time HMICFRS has inspected fire and rescue services across England. The previous Fire Service Inspectorate existed until 2005. Fire and rescue services were then inspected by the Audit Commission. Services were last inspected in 2008/09. The Local Government Association has offered services the opportunity to receive a peer review since 2011.

Our focus is on the service they provide to the public, and the way they use the resources available. We have inspected 14 services in the first tranche of inspections. Each inspection assesses how effective and efficient the service is, how it protects the public against fires and other emergencies and how it responds to the same. We also assess how well each service looks after the people who work there.

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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 findings from inspecting 14 fire and rescue services.

We have gathered evidence from our inspection activity. We also interviewed people who work for other public-sector organisations that work with fire and rescue services. And we conducted a survey of public perceptions<sup>8</sup> that includes evidence from just under 18,000 respondents nationally.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The survey can be found here: [www.bmgresearch.co.uk/hmicfrs-public-perceptions-of-fire-and-rescue-services-in-england-2018-report/](http://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/hmicfrs-public-perceptions-of-fire-and-rescue-services-in-england-2018-report/)

<sup>9</sup> Due to the small size of the population of the Isles of Scilly (fewer than 2,000 people), a specific analysis of the Isles of Scilly FRS was not possible.

## 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 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.

# National context

## The role and priorities of fire and rescue authorities

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides the legal framework in which fire and rescue services in England operate. The 2004 Act outlines the role of fire and rescue authorities and requires them to provide the following primary functions:

- fire safety: promoting fire safety in its area including publishing information and giving advice;
- firefighting: extinguishing fires in their area, as well as protecting life and property in the event of a fire;
- road traffic accidents: rescuing and protecting people from serious harm in the event of a road traffic accident; and
- responding to any other emergencies, including requests from the Secretary of State.

The Act also requires the government to produce a national framework – the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England – which outlines the government’s strategic priorities for fire and rescue authorities. Fire and rescue authorities must have regard to the framework in carrying out their functions. The framework was last revised in May 2018 and lists the following priorities:

- make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents;
- identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face;
- collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide;
- be accountable to communities for the service they provide; and
- develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

## Governance

The Home Office is the responsible government department for the work of fire and rescue authorities in England. Fire is a devolved matter and so the Scottish and Welsh governments are responsible for fire within their jurisdictions. Fire policy moved through a machinery of government change to the Home Office from the then Department of Communities and Local Government in January 2016. This led to the introduction of the fire reform programme by the then Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Theresa May MP.



To provide its primary functions, each fire and rescue authority employs firefighters and support staff. In doing so forming a fire and rescue service. Fire and rescue authorities are responsible for: setting the service's strategic and policy direction; setting the service's budget; and ensuring that the service's outcomes are being achieved in a way that is effective, efficient and in line with legal requirements.

Each fire and rescue authority will appoint an individual – commonly known as a chief fire officer – to manage the fire and rescue service. This role includes managing the personnel, services and equipment secured by the fire and rescue authority to provide its primary functions. Fire and rescue authorities are required to hold this person to account for the exercise of their functions and the functions of persons under their direction and control.

Fire and rescue authorities operate with a range of different, locally determined governance arrangements. A fire and rescue authority might be a single person (for example, the London Fire Commissioner; a police, fire and crime commissioner such as in Essex and Staffordshire; or a mayor such as in Greater Manchester). Or a fire and rescue authority might be part of a local county or unitary council. Just over half of fire and rescue authorities are combined: namely an authority which covers more than one local authority area.<sup>10</sup> Combined authorities are made up of locally elected councillors appointed from the constituent councils in that area.

## Funding

Overall, fire and rescue authorities received approximately £2.3 billion for the provision of their functions for 2018/19. It is for each fire and rescue authority to determine how to allocate its resources across all its prevention, protection and operational functions to meet its risks identified through its integrated risk management plan (IRMP).

Funding for fire and rescue authorities in 2018/19 comes from three sources:

- revenue support grant (£0.21 billion);
- locally retained business rates (£0.67 billion); and
- estimated council tax precept (£1.35 billion).<sup>11</sup>

The Home Office also provides additional grants for functions such as maintaining national resilience assets (£27m). The amount each fire and rescue authority receives from each of the three funding streams varies.

Financial reserves held by the 28 standalone fire and rescue authorities increased by 80 percent to £545.1 million between 31 March 2011 and 31 March 2018. This is equivalent to 42 percent of their main spending power in March 2018.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Combined fire and rescue authorities are also known as standalone fire and rescue authorities. This reflects that they are not part of a partner organisation such as a county council.

<sup>11</sup> This is a Home Office estimate of the amount of council tax available to FRAs in England. This is calculated by using MHCLG notional figures for FRA-only council tax funding for 2015–16 and uprating them by the precept referendum limits and tax base growth. The budgets of the 17 county council, unitary or mayoral authorities are determined by their parent authority. So the level of funding and share of council tax cannot be guaranteed.

<sup>12</sup> *Fire and Rescue Authority financial reserves: March 2018*, Home Office, November 2018. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-authority-financial-reserves-march-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-authority-financial-reserves-march-2018)

## Workforce

The number of firefighters and total staff has declined steadily since 2010, to 32,340 full-time equivalent (FTE) firefighters and 40,451 total FTE members of staff as at 31 March 2018. The number of FTE firefighters is 24 percent lower than at its peak as at 31 March 2004.

## The changing role of fire and rescue

In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, fire and rescue services attended 564,827 incidents, of which:

- 30 percent were fires;
- 40 percent were unwanted fire signals (fire false alarms); and
- 30 percent were non-fire incidents including road traffic collisions, flooding and animal rescue.

The number of incidents fire and rescue services attend has reduced and changed in profile over the years. For example, there were 29 percent fewer incidents attended in the 12 months to 31 March 2018 compared with 10 years ago, including a 43 percent drop in fire incidents.

Generally, fewer people are being harmed by fire. Fire-related deaths reached the lowest levels recorded in the years ending 31 March 2015 and 2017 at 263. But in the year ending 31 March 2018, the number rose to 334, which includes 71 from the Grenfell Tower fire.<sup>13</sup> In the last ten years there has also been a fall in the number of injuries that need hospital treatment following a fire. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018 there were around 3,306 injuries requiring hospital treatment – a 42 percent decrease compared with ten years ago.

The decrease in the number of fires could be attributed to many factors. In part it is a testament to the fire prevention and protection work of fire and rescue services.

The decrease in the number of incidents attended has seen fire and rescue services use their discretionary capacity to provide a diverse range of public safety activity in response to local need. It is the responsibility of each fire and rescue authority to determine how the service's resources should be used. The only guidance from government is that such activity should not be at the expense of providing the services' primary functions.

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<sup>13</sup> More up to date data has since been published covering the 12 months to 30 June 2018 and shows there were 247 fire-related fatalities. This compared with 344 in the year ending 30 June 2017 (a decrease of 28 percent). The year ending 30 June 2017 figure includes 71 fire-related fatalities from the Grenfell Tower fire.

## Fire reform

In 2016, the Home Office outlined a wide-ranging programme of reform which it is providing with the fire and rescue sector. The Home Office's aim is to support the continuous improvement of fire and rescue services, enabling them to be more accountable, effective and professional. The programme of reform included:

- creating an independent inspectorate (HMICFRS) to inspect on the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services;
- transforming local governance of fire and rescue by enabling mayors and police and crime commissioners – three to date (Essex, North Yorkshire and Staffordshire) – to take on responsibility for their fire and rescue service where a local case is made;
- developing a comprehensive set of professional standards to guide and encourage sector improvement;
- supporting services to transform commercially with more efficient procurement and collaboration;
- increasing the transparency of services with the publication of greater performance data and the creation of a new national fire website; and
- supporting the reform of the fire and rescue workforce by enhancing professionalism; management and leadership; training and development; equality and diversity; culture; and options for flexible working.

Separately, in April 2017 chief fire officers created the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

The NFCC brings together the operational leadership of the UK's fire and rescue services to provide co-ordinated professional, operational and technical leadership of the sector, advising and supporting central and local government, and other stakeholders. The NFCC is working with the government to provide the government's fire reform programme in relation to workforce reform and commercial transformation.

## Grenfell Tower fire

The response to the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 demonstrated the skill and determination of firefighters despite the devastating and tragic loss of 71 lives. Following the fire, the government established the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, chaired by Sir Martin Moore-Bick. It is examining the circumstances leading up to, and surrounding, the fire. The inquiry will establish the facts and will make recommendations as to the action needed to prevent a similar tragedy happening again.

In addition, the government also commissioned Dame Judith Hackitt to consider the current system of building regulations and fire safety. Dame Judith reported in May 2018.<sup>14</sup> She made recommendations which should transform the protection work done by fire and rescue services. We will ensure our inspection programme considers the lessons learned from the Grenfell tragedy and the long-term outputs from Dame Judith's report and the ongoing Grenfell Tower public inquiry.

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<sup>14</sup> *Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Final report*, Dame Judith Hackitt DBE FREng, May 2018. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-final-report](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-final-report)

# Effectiveness



# How effective are the services at keeping people safe and secure?

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The table below sets out our overall effectiveness pillar judgments for each fire and rescue service.

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**Table 1: Effectiveness pillar judgment for each fire and rescue service**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number of services</b>
Outstanding	0
Good	10
Requires improvement	4
Inadequate	0

## **Understanding risk**

Fire and rescue services need to understand the risks of fires and other emergencies to the public they serve. They need to involve the community in understanding this risk. Services should explain how they will mitigate the risks to the public. Fire and rescue services need to work with other public-sector organisations to share and use risk information. They then need to make this risk information available to operational crews and the wider workforce. This ensures staff are safer. And it helps services target activities at the areas of greatest risk.

Of the 14 fire and rescue services we inspected, we graded 12 as good at understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies. We graded two as requiring improvement in this area.

## **Having an effective risk management plan**

All fire and rescue authorities must produce and publish an integrated risk management plan (IRMP). The IRMP should explain the current and future risks to local communities. It should set out how the service plans to manage those risks. The IRMP may tell the public the number of fire engines the service will make available at any time. It may state the time the service will take to respond to calls for service from the public.

An effective fire and rescue service talks to the community to build an up-to-date understanding of the community's risks. Such a service will work with other emergency services and health and social care providers to feed into the IRMP. This should help it to identify risk clearly, prioritise activities and target resources at the greatest risks.

### **Reducing risk outside statutory duties**

Some IRMPs extend beyond fire and rescue because their chief fire officers have extended responsibilities. An example of this is Cornwall FRS. The chief fire officer is also the director of Resilient Cornwall for Cornwall Council. This means Cornwall FRS is responsible for areas of risk outside its statutory duties. Its extra responsibilities include working to reduce crime and disorder, domestic abuse and sexual violence. It also works to prevent modern slavery and extremist activity.

### **Getting the public involved in planning**

Good fire and rescue services use a range of activities to engage with the public. They might use interactive websites and social media or attend face-to-face meetings such as community roadshows and focus groups.

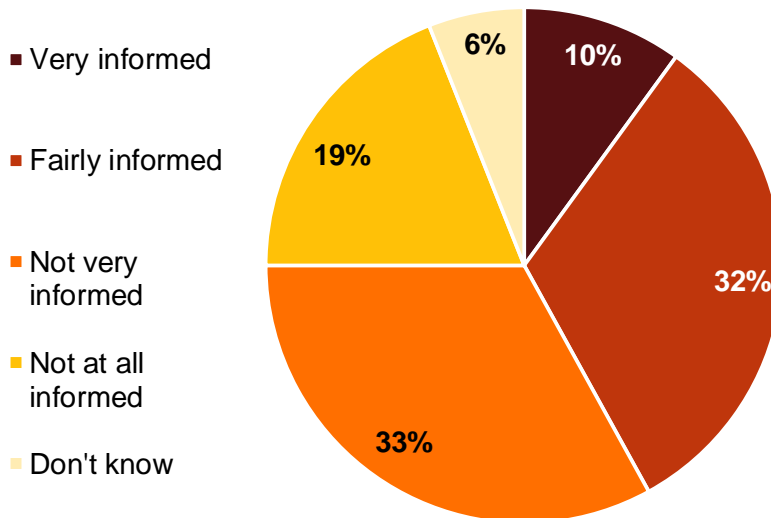
Several services have used information from the community to produce fire station plans. These identify risks and help to focus prevention activity at a neighbourhood level. For example, Cambridgeshire FRS uses focus groups to get to know the people it serves and the risks they face. The service maintains regular contact with community organisations, such as women's groups and faith groups and with community cohesion groups. It makes effective use of social media and its easy-to-use interactive website. The service has appointed a community engagement officer and a positive action officer. This has improved how the service works with people and communities it has found harder to reach in the past.

Another example of a service working well with the public is Cheshire FRS. This service finds out what the community needs by holding face-to-face meetings with community groups. In 2018/19, it held ten roadshows in major centres of population. The service asks black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), disability and community groups to contribute to consultations. It also works with fire and rescue authority members to extend its reach into local communities.

Most services we inspected recognise that they can do more to engage with their communities. Several have appointed dedicated officers to do this important work. Services that do engage with the public should use the information they gather to inform the way they work. It should also inform the services they provide.

Respondents to the public perception survey were split about whether or not they feel informed about what their local service is doing. Of the 17,976 respondents, 42 percent feel informed whereas 52 percent do not.

**Figure 1: Public perceptions survey: Overall, how well informed do you feel about what the fire and rescue service in your local area is doing?**

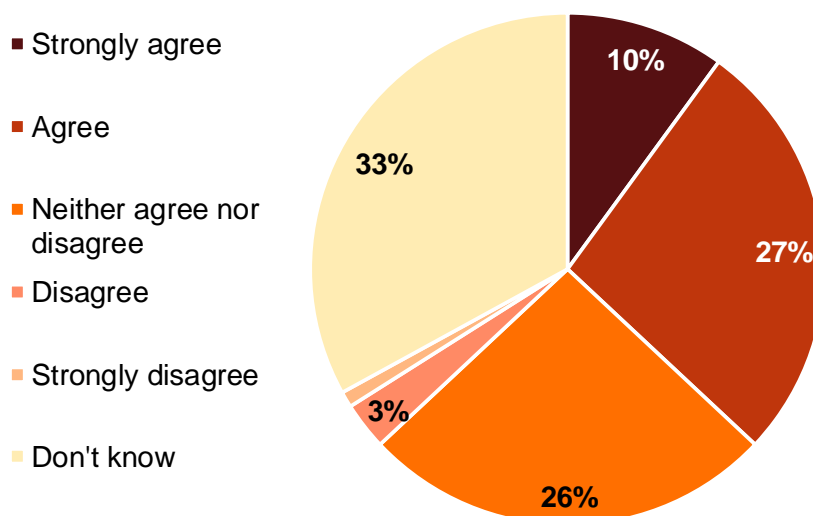


**Source: Public perceptions data**

**For further information about this data, please see annex A**

Only a small minority of respondents had been asked about their views on fire and rescue services (6 percent) in the 12 months leading up to the survey. Over a third of respondents feel that their service listens to the views of the public when setting priorities, with a further third saying that they don't know and around a quarter having neutral views. Only 3 percent feel that their local service does not listen to the views of the public when setting priorities. The relatively large proportion of neutral and don't know responses reflects the lack of knowledge about fire and rescue services more generally.

**Figure 2: Public perceptions survey: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service in your local area listens to the views of the public when setting priorities?**



**Source: Public perceptions data**

**For further information about this data, please see annex A**



Those who have been asked about views on their service in the previous 12 months are more likely to agree that it listens to the views of the public when setting priorities (82 percent of respondents, compared with 37 percent overall). They are also more likely to say that they feel very informed (45 percent) or fairly informed (43 percent) about their service.

### **Working with other public-sector organisations**

Fire and rescue services need to work with other public-sector organisations and share their information to properly understand risks to the public. Using this information helps to keep the most vulnerable people in the community safe, both now and in the future. Many services work well with partner organisations such as social care, local authorities and other emergency services. They have access to a wide range of information. However, not all services understand the risks and demographics of their local communities in detail. So they cannot plan their activities to help those who need it most.

There is no template or standard format for IRMPs. This means the 45 IRMPs covering English fire and rescue services differ considerably. We saw varied levels of detail and differences in the information the plans provide to the public in the 14 services we inspected. There is also considerable variance in the way services assess risk. And there is variance in how services translate that assessment into a commitment to what they will provide to the public. We welcome the work of the NFCC to develop guidance for services to help improve consistency of IRMPs.

### **Data needs to be fresh**

We found some fire and rescue services would benefit from updating the data they use to assess risk more frequently. In Bedfordshire the service plans to refresh its data in 2019. The current plan uses data that goes back to 2010. Hertfordshire FRS published its last IRMP in 2014. It is based on risk information gathered between 2009 and 2013. So that service is planning activity based on information that is in some instances nearly ten years old.

Some services use modelling tools to get a better understanding of complex data about risk. Risk modelling tools are computer programmes that allow fire and rescue services to make educated and informed choices about what might happen in various scenarios. This helps services to understand and predict their risks. In turn, this helps them allocate resources in a way that is proportionate to risk.

### **Maintaining risk information**

We examined how well fire and rescue services gather information to help protect people and property during fires and other emergencies.

An example of risk information is building plans that show the layout of a building and where hazards like chemicals or cylinders are stored in a factory. This information allows incident commanders to prioritise actions such as directing water jets to protect certain parts of a building or committing firefighters to search specific areas to rescue people more quickly in smoke.

Another example is maps that allow crews to find hydrants more quickly. Out-of-date risk information could slow down rescue operations and put firefighters and the public at unnecessary risk of harm. Good fire and rescue services have a robust process run by trained staff, who collect and refresh risk information. Staff regularly familiarise themselves with risk sites by visiting them and performing training exercises there.

### **Risk information available to all**

Most fire and rescue services collect risk information systematically and accurately and communicate it to their staff well. Most services have invested in mobile computers, called mobile data terminals (MDTs). Services install these in fire engines to give staff access to important risk information when attending fires and other emergencies. Most firefighters could use MDTs to access and interpret risk information.

But, we found that 12 out of the 14 fire and rescue services had out-of-date risk information for high-risk buildings on their MDTs. These services need to review their processes to ensure firefighters can access information. Some services rely on manual or paper-based systems to update risk information. So they do not update MDTs as quickly as they could. This means crews cannot access some risk information for months after the service becomes aware of it.

We found a risk information disparity between services with a large proportion of wholetime staff and those with a large proportion of on-call staff. Some fire and rescue services with a large proportion of on-call staff did not have robust systems in place to provide current risk information to operational crews promptly.

We found that several services did not record risk information for temporary events, such as festivals and concerts, effectively. And some services did not upload this information to MDTs.

### **Preventing fires and other emergencies**

To reduce the number and severity of fires in the home, fire and rescue services must promote fire safety. This includes fire prevention activity. Good services target their fire safety and prevention resources at individuals or households at greatest risk from fire in the home. Good services also target those most likely to engage in arson or deliberate firesetting.

We graded nine services as good at preventing fires and other risks. Five services require improvement in the way they prevent fires and other risks.

## **Prevention strategy**

All the fire and rescue services we inspected describe prevention as a priority in their IRMPs and allocate resources to prevention activity. All services have a prevention strategy that describes how they will do this work and what their priorities are. Much of prevention activity involves visiting people to do home fire safety checks. Firefighters and prevention specialists do these basic assessments of fire risks in the home. During these visits service staff provide fire safety advice, based on any potential fire risks identified during the check. Such risks include overloaded electrical sockets and unsafe cooking practices. Staff advise the householder about escaping should there be a fire. Firefighters may also advise about smoke alarms or fit them.

## **Quality not quantity in home visits**

The number of home fire safety checks recorded nationally has decreased since 2011. The total number of checks completed by fire and rescue services has decreased from 775,019 checks in the 12 months to 31 March 2011 to 576,040 checks in the 12 months to 31 March 2018. The number of home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue services in England had reduced by 2 percent in the 12 months to 31 March 2018, when compared with the same period in the previous year.

Despite a decrease in the total number of home fire safety checks, the proportion of visits to the elderly and people with disabilities has increased. In the 12 months to 31 March 2011, only 36 percent of checks were conducted on the elderly, with 11 percent targeting people with disabilities. However, in the 12 months to 31 March 2018, these proportions have increased to 54 percent and 25 percent respectively. Some of the services we inspected explain that this is a deliberate move. They are focusing on increasing the quality of services provided to the public, rather than the quantity, and targeting activity at those most at risk.

Very few services evaluate prevention activity properly. So they have a limited understanding of the benefits it can provide to the public. It is also difficult for them to see how to get value for money from this activity.

Increasingly fire and rescue services are expanding home fire safety checks to include wellbeing. These expanded assessments are known as 'wellness checks' or 'safe and well checks'. This may be the reason for the decrease in overall numbers of home fire safety checks in recent years. Wellness checks are a more rounded approach to prevention and public safety. Those carrying out wellness checks go beyond identifying fire risks. They look for other potential risks to health and wellbeing. The table below shows which activities the services we inspected undertake.

**Figure 3: Activities included in a prevention visit as at 31 March 2018**

	Avon	Bedfordshire	Cambridgeshire	Cheshire	Cornwall	Hampshire	Hereford and Worcester	Hertfordshire	Isle of Wight	Isles of Scilly	Lancashire	Lincolnshire	Surrey	Warwickshire
Identify potential fire risks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Take action to reduce fire risks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure working smoke alarms are fitted	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advice on social welfare	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health screening/detection	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Ill-health prevention	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
Advice on slips, trips and falls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Source: HMICFRS data collection**

**For further information about this data, please see annex A**

Many fire and rescue services told us they are carrying out these enhanced wellness checks. But in several services we found a disparity between this aim and what is actually provided to the public. In some services, firefighters told us they were still doing just traditional home fire safety checks, not the expanded safe and well checks. They told us they were not confident asking personal questions of those they visited (for example about lifestyle or diet). Prevention specialists (most often non-operational staff) generally told us they felt confident to ask people the broader wellbeing questions. They were better able to identify potential vulnerabilities beyond traditional fire risk vulnerabilities (such as smoking, mobility issues and hoarding).

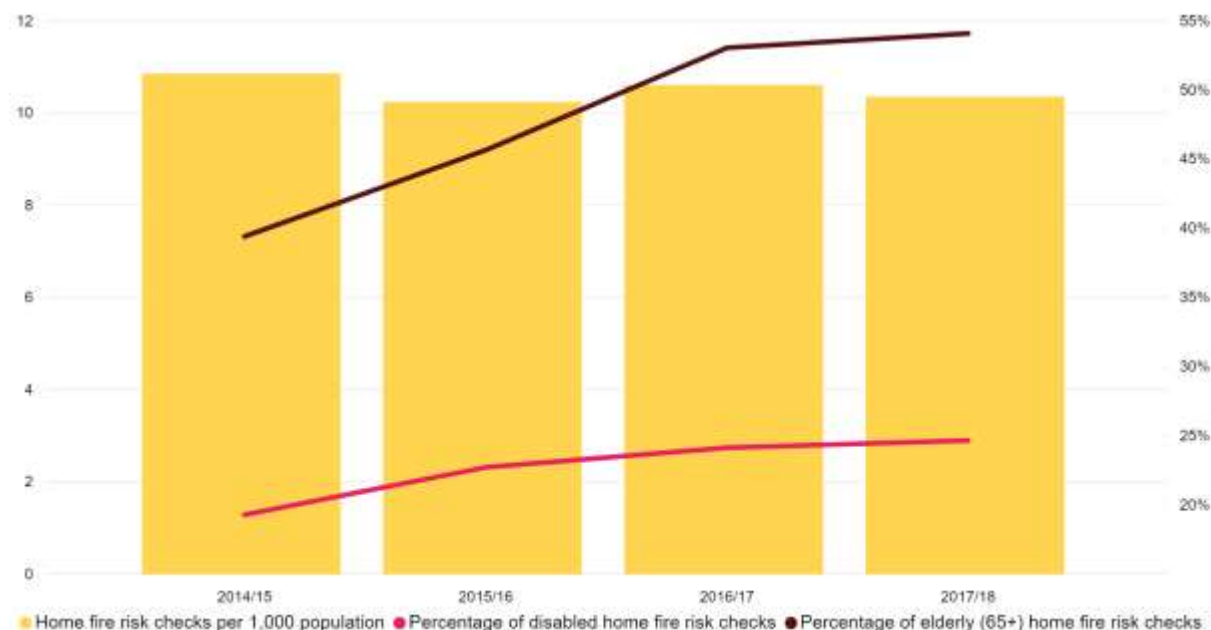
### Target prevention

In financially constrained times, fire and rescue services should target prevention activity at those most at risk of fire and other emergencies. This means using data and information they collect, including from other public-sector organisations, to understand which people are at risk. These at-risk people may particularly benefit from prevention support.

Some services take referrals from public or voluntary-sector organisations to carry out safe and well checks. Other services have partner organisations, such as charities or social services, carry out home fire safety checks on their behalf. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, nine out of the 14 services we inspected used partner organisations to carry out some home fire safety checks. This ranged from 15 checks in Lincolnshire to 2,320 in Hertfordshire. These partner organisations normally make referrals on the basis of a risk assessment. The risk assessment informs a decision that the person or household is vulnerable and needs support. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, 24,284 home fire safety checks were conducted by partners, compared with 50,105 in the 12 months to 31 March 2011.

Most fire and rescue services have a way of assessing the need for a home fire safety check before sending staff to visit. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, the percentage of checks completed with higher-risk groups nationally, such as those over 65, increased to 54 percent and people with disabilities to 25 percent.

**Figure 4: Number of home fire risk checks per 1,000 population in the 12 months to 31 March 2018 and the percentage targeted at the elderly (65+) and those registered as disabled**



**Source: Home Office data**

**For further information about this data, please see annex A**

Some fire and rescue services provide home fire safety checks to any member of the public who asks, regardless of their circumstances. In these financially constrained times services may not have the capacity to manage this approach. Services ought to risk assess and prioritise the people they support. Staff in such services told us they are frustrated that their time is not better spent on helping those most in need. Risk assessments would give them evidence that they are targeting resources to risk. They would also allow them to provide a better intervention to people who most need it.

### **Promoting community safety**

Fire and rescue services work closely with other organisations to gain a shared understanding of risk and to provide effective prevention services to the community. Services also help to keep the public safe through broader prevention activities such as water safety awareness campaigns. These are particularly effective where local initiatives resonate with the public. For example, if they highlight a dangerous local body of water or respond to a recent news story. The NFCC and Home Office run an annual programme of prevention campaigns. It provides material that services can adapt to their local area. We saw better evaluation of national prevention campaigns. This evidence helps services to understand the benefits to the public of their work.



## **Working with health professionals to care for the public**

We found many examples of fire and rescue services working with health professionals. The services do a range of activities aimed at improving the lives of local people. Many fire engines and fire stations have defibrillators and first aid equipment. Firefighters use these to deal with medical incidents when attending fire and other emergencies. Some services have arrangements with local ambulance trusts for fire crews to respond to medical emergencies alongside ambulance crews. Fire and rescue services recover costs for this from ambulance trusts. This was part of a national trial to consider how a firefighter's role might be expanded. The trials were suspended in September 2017, and many services stopped this work. But others continue to provide the service.

Services we inspected also participate in other health work. For example, Isle of Wight FRS has joined up with Hampshire FRS in a programme funded by the health service known as 'better me'. This involves firefighters working with disadvantaged children to improve their fitness, cooking, diet and hydration. In Hampshire the local clinical commissioning groups contracted the service to design a programme called 'safety through education and exercise for resilience' (STEER). It promotes wellbeing in communities on behalf of the NHS, focusing on mobility, social intervention and safety in the home among the elderly. In Cheshire 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. In Warwickshire staff carry out 'heartshield', a programme to teach children cardio-pulmonary resuscitation techniques and other aspects of healthy living. The service provides this jointly with public health professionals from the county council.

Fire and rescue staff may be able to identify individuals' wider vulnerabilities and exposure to risks beyond fire. We recognise services can make an important contribution to supporting the public and alleviating pressures on other local response resources. But this should not get in the way of the primary fire and rescue work they need to do by law.

### **Services should evaluate health activity**

All fire and rescue services should assess what they are aiming to achieve through wider health activities. They should assess what interventions are most helpful and decide how best to measure and evaluate end results.

Cheshire FRS works with the NHS Innovation Agency, screening people to provide early warning of any risk of stroke. The service has some evidence of the benefits of this activity, in that it directed 76 people to their GPs. But it has not yet examined whether the gains are worth the effort and resources it has put in.

We found that other organisations which work with fire and rescue services were positive about how services undertake prevention initiatives. Hereford and Worcester FRS's partners described how the service takes the lead with initiatives, and works to support vulnerable people. A good example of joint working is their 'connecting families' programme. It aims to turn around the lives of disadvantaged families through early intervention. Partner organisations provide data about vulnerable families so they can get the targeted interventions they need.

The service and its partner organisations have not yet formally evaluated the programme, although there are plans to do so.

### **Identifying people with vulnerabilities and making safeguarding referrals**

Fire and rescue services should make appropriate arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. Government and the NFCC make it clear that it is a shared responsibility. This is because it depends on effective joint working between organisations and professionals that have different roles and expertise.

### **Spotting other kinds of vulnerability**

Some of the fire and rescue service staff in any fire and rescue service will have contact with children and vulnerable adults. Or they may have access to information about them. They have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

Most staff we spoke to felt confident identifying factors that would make someone vulnerable to a fire in the home. But far fewer could identify other kinds of vulnerability. Many staff we spoke to didn't feel it was their job to do so.

We found inconsistencies in the extent to which staff can identify people with vulnerabilities and make safeguarding referrals. Some fire and rescue services have trained staff to give them a good understanding of safeguarding responsibilities. These services also have clear safeguarding referral procedures. Most services provide e-learning safeguarding training to operational crews. A small number of services would benefit from providing further training to staff in this area. Where staff have not received training, they told us they lacked confidence in questioning members of the public to identify vulnerabilities.

### **Reducing arson and firesetting behaviours**

There has been a national increase in deliberate fires over the previous few years. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, fire and rescue services across England attended around 80,800 deliberate fires. This is an 18 percent increase when compared with the 12 months to 31 March 2015. Many services work to prevent arson and deter people who show an interest in starting fires (also known as firesetters). Good services are working with police forces to tackle arson.

### **Good approaches to tackling arson**

Cambridgeshire FRS has a good approach to tackling arson and firesetting behaviour. It has worked with a forensic psychologist to develop an arson intervention programme called 'Project ICARUS'. This programme was the first of its kind in the country. Fire service staff provide the programme to prisoners and probationers, under the supervision of the forensic psychologist. A second programme, called 'firesetters', is for children and young people. It targets those who play with fire or have been in the criminal justice system because of fire-related crime.

Lancashire FRS works closely with Lancashire Constabulary. They exchange fire-trends data and incidents of suspected arson. And they provide early statements from fire investigation officers to support police inquiries and prosecutions. The service also provides arson education information to new police recruits and serving detectives on training courses.

## **Road safety**

Fire and rescue authorities have a statutory duty to respond to and rescue people from road traffic collisions. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, fire and rescue services attended around 29,900 road traffic collisions. This accounts for 5 percent of all incidents attended. Fire and rescue services do not have a statutory duty to do road safety prevention activity. However, almost all services do it anyway. They recognise their role in reducing the risk of people being killed or seriously injured on the roads. Most services work well with colleagues through safer roads partnerships to make their activity consistent and effective.

## **Driving campaigns**

We found evidence of a range of activities and campaigns aimed at road users, especially young drivers and motorcyclists. Many fire and rescue services use national campaigns such as ‘safe drive stay alive’ to educate young drivers. Services also use campaigns such as Biker Down and BikeSafe. These educate motorcyclists on safe riding and what to do if they come across accidents.

## **Protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety**

Responsibility for fire safety in buildings sits with a ‘responsible person’. This might be the building owner or managing agent.<sup>15</sup> The National Framework states that all fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, which includes fire prevention. This means they should audit whether the responsible person has properly assessed fire risks in the building they are responsible for. And they should, where necessary, force landlords and business owners to comply with fire safety legislation. It is up to each service to determine its own risk criteria about what is a high-risk premise. It should use this criterion to decide how many audits it does each year.

Each service must have a locally determined, risk-based inspection programme (RBIP). They must also have management strategies for enforcing fire safety regulations. Services work with businesses to help them comply with the law by issuing advice and if necessary, informal action plans. If the business does not follow the advice, the service can use formal enforcement powers to ensure compliance.

Of the 14 fire and rescue services we inspected, we graded only five as good at protecting the public through fire safety regulation. Eight services require improvement and we judged one as inadequate. These are the lowest grades of all the questions

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<sup>15</sup> Section 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 defines a “responsible person” as (a) in relation to a workplace, the employer, if the workplace is to any extent under his control; (b) in relation to any premises not falling within paragraph (a) — (i) the person who has control of the premises (as occupier or otherwise) in connection with the carrying on by him of a trade, business or other undertaking (for profit or not); or (ii) the owner, where the person in control of the premises does not have control in connection with the carrying on by that person of a trade, business or other undertaking.



within the effectiveness pillar. We are concerned that in too many services, protection is not a priority. They do not devote enough resources to the risk reduction activities set out in their IRMPs.

### **Lack of resource and capacity hampers inspections**

In the fire and rescue services we graded as inadequate or requiring improvement we saw some common features that reduce their effectiveness. Many do not have enough qualified inspectors to carry out their inspection programmes. All too often the service does not have a clear understanding of its highest risks. And some of these services don't have capacity to carry out whatever remedial activity is needed. Many of the protection teams we spoke to describe themselves as understaffed and under-resourced.

All too often, fire and rescue services are not matching resources to the risks identified in their RBIP. This because of a combination of poor succession planning, and difficulties in retaining trained inspectors. Trained inspectors are offered higher rates of pay in the private sector. We also saw that some services we inspected prioritise maintaining response teams over protection departments. Fire and rescue services need to be sure that they are using all available resources across the range of risks identified.

### **Risk-based approach**

Fire and rescue services should know the premises in their area. They should decide their own criteria for defining risk at these premises. Services then need to compile a list of premises that are at risk according to their definition. There was a large range in the number of high-risk premises in the services inspected in this tranche. Services should then tell the public how they will manage this risk through an RBIP. Services should describe this programme in the IRMP.

### **Supervised inspections**

Good fire and rescue services have a clear inspection process that all inspection officers follow. Supervisors should check the work of inspection officers. This helps ensure inspections of risky premises are of a consistently high quality. High performing services also regularly review their risk information about the cause of fires. They use this information to improve their inspections of other premises and the advice they give to building owners. For example, Cheshire FRS analysed incident data and found that most non-domestic fires are preventable electrical fires. The service trained its frontline staff to advise businesses on preventing electrical fire.

### **Services respond promptly to planning applications**

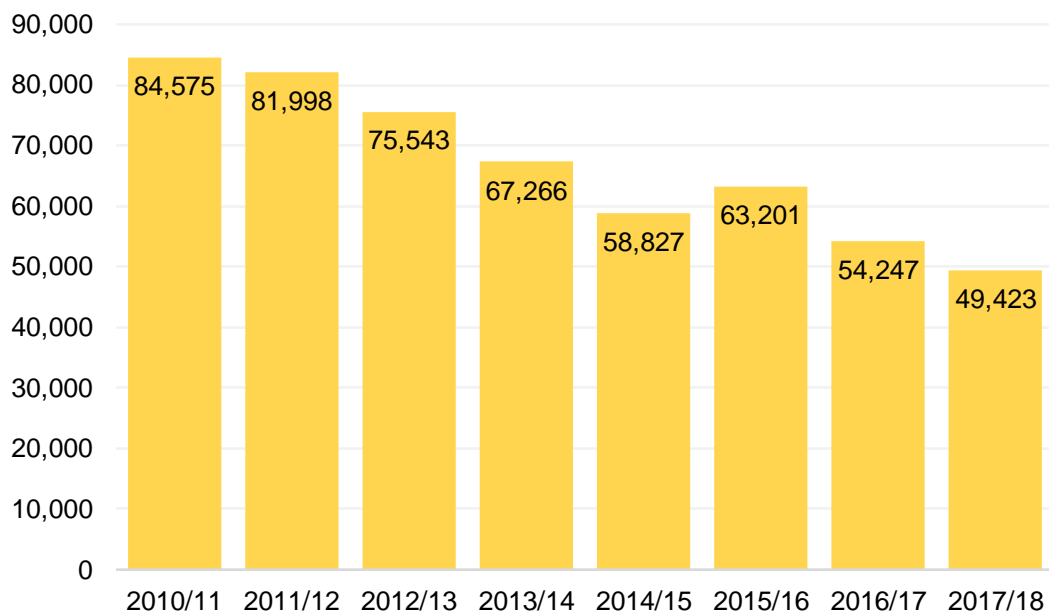
Local authorities must consult fire and rescue services on planning applications for new buildings and renovations to business premises and developments. Services should assess fire risks related to planning applications. They should respond to the local authority in writing and within agreed timescales (usually within 15 working days). All but one service was meeting their legislative requirements to reply to building consultations.

We are concerned that in too many fire and rescue services, protection teams focus on reactive work, such as dealing with complaints, concerns and post-fire audits. As a result, these services are not giving enough resources to their RBIPs. Many protection staff told us they are frustrated because they cannot do this important work. They are worried about the potential consequences to the public.

### Enforcement

Fire and rescue services have a range of informal and formal notices to get building owners to comply with fire safety requirements. To assess risks, services carry out fire safety audits of buildings. They look for problems such as blocked fire exits or faulty fire doors. If they judge it unsatisfactory they notify the building owners and explain the improvement required. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, services across England conducted 49,423 fire safety audits. This has decreased by 42 percent when compared with the 12 months to 31 March 2011, where 84,575 fire safety audits were carried out. The number of these audits has decreased by 9 percent when compared with the 12 months to 31 March 2017 (when 54,247 audits were conducted).

**Figure 5: Number of safety audits conducted on known premises for the 12 months to 31 March 2011 to the 12 months to 31 March 2018**



**Source: Home Office data**

**For further information about this data, please see annex A**

## **Business engagement before enforcement**

In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, of the 49,423 fire safety audits carried out, 68 percent were deemed to be satisfactory. Levels of satisfactory audits have stayed relatively stable since the 12 months to 31 March 2015, following an increase from a low of 56 percent in 2010/11.

Where an audit was deemed to be unsatisfactory, the most common action taken was to issue an informal notification (87 percent of the 16,980 notices and prosecutions given in the 12 months to 31 March 2018). The proportion of informal notifications has remained relatively stable since 2010/11.

Many of the fire and rescue services we inspected told us they have moved from a focus on enforcement to increasing engagement with businesses. This means they encourage and support businesses to help them comply with safety requirements. We found several FRSs working in partnership with trading standards and local housing officers. They conduct multi-agency enforcement action to keep the public safe. An example is focused inspections on houses of multiple occupation. For example, where a number of families live in a single dwelling and share common areas, such as the kitchen or stairwell. This increased focus on engagement should not come at the cost of fire and rescue services carrying out fire safety audits where required.

Where required, fire and rescue services will issue formal notices. They have the power to prosecute building owners if they fail to comply with fire safety regulations. They might issue improvement notices or temporarily close the premises down until the problem is remedied. Prosecution is the last and most extreme of the enforcement powers available to fire and rescue services. Prosecutions can tie up resources and they are expensive and can be time consuming for services. The number of prosecutions nationally is relatively small. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, fire and rescue services across England brought 82 prosecutions. We were encouraged to see that services often held meetings to agree which cases to prosecute before commissioning legal representation.

## **Make more use of prosecution powers**

Some fire and rescue services are not using the full range of powers available to them. Nationally, 24 services have not brought a prosecution in the 12 months to 31 March 2018. Services that are not making full use of their powers should have a sound understanding of why this is the case. Without that understanding, it is possible they are not using all the tactics available to improve standards of fire safety.

Services that have not brought a prosecution for some time may find it difficult to maintain the skills and competence required.

## **Consistent advice for businesses**

Fire and rescue services can participate in primary authority schemes. This is a government initiative to help businesses get consistent advice from regulatory bodies, including fire safety. For example, a national chain of stores can get fire safety advice from a single service to use across all their stores.

The scheme is part of the government's aim to reduce burdens on business by enforcing regulations efficiently.

## **Support and education for businesses**

We saw clear advice to businesses on fire and rescue service websites. We also found good examples of services providing support and education to businesses through seminars and visits. For example, Hereford and Worcester FRS hosts business forums with other enforcing authorities. These forums aim to support businesses and educate them about keeping their premises safe.

## **Unwanted fire signals**

Some large and complex premises, such as hospitals, care homes and factories, have fire alarm systems that automatically call the fire service. This can happen even when there isn't a fire, sometimes because of a faulty system. Responding to these unwanted fire signals (otherwise known as false alarms) is costly and uses fire and rescue service resources.

Effective fire and rescue services have adopted the NFCC's best practice guidance. They work with businesses and building owners to reduce the burden of unwanted fire signals. Good services have clear unwanted fire signals policies that:

- include a statement of responsibility;
- identify a lead person for reducing unwanted fire signals; and
- engage with building managers and users to reduce unwanted fire signals.

Good fire and rescue services also have a call-challenge policy. This means that when the control room gets an automatic fire alarm, operators call the building owners. They ask the owners to confirm that there is a fire and whether they need a fire and rescue response. This can help to reduce the burden on services. We found examples of services using data about unwanted fire signals to target activity to reduce this demand.

We found that Lancashire FRS may be attending more false alarm calls than it needs to. It shares the North West Fire Control centre with other services but does not use the call-challenging protocols they use.

## **Evaluate to better protect**

Fire and rescue services would benefit from evaluating the effectiveness of their protection activities, such as their essential RBIP and primary authority scheme work. This evaluation would assist them in putting essential activity first and using their resources to protect those at greatest risk.

## Responding to fires and other emergencies

Fire and rescue services need to respond to the public when they call for service. Effective services have the right combination of trained staff and equipment available to help the public when they need them. We found 11 out of 14 services inspected to be good at responding to fire and other emergencies.

Incidents attended by fire and rescue services have decreased over the last 14 years. Incidents have decreased from over 1 million in the 12 months to 31 March 2004, to around 564,800 in the same time period in 2018. Fires attended have decreased in the same period from around 473,600 to around 167,100. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, only 30 percent of incidents attended by fire and rescue services were fire incidents.

An important part of how fire and rescue services respond to the public is the way the control room operates. Call handlers answer 999 calls and speak to the public during perhaps the most difficult time of their life. Call handlers need to get information about the location of the incident and, if appropriate, provide survival advice.

### Effective call handling

We visited control rooms as part of our inspections. We found control operators to be handling calls effectively. They were dispatching resources and passing risk-critical information to fire crews.

Control rooms across England work under a range of operating models. Some control rooms are specific to one fire and rescue service, and others are shared by several fire and rescue services. We found that shared control rooms improve mobilisation across borders.

For example, we saw effective practice in North West Fire Control, which handles emergency calls for Lancashire FRS, Cumbria FRS, Greater Manchester FRS and Cheshire FRS. North West Fire Control responds to calls about life-critical emergencies near a service border with the quickest available fire engine. It will send the quickest engine even if it crosses the service border to attend the incident.

In the fire and rescue services we inspected we found that callers generally receive a good service when they first make contact with the service. Control room operators handle calls effectively and give the caller fire survival guidance.

### Control rooms communicating well

Control room operators are essential to providing an effective response to fires and other emergencies. In many fire and rescue services staff can vary the response to incidents. They might increase or decrease the numbers of fire engines as information comes in.

Control operators in some services also perform other roles. They might take careline calls or post incident information to social media. It is important for services to communicate effectively with the public. They need to keep the public updated about hazards and areas to avoid. We found most services make good use of social media, like Facebook and Twitter, to warn and inform the public.

## Ready to respond

Fire and rescue services are funded to meet potential risks to the community, rather than meet demand from emergency calls. This means that emergency response staff may not always be actually responding to emergencies. But they still need to be available in case an emergency arises. To manage this problem, services need to understand their levels of risk. They need to know the minimum safe levels of fire engines and staff required to meet predictable emergency scenarios. Services need to plan how to best use available resources when demand is low. Available resources are those that are not currently responding but need to be available to respond. They can draw on these available resources for other important work such as prevention and protection activity, training and learning.

## Managing assets and resources

Apart from the Isles of Scilly, all fire and rescue services we inspected in this tranche have a mix of wholetime and on-call staffed fire stations. The operational workforce is made up of permanent employees (wholetime) and on-call or retained staff. On-call staff may have other primary employment but commit to respond to emergencies when required.

Fire and rescue services need to consider:

- how many firefighters they need to respond to emergencies to meet their locally-agreed attendance times;
- how many incident commanders and specialist vehicles and officers they need per incident; and
- what level of training these people need.

Fire and rescue services should be able to explain why they need these people and resources.

National operational guidance (NOG) and the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)<sup>16</sup> set out how fire and rescue services should respond effectively and what resources they need to do so. We found variation in the resources deployed to incidents. And we found variation in the extent to which services follow NOG. The number of firefighters riding on each engine varied between services. Some services have a minimum of five firefighters per engine and others a minimum of four. Several services are trialling smaller fire engines that can be crewed with three or fewer firefighters. We also saw variation in the number and level of incident commanders deployed to support incidents.

Many fire and rescue services follow the national model by deploying an incident commander with the first engine. After that they send tactical support officers to monitor supervisory managers. One service deploys more senior incident commanders and firefighters to incidents in addition to those who attend with the first engine. This could lead to unnecessary handovers and confusion about who is commanding the incident.

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<sup>16</sup> *Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework, Edition 2*, JESIP, July 2016. Available at: [https://jesip.org.uk/uploads/media/pdf/Joint%20Doctrine/JESIP\\_Joint\\_Doctrine\\_Document.pdf](https://jesip.org.uk/uploads/media/pdf/Joint%20Doctrine/JESIP_Joint_Doctrine_Document.pdf)



Good fire and rescue services have a clear understanding of risk and move resources dynamically to provide cover where it is needed most. Services are increasingly reviewing their shift systems and varying the numbers of staff on duty at certain times. A good example of this is in Warwickshire FRS. The service reviewed risks and incidents and realised it was not meeting response time targets for motorway incidents near Gaydon. So the service re-allocated its resources to set up a 12-hour peak demand fire station near Gaydon.

Fire and rescue services need to know which fire engines are available and where they are if they are to provide an effective response. We are encouraged to see that some services use a range of fire engines and crewing models to meet their risk. For example, since 2016, Hampshire FRS has changed how it responds to emergencies. It uses the type of incident to determine the number of firefighters to send and the type of vehicle they travel in. Hampshire FRS's fleet has a range of different size fire engines that can be crewed by different numbers of staff.

Fire and rescue services with a significant proportion of on-call staff face different problems in maintaining availability of fire engines. We do not underestimate the demands and complexities of maintaining availability of on-call staff. On-call staff make a significant commitment to the fire and rescue service. They provide a vital contribution to the safety of their community on top of their primary employment.

Fire and rescue services identify the number of fire engines and capabilities they need at any one time to meet their predicted risk and demand identified in their IRMP. The number of fire engines needed varies between services. This reflects the differing risks facing the public and how those risks change during different times of the day and week. For the services we inspected, most had good availability of fire engines crewed by wholtime firefighters. However, over half of the services we inspected are trying to manage lower availability of fire engines crewed by on-call firefighters. This is a concern, especially where services are reliant on these engines to be ready to respond if the public needs them.

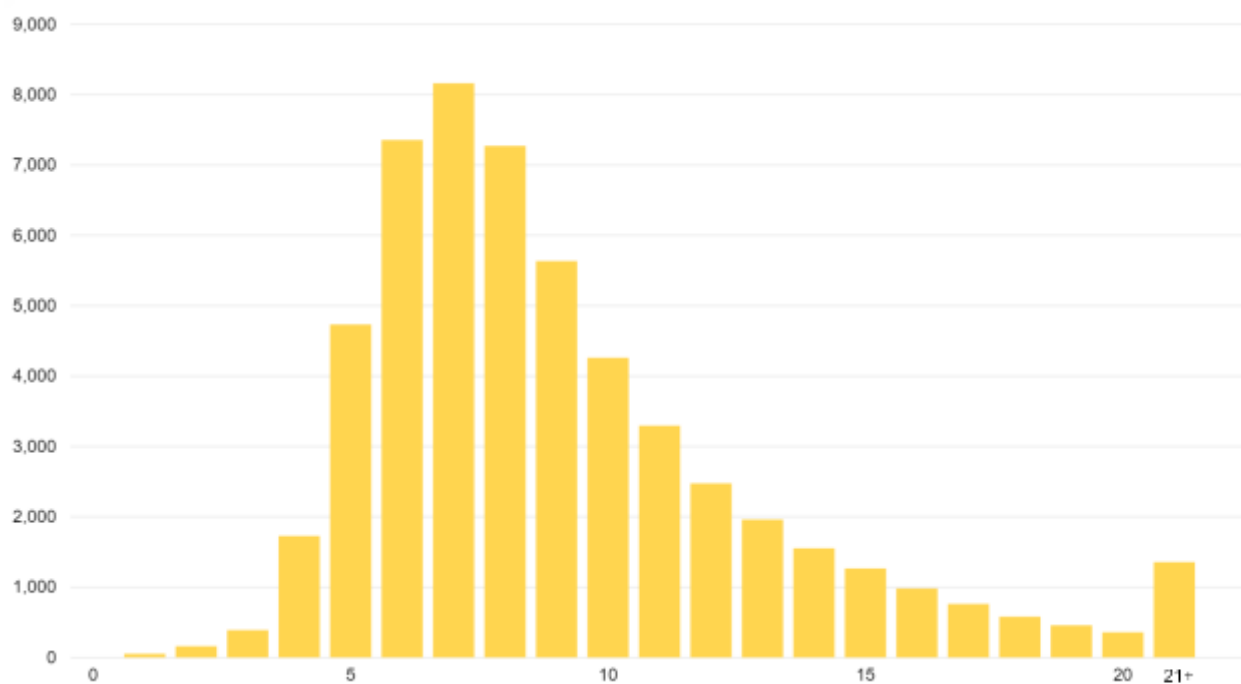
Attracting on-call firefighters is a problem for fire and rescue services nationally. Services are trying to manage the effects of this problem in many different ways. For example, some services move resources around their service to fill gaps as they appear, some services have introduced smaller fire engines with fewer firefighters to attend certain types of incident and some services have implemented different crewing models to ensure availability during the busiest times.

Good fire and rescue services have well-managed systems that help ensure fire control and firefighters are always aware of available fire engines. We found evidence that every service was working to increase availability of fire engines crewed by on-call firefighters. However, some services do not have robust procedures to understand availability of on-call staff. This means that mobilising can be, at times, ineffective and inefficient. In some places this has led to a two-tier service. For example, people living in towns and cities might get a quicker response than people living in more rural locations.

## Response

A prompt response to an emergency gives those affected a better chance of surviving an incident. If crews arrive quickly, they can limit the spread of fire and reduce damage. Each fire and rescue service sets its own response standards, and these vary from service to service according to geography, demography and risk.

**Figure 6: Number of primary fire incidents by 1-minute response time bands for the 12 months to 31 March 2017**



**Source: Home Office data**

**For further information about this data, please see annex A**

### **Services need to hit their promised response time targets**

Several fire and rescue services are not meeting the response time targets that they committed to in their IRMP. National data on response times is collected in a consistent way by the Home Office. It measures time of the call to the time the first fire engine arrives at the scene. But the way each service measures its own response times can vary.

It is reasonable for response times to vary depending on the risk, geography and demography of an area. But it is not acceptable for services to commit to a response time and then consistently fail to meet it. If the response time is not possible with the resources available, the service needs to be honest with the public. The service needs to tell the public what it can do to keep them safe through prevention, protection and response.



## **Working together on larger incidents**

Fire and rescue services agree to support each other at emergency incidents close to their borders and during large or protracted incidents. This is a good use of resources and important for maintaining public safety. We found good examples of services working together in mobilisation. This makes it easier for services to deploy whatever fire engine can get to the incident quickest.

## **National operational guidance**

The national operational guidance (NOG) was developed by the NFCC, government and Local Government Association. This guidance describes the hazards crews might encounter at incidents. It also describes the measures crews should use to control or eliminate them.

## **Good progress on guidance, but more work needed**

All the fire and rescue services we inspected had either adopted or were in the process of adopting NOG. Progress in adoption varies from service to service. We found good examples of services working with other FRSs in regional groups to pool resources in implementing the guidance. If all services use the national guidance it will improve consistency. And services will find it easier to work with their neighbours as they will be using the same procedures and terms.

During our inspections we spoke to firefighters and managers about their understanding of NOG. Good fire and rescue services have explained the benefits of NOG and have trained their staff to follow it. Some services have not yet adopted NOG. They are operating a two-tier system using their own protocols as well as NOG. This causes confusion and frustration for firefighters, who are unsure about which approach to follow.

## **Command**

Incident commanders make sure crews are safe as they work and that they do whatever they must to protect the public. It is important that they show clear, objective thinking in fast-moving, traumatic and pressured situations. This is particularly the case where there has been an injury or fatality, as the service could have to defend its actions in court. Generally, we found that incident commanders are trained and ready to lead teams during incidents.

Firefighters told us they are well equipped with a good standard of vehicles, equipment and protective clothing. Fire and rescue service staff spend a lot of time training in the safety critical skills needed to operate equipment and respond to emergencies. In all the services we inspected, firefighters are confident in their use and understanding of essential equipment like breathing apparatus.

Supervisors can describe how to command incidents, and many had documents to support their understanding.

## **Record critical decisions to learn from them**

Incident commanders are meant to record the critical decisions they make during an incident. This is an area for improvement across most of the fire and rescue services we inspected. We found evidence in several services that incident commanders are not routinely recording their decisions. So it is difficult for the service to learn from experience and improve the service they provide to the public.

## **Operational discretion**

Operational discretion is part of the national guidance agreed by the NFCC and the Health and Safety Executive:

“Operational discretion relates to rare or exceptional circumstances where strictly following an operational procedure would be a barrier to resolving an incident, or where there is no procedure that adequately deals with the incident.”

Using operational discretion might mean the commander has to use tactics and equipment in a novel way. For example, ladders may be used as improvised stretchers or to bridge a gap if waiting for purpose-made equipment would unduly delay a rescue. We were encouraged to find that commanders at all levels generally understood how to make critical decisions and apply their discretion when appropriate. But the use of discretion was not as well logged or evaluated as it could be. Good recording and evaluation would help fire and rescue services learn from how commanders use operational discretion.

## **Evaluating operational performance**

Fire and rescue services should evaluate how well they respond to incidents. This evaluation tells them how to improve and what value they provide to the community. It allows them to check that they are using new procedures and techniques effectively.

## **Debrief after small incidents as well as large ones**

All the fire and rescue services we inspected had developed a process to debrief staff after incidents. Most services have an operational assurance team to gather learning and help the organisation improve. We found that these services are good at debriefing large and complex incidents because the central team manages this. We found that learning from smaller incidents is not captured well enough. So services are missing opportunities to develop staff and improve the way they help the public.

## **Sharing learning across the nation**

Every fire and rescue service has access to a national platform that they can use to share learning with each other.<sup>17</sup> We found most services understand the value of this. They can submit their learning and they make good use of available case studies. Staff we spoke to are positive about the learning they had taken from this platform.

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<sup>17</sup> See: [www.ukfrs.com/national-operational-learning-0](http://www.ukfrs.com/national-operational-learning-0)

## Responding to national risks

Fire and rescue services must respond during times of extraordinary need such as flooding and major incidents. They need arrangements to supplement their resources. They can do this by calling for help from neighbouring services and from specialist national resources. We examined how ready they are to do this and how well they work with other organisations to this end. All the 13 services we inspected in this area are good at responding to national risks. We didn't inspect Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service because it doesn't have a national response requirement.

### Preparedness

Good fire and rescue services have trained staff who know who to contact in a time of exceptional need. And they know what to ask of those they contact. One example, in the services we inspected, is the use of national inter-agency liaison officers (NIOs) as subject matter advisers when responding to incidents like a marauding terrorist attack. The role of the NIO, or alternatively an officer with the relevant security clearance, provides services with a secure means of communication enabling classified information to be transferred between police, fire and ambulance.

### Prepared for emergencies at high-risk sites

All the fire and rescue services we inspected have good systems and plans for dealing with incidents at high-risk sites. High-risk sites might include power stations and chemical factories. Most services can access risk information for neighbouring service areas, but the quality of this information varies. At its best, firefighters can access risk information on MDTs, as they would for their own service's information. In other services, firefighters rely on fire control operators relaying information.

### Drawing on other resources

We spoke to fire control staff and middle and senior managers who knew how to call on neighbouring fire and rescue services and national resources. They described the national co-ordination advisory framework arrangements effectively.

We found that services have effective training programmes to maintain competence and availability of specialist national resources such as:

- detection identification and monitoring for chemical incidents;
- high volume pumps for flooding response;
- enhanced logistic support; and
- urban search and rescue for building collapse.

### Better access to cross-border risk information

Staff on both wholetime and on-call stations we inspected could retrieve risk information and data from the MDTs in fire engines. But staff often told us they lacked confidence about accessing risk information for an incident over the border (see 'Managing assets and resources'). We are satisfied that most operational staff understand how to interpret risk information.

## **Working with other agencies**

We found that incident commanders at all levels have a good understanding of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP). These principles help to ensure all the blue light services work together effectively.

## **Services are valued members of the resilience community**

All fire and rescue services are active members of their local resilience forums (LRFs). LRFs are groups of emergency responders and representatives from local authorities who meet to agree plans and preparedness for community risks such as wide area flooding, pandemics or major incidents like an explosion. Members of the LRFs are positive about the level of participation and support provided by fire and rescue services. Many services take lead roles by chairing groups and organising exercises.

## **Improve cross-border exercising**

The fire and rescue services we inspected take part in multi-agency exercises at high-risk sites and for major incidents such as flooding. At LRF exercises fire crews test multi-agency response plans and senior managers can refine their command skills. But some services need to improve their exercising at a local or cross-border level. Running training exercises with other fire crews and other emergency responders can help to test operational procedures and working practices, and help disseminate learning.

## **A broader range of emergencies**

We found evidence that fire and rescue services are increasingly responding to a broad range of emergencies beyond fires and road traffic collisions. All the services we inspected are prepared to deal with flooding and terrorist incidents. While the amount of equipment, expertise and training within services varies, every service understands how to call on extra resources.

# Efficiency



# How efficient are the services at keeping people safe and secure?

The table below sets out our overall efficiency pillar judgments for each fire and rescue service.

**Table 2: Efficiency pillar judgment for each fire and rescue service**

Grade	Number of services
Outstanding	0
Good	8
Requires improvement	5
Inadequate	1

Fire and rescue authorities receive funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) via the local government settlement. Funding from the local government settlement is split into revenue support grants and business rates and is collectively known as the settlement funding level. Fire and rescue authorities are also funded by council tax precept. Like other public-sector bodies, fire and rescue services have been subject to budget reductions over the last eight years. It is not possible to determine the change in funding for all 45 fire and rescue authorities in England. Seventeen authorities are part of a wider organisation (e.g. a county council or mayoral authority) and are responsible for providing a range of local government services. The wider organisation (of which the fire and rescue service is a part) is responsible for allocating funding and do so based on local priorities.

Fire and rescue services must have the capacity to respond to events even if those events haven't happened in recent years.

The National Framework states that: "Fire and rescue authorities must manage their budgets and spend money properly and appropriately and ensure the efficient and effective use of their resources, pursuing all feasible opportunities to keep costs down while discharging their core duties effectively. Fire and rescue authorities should regularly review the numbers and deployment of firefighters and other staff to ensure that their fire and rescue service has a workforce that is commensurate with the risks that they face."

An efficient fire and rescue service should:

- allocate its budget and resources according to the activity in its IRMP;
- have clear reasons for the way it has allocated resources to prevention, protection and response;
- work to reduce non-operational costs – for example, through benchmarking, contract renegotiation, and joint procurement;
- have introduced flexible workforce patterns that provide a cost-effective service that keeps people safe;
- actively explore opportunities for collaborations that line up with the priorities in its IRMP and improve its service or efficiency;
- understand potential future financial difficulties – this understanding should be based on robust, realistic and prudent assumptions, and use scenario planning, modelling and benchmarking to plan for future spending reductions;
- have a plan for its financial reserves – to show how it uses them in a sensible and sustainable way to improve the long-term efficiency of the service, rather than merely fill budget gaps; and
- invest in technology and exploit changes in technology to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

### Access to better financial data

To manage budgets, use resources efficiently and effectively and to pursue opportunities to reduce costs, fire and rescue services need accurate and reliable data.

We found that in some services we inspected there was a lack of credible and comparable data about expenditure. This was particularly the case for services that are part of a county council, which use the council's support functions such as finance, human resources and IT. We saw services that didn't know how the council calculated and allocated charges for their support services. This makes it difficult for the service to find out whether it gets value for money.

Fire and rescue service leaders need to understand their true costs to run an efficient service. All services need to understand their spending better and to explain it better. We have established that the current Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) data on fire and rescue service finances is not good enough. It cannot be used to understand and compare fire and rescue service finances. This has made it difficult for us to accurately assess the actual service cost. We are working with CIPFA and the sector to get better data in 2019. This work includes revised guidance. The new guidelines call for consistent responses and more validation checks by CIPFA. We hope to see better financial data by September 2019.

## Using resources to manage risk

### Understanding risk to the public

Fire and rescue services need to understand foreseeable risks to the public. They need to understand what resources they need to reasonably mitigate such risks. Nearly all of the services inspected showed an understanding of risk. They explain this in an IRMP. Resourcing to risk means that services may need to have a response resource that they know they will not regularly use. This is so they are resilient and have enough resources to face a major incident or emergency.

We judged over half (eight) of the fire and rescue services we inspected to be good in this area. They showed us how they use a range of historical, current and predictive data to decide how to use resources. We saw services using risk information to shift resources to areas of highest risk and they explained to us why they did this. We also saw evidence that services are exploring new ways to allocate resources. For example managing risk and improving efficiency through new crewing arrangements or shift patterns.

### Matching resources to risk

Cambridgeshire FRS uses a variety of working patterns to match resources to risk. It uses a mix of wholetime, day-crewed, on-call and volunteer firefighters to match its resources more efficiently to demand. It worked out that it would be more efficient to move from a five-watch system back to a four-watch system. It also introduced two roaming pumps to increase the availability of fire engines, and improve productivity. This means the service has the right resources to respond to major incidents and to do prevention and protection work.

Additionally, Lancashire FRS uses a broad range of duty systems aligned to the risk rating of surrounding areas. So the service meets attendance times while avoiding overprovision. It reviews its duty systems on a three-year cycle, using previous reviews to improve efficiency.

### Better modelling makes it easier to allocate firefighters and equipment

Some fire and rescue services we inspected are not meeting the levels of availability outlined in their IRMP. These services can still respond when the public needs them, but their resource-to-risk modelling could, perhaps, be better. For example, one service could not explain why it believes it needs 40 fire engines available at all times. And it could not say why its target attendance times were the right ones. Fire and rescue services need to tell the public what they will provide and then meet that commitment.

We were also concerned to find fire and rescue services that are not clear how many firefighters and staff they need. We saw decisions to allocate resources that were based on historical risk information. We saw workforce plans based on maintaining the same number of firefighters each year. And some services base workforce plans on employing as many firefighters as they can afford. They continue to do this even if risk has changed, or if resources would be better allocated in another way. This is



sometimes even the case when the service's prevention and protection activities do not meet statutory responsibilities.

### **The public wants response to incidents**

All the fire and rescue services we inspected prioritise their ability to respond to major incidents. The public supports this. The public perceptions survey we commissioned shows 70 percent of respondents see extinguishing fires and protecting life and property as in the top three most important activities that fire and rescue services should prioritise. Next most important priorities, according to respondents, are responding to other life-threatening emergencies and road traffic collisions and other transport incidents.

### **Prevention and protection: under-resourced in some services**

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires services to undertake fire prevention and protection activities.

We expect fire and rescue services to explain how they allocate their resources to prevention, protection and response. Almost half of the services we inspected require improvement (with one service graded as inadequate) in this area. This was in part because of an unequal distribution of resources to the risks the service manages. We found examples where a service's distribution of resource to risk is disproportionate or not well understood and explained.

In the effectiveness pillar, protection activities were graded, in general, lower than other areas. This is in part because some services do not allocate enough resources to this important work. We saw protection teams that do not have enough resources to complete the high-risk inspections committed to in the RBIPs.

Graded judgments on prevention were mostly good across the 14 fire and rescue services inspected. But we did find services that had not prioritised resources for prevention activity. We found prevention specialists with a backlog of work and we found examples of reactive prevention work that does not target the most vulnerable people. We did see some services, such as Surrey FRS, exploring ways to increase capacity. For example, by using volunteers for prevention activities. But many services do not have plans to tackle the resource problems in this area. The public perceptions survey we commissioned shows that only 16 percent of respondents have had contact with their local service in the past 12 months. Most commonly (5 percent of respondents), people saw them at a community event or open day. Services often host or attend these to promote prevention messages.

### **Services work well with others**

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 placed a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities, police forces, and ambulance trusts. They need to:

- review collaboration opportunities;
- tell other emergency services about collaborations that could improve their mutual efficiency and effectiveness; and
- give effect to collaborations that the parties involved agree are effective and efficient and do not harm public safety.

Nearly all the fire and rescue services we inspected have a positive attitude towards collaboration. They are keen on opportunities to make savings and improve services to the public. We saw a wide range of collaborative activities including sharing estates and control rooms. These collaborations can save services money and give opportunities for them to train together. They also create closer links and improve understanding between the organisations involved.

We also saw fire and rescue services working closely with other emergency services. In particular, Cheshire FRS collaborates with Cheshire Constabulary in back-office functions. The single back-office should reduce frontline support costs, improve services and benefit the environment. By January 2017, the service had saved just over £670,000. Additionally, Cambridgeshire FRS combined its fire control with Suffolk FRS. The two services are each saving about £400,000 a year.

Other fire and rescue services collaborate with the county council. Cornwall FRS in particular took funding support from the council and local police and crime commissioner to introduce tri-service safety officers. These officers support the police, ambulance, fire and rescue service and council anti-social behaviour team. An independent review found these officers to be of “significant value to all services and residents”. They help with on-call response cover and safety and prevention services in the community. The service also hopes that they will improve workforce diversity.

### **Collaborations need reviewing**

Most of the fire and rescue services we inspected are ambitious in the collaboration efficiencies they aim for. But nearly half of services have no formal review process for collaboration. So they fail to evaluate the benefits of often costly projects. Where they have done so, the results often fall short of the anticipated savings. Services need to evaluate the collaborations to identify what worked. Evaluation will also help them better understand the feasibility of future projects and predict results.

### **Continuity plans in place**

Fire and rescue services need robust business continuity arrangements otherwise they risk service failure during an unexpected incident. We were pleased to find them in nearly all the services we inspected. Some services, such as Lincolnshire FRS, have a wide range of business continuity plans covering critical functions such as:

- response capability;
- looking after staff;
- weather alerts; and
- cyber-attacks.

Lincolnshire FRS tests these plans regularly for viability. In this example, each department has its own bespoke plan. The service reviews these annually and tests them through multi-agency exercises.

A few fire and rescue services need to widen their business continuity plans to cover areas such as cyber-attacks. They should also ensure that they are regularly testing and updating their plans. In one service we could not find any evidence of business continuity arrangements testing. Another service regularly tested equipment in its secondary control room, but had never fully tested it by taking calls and mobilising crews.

## Planning a sustainable model for now and the future

Fire and rescue services should make the most of their available resources. Services should:

- closely manage budgets;
- spend money properly and appropriately; and
- pursue all feasible opportunities to keep costs down while doing their primary duties effectively.

They should base future budgets on robust, realistic and prudent assumptions. They should use scenario planning, modelling and benchmarking to plan future spending reductions. Nine of the services we inspected are good at doing this.

Like other public-sector bodies, central government has required fire and rescue services to make savings. HM Treasury told departments to plan for a round of funding reductions in next year's spending review. Fire and rescue services do not yet know what level of savings they will need to make. This, alongside council tax freezes, has created an air of uncertainty about future budgets.

### Saving through efficiency

We found that nearly all fire and rescue services have a track record of achieving savings. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018 the England rate (excluding Isles of Scilly FRS) for firefighter cost per head of population was £22.38, which had decreased slightly from £22.76 for the same period in 2017. We were encouraged to see some services creating longer-term efficiencies by:

- revising their senior management structures;
- altering shift systems; and
- investing in, and taking advantage of, technological advances to improve efficiency and productivity.

But we also saw services plugging budget gaps by not filling vacancies or by using reserves and underspends from previous years. This may not prove to be sustainable. We also found a range between services in the rate of firefighter cost per head of population, with one service costing £16.42 in the 12 months to 31 March 2018 and another costing £31.75 during the same period.

## **Wise use of financial reserves**

Fire and rescue authorities (other than county council fire and rescue authorities) can keep part of their funding in financial reserves. These reserves are:

- to manage financial risk;
- to fund major future costs such as change programmes aimed at improving services to the public;
- to cover unforeseen pressures; or
- earmarked for a specific purpose such as investment in new technology.

Most fire and rescue services have reserves. Fire and rescue services that are part of county council governance structures do not hold their own reserves but can access council reserves. Services must use reserves in an appropriate and sustainable way.

Financial reserves held by the 28 standalone fire and rescue authorities increased by 80 percent to £545.1 million between 31 March 2011 and 31 March 2018.<sup>18</sup> On average reserves make up 42 percent of fire and rescue services' main spending power in March 2018.

## **Some services are not using reserves to fund efficiency**

We are concerned that some fire and rescue services are not using reserves sensibly and sustainably to fund changes to improve long-term efficiency. We found a general over-reliance on reserves in some services to fill budget gaps or maintain inefficient practices. Services should not delay initiatives that will improve efficiency just because they can use their reserves to shore up inefficient practices. Nor should services use reserves to sustain essential activity.

We were encouraged to find Lancashire FRS investing its reserves in frontline services. It purchased water rescue equipment and a new style of high-reach water tower, the first of its kind. Additionally, Cheshire FRS is using reserves to develop new training facilities, fund ICT developments and to support collaboration projects.

## **Budget plans vary in sophistication**

While fire and rescue services are planning for the future, the scope and scale of these plans varies significantly across the services we inspected. Most services understand the financial climate. But the financial planning in some services is limited in scope and based on unsophisticated scenario planning and modelling. Although nearly all services operate within their existing budgets, there is very little evidence of real financial and resource planning past 2020.

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<sup>18</sup> *Fire and Rescue Authority financial reserves: March 2018*, Home Office, November 2018. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-authority-financial-reserves-march-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-authority-financial-reserves-march-2018)

Most fire and rescue services we inspected would benefit from a better understanding of the financial difficulties they may face in three or four years' time. They could increase the sophistication of their scenario planning, modelling and benchmarking. We would expect services to consider what they need to do now to solve, or if possible, avoid problems in the future. Services should use information about their known risks, workforce, assets and capacity to prepare for problems. Services need to understand risks and demand at a level that is sophisticated enough. This will help them work out the minimum level of resource they need to give the public an efficient and safe service.

### **Using data to predict future risk**

Fire and rescue services' investment plans should use reserves to improve efficiency in the future.

We were encouraged to see some services progressing in this. Lancashire FRS in particular uses historical and predictive data to understand community risk. It can set out both the financial risks it managed in the past and the problems it faces in the future. The service measured the progress of the IRMP with key performance indicators, one being value for money. It showed it was flexible enough to meet future financial difficulties, including those outside its control. For example, government grants, nationally set pay awards and varying levels of council tax.

### **Using technology to streamline processes**

All the fire and rescue services we inspected have the operational equipment they feel they need to keep the public safe. But the use of technology varies considerably. An efficient service makes the best use of opportunities and responds to risks presented by changes in technology. We would expect to find technology streamlining processes and procedures. Examples include:

- online systems which remove the need for paper forms and remove duplication by updating multiple systems with the same piece of information;
- MDTs, tablets, laptops and Wi-Fi to support flexible working; and
- access to real time data to help staff to manage and resolve emerging incidents.

### **Technology use in fire and rescue services**

We found examples of innovative technology use. For example, Lancashire FRS uses drones to view incidents in remote locations as they happen, and uses debrief apps. But we were concerned to find some fire and rescue services using broken or unreliable IT systems. This hinders productivity. It also hinders firefighters in getting risk information on the way to an incident. This makes their job more difficult and less safe. We also found services that rely on paper-based or fax systems to share operational information such as availability of crews or learning from incidents.

## Outside income boosts sustainability

About half of the fire and rescue services that we inspected are actively exploiting external funding and income generation opportunities. Examples include:

- providing vehicle maintenance to a neighbouring service;
- leasing estate to other emergency services;
- providing training to the public, county council and private businesses; and
- charging for the monitoring of CCTV.

One service generates in excess of £1 million annually by allowing other public-sector services to locate staff in its premises. These are good examples of ways services can improve financial sustainability.

## Income generation may clash with primary duties

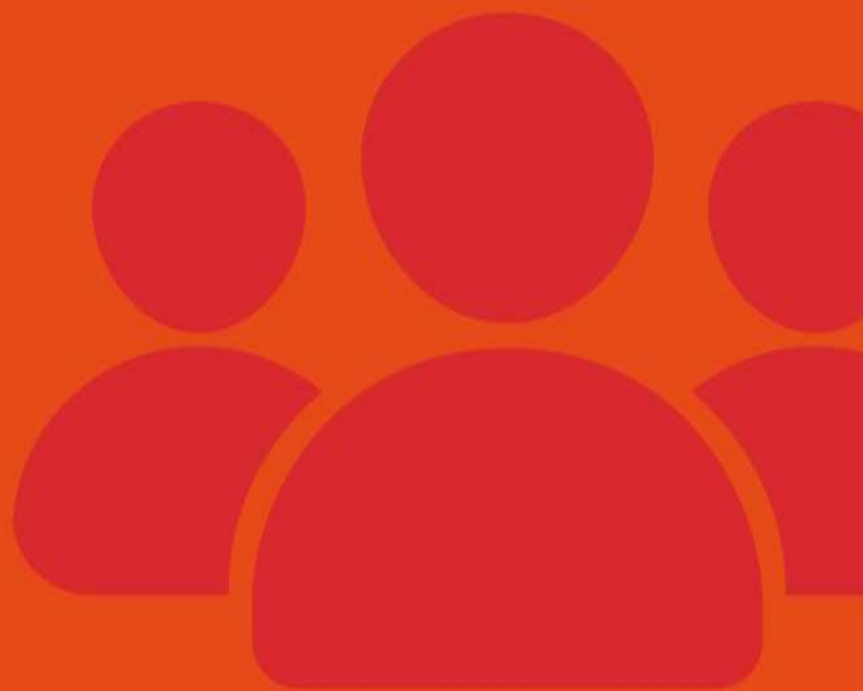
But we were concerned that in some fire and rescue services these activities are prioritised over primary duties. We found examples of services with short-staffed prevention and protection teams assigning staff to provide training on a cost-recovery basis.

While it is positive that services are trying to increase their income, they need to avoid or manage conflicts of interest. We are considering further work to find out if there are unmanaged conflicts of interest in fire and rescue services. Grant Thornton has published guidance<sup>19</sup> on trading arms, following consultation with NFCC and the fire industry association (FIA). Services can use this to self-assess their activities.

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<sup>19</sup> *Creating and operating a successful trading fire company*, Grant Thornton, October 2018. Available at: [www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1.-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/creating-and-operating-a-successful-fire-trading-company.pdf](http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1.-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/creating-and-operating-a-successful-fire-trading-company.pdf)

# People



# How well do the services look after their people?

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The table below sets out our overall people pillar judgments for each fire and rescue service.

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**Table 3: People pillar judgment for each fire and rescue service**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number of services</b>
Outstanding	0
Good	3
Requires improvement	10
Inadequate	1

## Values and culture

Fire and rescue services should be positive places to work. Staff should be well equipped physically and mentally to protect the communities they serve. Staff at all levels should demonstrate the service's values and behaviours. These values should be available to the public.

Fire and rescue services should have a positive culture that promotes health, safety and wellbeing to all staff.

Firefighters need to support the public during dangerous and difficult times. They witness horrific incidents including fatal road traffic collisions, house fires, significant flooding and terrorist attacks. Each service needs to give appropriate support to those who have witnessed traumatic events. This means having support services that staff can access. Staff must have confidence in these support services at all times.

Most operational activity is done by small teams of firefighters, who work closely together on watches. These watches, for both wholetime and on-call staff, work together intensively and for prolonged periods of time. Many people spend their whole careers working for the same service, often as part of the same team.



## **Most services need to do more to promote good values**

Most (nine) of the fire and rescue services we inspected require improvement in the way they promote values and culture. The values and culture of services we inspected vary hugely, with one service graded as outstanding and one as inadequate.

We saw a small number of services where we found a positive culture at every level of the organisation. In Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, which we graded outstanding, we saw senior leaders modelling a clearly explained set of service values. There is a strong and positive culture at all levels of the organisation. Staff believe in this culture and live by it.

In other fire and rescue services we saw that leaders know the values and behaviours they want, but have not yet communicated them. So staff did not understand them. We witnessed staff behaving poorly towards each other. For example, we observed staff using insensitive and inappropriate language. And we were told about autocratic and domineering behaviour by middle and senior managers.

### **‘Watch-culture’ is a barrier to professional help**

An important element of a fire and rescue service’s culture is how they look after their people. Positively, most services we inspected have suitable staff wellbeing provision in place, including after traumatic incidents. It is important that staff can access whatever wellbeing service they feel they need, in a timely fashion.

In some services staff told us that the watch-culture is a barrier for staff seeking professional help. Aspects of this watch-culture, such as teamwork and cohesion, can be a strength in operational situations. But watch-culture can also leave some staff afraid of seeming weak to colleagues or being different. This leaves them without the confidence to seek help. And watch-culture can result in people seeking help only from their peers, even if professional help would be more appropriate.

### **A lack of trust in the grievance process**

Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints that employees raise with their service. Managers should try to resolve concerns before they become major problems. Staff who are confident that managers will deal with grievances fairly and promptly are more likely to trust the organisation. The use of fair procedures shows employees that they are respected and valued. This, in turn, can help to improve motivation and performance.

Disappointingly, staff in half of the services we inspected lack trust in the resolution process. In most cases staff perceive the process as unfair. They told us about timescales that are not met, and managers who are not trained to resolve concerns effectively. We also found that fire and rescue services do not effectively record, track or monitor informal grievances. This means services are not making sure they apply the principles of procedural justice. All too often, services are not taking opportunities to learn and improve as a result of grievances.

Results of our survey of staff from Tranche 1 showed just over a quarter of the 1,002 people who responded felt they had been bullied or harassed in the last 12 months. And 20 percent felt they had suffered discrimination, but only 8 percent had reported it formally. Fire and rescue services have some way to go towards creating an inclusive and positive working culture in which staff feel valued and supported, and behave appropriately with each other.

### **A supportive health and safety culture**

Most of the fire and rescue services we inspected have appropriate health and safety policies. And most have what staff feel to be a supportive health and safety culture.

Most of the services that we inspected have a system in place to monitor the hours worked by staff. Such systems help to ensure that staff get enough rest and are safe to work. But when it comes to managing these services in practice, the picture is mixed. A small number of services do not effectively monitor or control overtime or secondary employment away from the service. This is a concern to us. These services cannot assure compliance with the working time directive. And they cannot guarantee their staff have enough rest to ensure their wellbeing and safety.

### **Training and skills**

Fire and rescue services are like any employer in that they need a workforce plan. Workforce plans record the skills and capabilities needed now and in the future to manage risks to the public. Services need to track and monitor the skills and capabilities in their workforces. And they need a culture of learning and improving that encourages staff development. Finally, they need a performance management system that supports the individual and monitors their competence and performance.

#### **The right mix of risk-critical skills**

We found that most (ten) fire and rescue services we inspected are good at ensuring their staff are sufficiently trained and skilled. The remaining four require improvement.

A few services don't have an adequate system in place to ensure all operational staff are competent in risk-critical skills.

Fire and rescue services need to provide suitable operational training. And they must record training accurately. This is so the service can assure itself that all operational staff are competent. Services need:

- a mechanism for monitoring the expiry dates of staff competencies;
- effective plans for maintaining competencies; and
- to provide training in advance of competencies going out of date.

#### **Workforce planning to prevent skills gaps**

While most fire and rescue services have recruited wholetime firefighters in recent years, a small number of services have carried out little or no recruitment. But the difficulties of attracting and retaining on-call staff are always with services, so on-call recruitment has continued as usual.

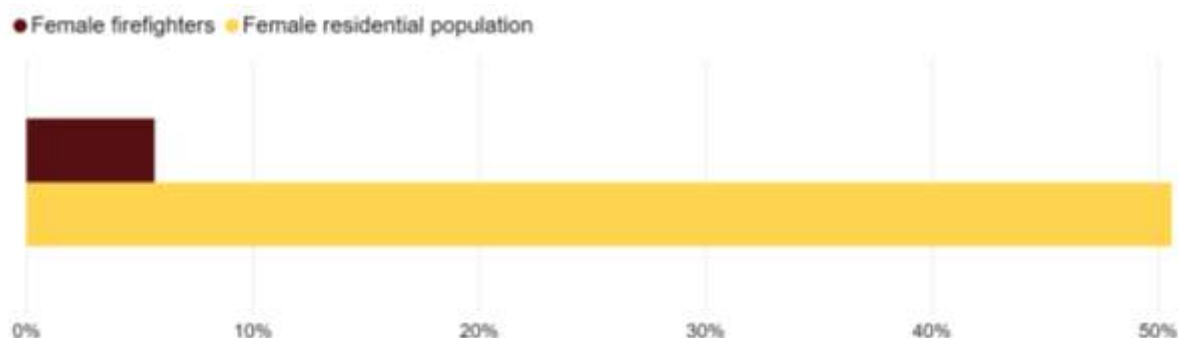
Fire and rescue services need to improve their workforce planning. Fewer than half of the services we inspected showed effective workforce planning processes. Effective processes fully account for retirement and planned leavers. They also include succession planning for the skills and knowledge gaps created. This situation is worrying given the age profile of the sector. A high number of firefighters are expected to retire over the next few years. Services need to be planning for these departures now. They need appropriate training provision and succession planning to fill these gaps without damaging service delivery. Effective workforce planning also helps services to plan for a sustainable financial future.

We found that in Cambridgeshire, the service has introduced a 'balancing board' to understand its future skill requirements. This board takes its workforce's predicted leaving dates and balances them against the demand predicted in its risk management plan. The service reviews and mitigates the risk of losing staff who are critical to service delivery. The balancing board underpins the service's succession planning strategy. It is an example of effective workforce planning.

### Fairness and diversity

Fire and rescue services should be inclusive and meet the needs of their workforce. No fire and rescue service is currently representative of its community in terms of gender and BAME diversity. Some 5.7 percent (1,980) of firefighters were women in England as at 31 March 2018. This compares with 5.2 percent in the previous year (1,832 in 2017). Since 2010, the main reason the proportion of women firefighters has increased has been a decrease in the number of male firefighters.

**Figure 7: Percentage of female firefighters as at 31 March 2018**

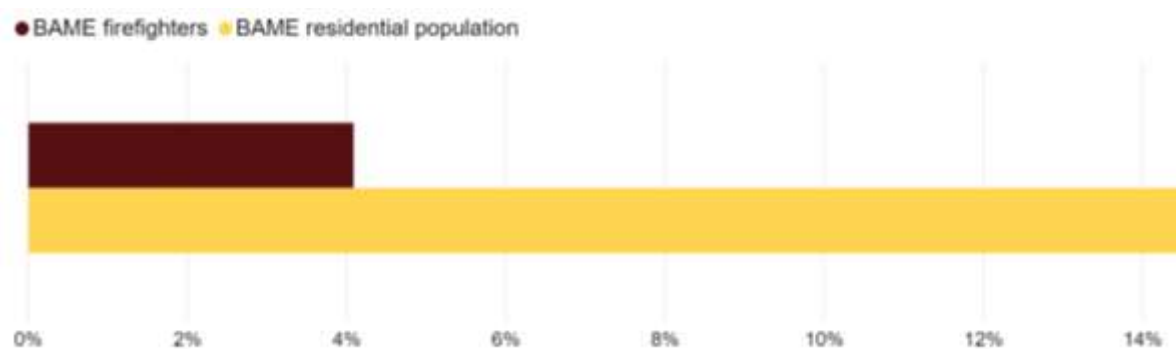


**Source: Home Office data**

**For further information about this data, please see annex A**

Some 4.1 percent (1,293) of firefighters were from an ethnic minority group in England as at 31 March 2018. This compares with 3.9 percent in the previous year (1,255 as at 31 March 2017). The number of white firefighters has been decreasing faster than the number of firefighters from an ethnic minority group. And there has been a very small increase in the number of firefighters from an ethnic minority group when compared with the same time period in 2017.

**Figure 8: Percentage of BAME firefighters as at 31 March 2018**



**Source: Home Office data**

**For further information about this data, please see annex A**

While the diversity of the firefighter workforce is limited, the diversity of non-operational staff is better.

Disappointingly some services do not yet collect data on sexual orientation, religion or disability.

While we graded four services good at ensuring fairness and diversity, nine require improvement and one was graded inadequate. When we form our judgments, we consider:

- how effectively services exploit opportunities to increase diversity;
- how they promote diversity at all levels within the organisation; and
- how they engage with under-represented groups, both within the workforce and the community.

### **Diversity benefits fire and rescue services**

Fire and rescue services need to understand the different needs and priorities of the communities they serve. To do this, services need diverse workforces. Other benefits of diverse workforces include greater innovation and better performance. It also leads to diversity of behaviour, where employees with different personalities and backgrounds work in different ways. This can improve decision making and service to the public. Services also need diverse workforces to develop talented future leaders and transform services into modern public-sector organisations.

### **Communicate diversity**

Around a half of respondents to our public perception survey do not know how diverse their local service is in relation to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and disability. This lack of awareness is reflected in the limited diversity of applicants seeking to join fire and rescue services.

We are concerned that staff – including managers – in half the services we inspected do not understand the benefits of and need for workforce diversity. In a small number of services, this lack of understanding manifested in staff behaviours and attitudes inconsistent with an inclusive or open workplace. This must be addressed.

## **Act on diversity**

We were also very concerned to see two services have no designated shower facilities for female firefighters on some of its stations. Firefighters who cannot shower risk carrying home fire contaminants on their skin.

It is encouraging to see most of the fire and rescue services we inspected are engaging in recruitment activity that targets under-represented groups. The sector is promoting itself through activities such as 'have a go' days and myth-busting presentations.

It is one thing recruiting a more diverse workforce; it is quite another to make sure individuals feel properly included and can thrive within a service. Unless fire and rescue services tackle fundamental cultural problems, they will always struggle to be a diverse employer. We recognise the work of the Home Office, the NFCC and some services in breaking down barriers. For example, the 'join the team: become a firefighter' programme is designed to support services in attracting a more diverse range of applicants.

## **The value of feedback**

Seeking and acting on staff feedback is an important way for leaders to engage their workforce and discover ways to improve.

There is mixed use of methods such as staff surveys and focus groups to seek feedback and encourage improvements. Most fire and rescue services have recently undertaken a staff survey. But fewer than half showed effective use of the results as a basis for change and improvement. Some services are utilising other staff feedback procedures, such as engagement groups and social media platforms. But many of these procedures are relatively new and there is limited evidence of resulting change. We recognise the strength of staff engagement through representative bodies in services.

## **More staff support networks would support diversity**

Fewer than half the fire and rescue services we inspected have set up staff support networks. That includes those for staff from under-represented groups. Staff networks can provide support and help staff share their experiences with each other. Networks can also gather and record ideas to improve workforce diversity and help identify barriers to equal opportunities. If services wish to attract and retain people with a broad range of skills, abilities and experience, they need to engage better with all parts of their workforces.

In Hampshire FRS we were encouraged by the work of the diversity and inclusion team. The team has established staff support groups, such as Fire Inspire (for female staff), Fire Out (for LGBT staff) and Fire Able (for BAME and disabled staff).

## Leadership and capability

Fire and rescue services should operate effective performance management processes to support and develop individuals. They also need to identify and support those with the talent and capacity to become future leaders. Most (11) fire and rescue services require improvement in this area and three are good.

### **Increasing staff trust in the appraisal system**

Every fire and rescue service inspected has some kind of performance management process in place. But staff in most services do not consider their appraisal system effective at managing their performance. Staff in some services told us that appraisal systems are only a means for those seeking opportunities for promotion or development. All too often, the value of the performance management regime for staff not seeking promotion is limited. Managing performance of every staff member is important to help them fulfil their potential and work effectively.

In a small number of services, we found that appraisals are carried out for staff in large groups, rather than as individuals. We recognise the value in discussing team performance. But relying solely on this method does not allow managers to openly discuss individual performance and career aspirations. And it does not allow managers to help individuals be more effective in their current role. Nor does it allow staff to express concerns or welfare needs.

The NFCC has an upcoming leadership framework. It recognises the need to tailor development to the individual, rather than using a one size fits all approach.

### **Staff need to trust the promotion process**

Staff in more than half the fire and rescue services inspected told us the promotion and selection processes are unfair or not clear and open. In particular, staff feel the process and selection criteria used by services is poorly communicated. We believe services need to do better at explaining promotion processes to staff. This would improve staff awareness and give them more confidence in the process. Explaining in advance assures staff that the right people have been selected, in the right way, at the right time.

A small number of services have staff carrying out temporary promotion responsibilities for excessive amounts of time, in some cases many years. These temporary roles are not secure and we believe this is to the detriment of staff who hold them. It could also be a further example poor workforce and succession planning.

## Do more to spot talent

It is important for a fire and rescue service to develop its future leaders. Talent management is the attraction, identification, development, and retention of those individuals who are of particular value to an organisation. This might be because of their high potential for the future or because they are fulfilling critical roles. The benefits of an organisation-wide approach to this are that it:

- builds a high performing workplace;
- encourages a learning organisation; and
- expands diversity of thought and experience at senior levels.

Only two services inspected have a process for identifying and developing staff with high potential to become senior leaders but who fall outside 'traditional' development pathways. In some services we witnessed a reluctance from staff to engage with this concept. Some staff fear being stigmatised for doing so. And some are reluctant to 'put their head above the parapet'.

We are pleased that service leaders, through the NFCC and the new Fire Standards Board, are addressing this problem. Service leaders have access to national talent schemes such as the executive leadership programme, which is open to all services. It is available to staff who hold a senior leadership position, or who are likely to in the near future. On completion, these staff receive a postgraduate certificate in strategic leadership. They will be much better equipped to guide and encourage positive change within their services.

We also look forward to the introduction of the NFCC National Leadership Framework. This will define the leadership qualities needed at each level of management. And it will set out process to support people in developing their careers.

We are encouraged that a small number of fire and rescue services have looked outside the fire and rescue sector to bring in talented individuals at senior management level. Such leaders will bring diversity of thought and experience. This is an important opportunity for services that must provide a modern public service in financially constrained times.



## Definitions and interpretations

In this report, the following words, phrases and expressions in the left-hand column have the meanings assigned to them in the right-hand column. Sometimes, the definition will be followed by a fuller explanation of the matter in question, with references to sources and other material which may be of assistance to the reader.

7(2)d risk	responsibility of fire and rescue services to gather risk information in their area; provided for under Section 7(2)d of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
Article 31 prohibition notice	notice issued by an enforcing authority (e.g. the fire and rescue service) under <a href="#">Article 31</a> of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, prohibiting or restricting use of a building to ensure people's safety; most stringent measure available to an enforcing authority
benchmarking	comparing costs and services with other organisations
BikeSafe	programme for motorcycle safety nationally; led by the police; aims to reduce number of bikers being hurt on the roads; in some areas, the local fire and rescue service runs this in conjunction with the police
Biker Down	<a href="#">programme</a> telling motorcyclists what to do if they are first at the scene of an accident involving a motorcyclist; national in scope
COMAH site	site covered by the <a href="#">Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 2015</a> ; these Regulations apply to establishments storing or otherwise handling large quantities of hazardous industrial chemicals; designed to ensure establishments take all necessary measures to prevent and limit consequences of major accidents
critical incident	incident that endangers people or property, such as a building fire or road traffic collision
day crewing plus	shift system used by firefighters; usually firefighters are based at a fire station during the day and live in close proximity at night where they can be called if required
dry riser	pipe that can be externally connected to a pressurised water source to distribute water to multiple levels of a building

Exeter data	database of all patients over 65 registered with an NHS GP in England and Wales
Experian data	<b>See</b> Mosaic data
fall back	situation requiring a fire control to change its procedures due to a loss of equipment or the need to change location
fire and rescue authority (FRA)	governing body responsible for the local fire and rescue service; FRAs nationally operate a range of different locally-determined governance arrangements
Fire and Rescue National Framework for England	framework prepared by the Home Secretary as required by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004; sets out guidance and priorities which fire and rescue authorities have a duty to have regards to
fire control	department in a fire and rescue service which provides a constant service to answer emergency calls, mobilise fire appliances and support the operational response of the service
fire safety enforcement action	action taken by every fire and rescue service to enforce compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005; this order requires individuals to carry out risk assessments to identify, manage and reduce the risk of fire in the property they are responsible for
fire service emergency cover (FSEC) toolkit	software provided by the government to UK fire and rescue services; geographical information-based risk assessment toolkit that helps services align local risks and resources to reduce costs
fire transformation fund	initiative run by Government that allocates extra investment to reform fire and rescue services
framework agreement	procurement process between a public sector organisation and a company or companies, to provide goods or services; associated with achieving value for money
hazardous area response team (HART)	personnel recruited and trained to provide the ambulance response to major incidents involving or potentially involving hazardous materials
heritage site	site, building or area of unspoilt natural environment, considered to be important to a country or area's heritage; the <a href="#">Heritage at Risk</a> register lists at-risk heritage sites
home fire safety checks	visits to a residential premise to provide advice on how to stay safe from fire; checks may vary between fire and rescue services; also known as home fire risk checks
hot debrief	review of lessons learned completed immediately after an incident, when all main people are still present and can remember details

independent statutory inspection	inspection undertaken in the exercise of the Home Secretary's powers under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999
index of multiple deprivation	qualitative study, by the UK government, of deprived areas in English local councils
integrated risk management plan (IRMP)	plan which each fire and rescue service must produce; each plan must outline all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks, how the service will allocate resources across prevention, protection and response, required service delivery outcomes, including resource allocation for mitigating risks, and its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
Investing for the Future	savings and investment plan of Avon Fire and Rescue Service
Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)	programme to improve the way police forces, fire and rescue services and ambulance trusts work together when responding to major multi-agency incidents
joint organisation learning (JOL)	learning identified through multi-agency response to an incident
level 4 diploma in fire safety (fire inspectors)	qualification for experienced fire safety officers working in complex environments and situations
level 5 diploma in engineering design (technician)	qualification for individuals who work or intend to work in a position assessing or designing fire engineered buildings
local resilience forum (LRF)	partnership made up of representatives from local public services; responsible for planning and preparing for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies
M/ETHANE	common model for passing incident information between services and their control rooms; stands for: Major incident declared; Exact location; Type of incident; Hazards present or suspected; Access-routes that are safe to use; Number, type, severity of casualties; Emergency services present and those required
mobile data terminal	device used in a fire engine; communicates with the service's control room and, depending on type, can display mapping and risk information
mobilisation	despatch of a fire engine to an emergency call
Mosaic data	system, available commercially, that classifies UK households by demographics, lifestyles, preferences and behaviours
multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)	entity bringing together main local safeguarding agencies; aims to better identify risks to children (and in

	some areas, vulnerable adults) and improve decision-making, interventions, and outcomes
mutual assistance	method of co-operation between organisations; such as a fire and rescue service providing another service with resources
national co-ordination and advisory framework (NCAF)	framework that guides local and national decision-makers' co-ordination of fire and rescue service responses to major incidents
national co-ordination centre	centre that oversees deployment of fire assets in response to a major incident
National Fire Chiefs Council	body bringing together operational leadership of the UK's fire and rescue services
national inter-agency liaison officer (NILO)	senior manager from the fire and rescue service or police, with specific training to command and liaise between agencies involved at an incident
national operational guidance	<a href="#">guidance for firefighters, covering good practice for operational policies, procedures and training</a>
national operational learning (NOL)	learning shared through national operational guidance
national resilience assets	skills and equipment used to respond to major incidents, emergencies and disruptive events
near miss	incident where firefighters feel their personal safety could have been compromised, but no harm actually occurred
on-call	<b>See</b> retained
operational discretion	decision made by incident commanders, having assessed the risks, to depart from organisational policy or standard operating procedure; used in rare circumstances where strictly following procedure would impede resolution of an incident, or where there is no adequate procedure for the incident
primary authority scheme	partnership in which fire and rescue services advise businesses on complying with environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations through a single point of contact
primary fire	more serious fire that harms people or damages properties
priority-based budgeting	approach to budgeting that allocates the service's resources in line with already established priorities; contrast with traditional budget planning, which looks only at changes from the previous year's budget
Regulators' Code	<a href="#">framework for how regulators should engage with those they regulate</a> ; clear, flexible and based on principles
reserves	money earmarked for planned expenditure during the current medium-term financial plan, for specific projects beyond the current planning period, or held as a general

	contingency to meet other expenditure needs (for example, insurance)
retained	on-call firefighters not employed full time by a fire and rescue service; paid when called to emergencies or when they otherwise undertake fire service duties
safe and well visits	more comprehensive home fire safety checks
safeguarding	providing protection and support to ensure the safety of vulnerable people and prevent further harm
safety flashes	periodic messages from the fire and rescue service to its firefighters; giving risk or safety information
trauma risk management (TRiM)	peer-run psychological support system; designed to allow organisations to proactively support staff after traumatic events
urban search and rescue (USAR)	rescue operations to find and free people from collapsed buildings, confined spaces or large-scale transport incidents, and get them to safety
vulnerable people	people less able to help themselves in case of an emergency; for example people with mobility problems, people with mental health difficulties, and children; definitions of 'vulnerable people' vary across fire and rescue services
watch	team attached to a station
wholetime firefighter	firefighter employed on a full-time basis
wholetime fire station	fire station crewed all the time
zero-based budgeting	budgeting which starts at zero, forcing managers to critically assess every activity and look for alternative ways to achieve the desired result; contrast with traditional budgeting, which looks only at changes from the previous year's budget

# 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.

## 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.

## Figures in the report

### Public perceptions survey

We commissioned BMG Research to survey attitudes towards FRSs in June and July 2018. This consisted of 17,976 interviews across 44 local fire and rescue service areas. This survey did not 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 ensured that survey respondents were 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.](#)

### Figure 6: Number of primary fire incidents by 1-minute response time bands for the 12 months to 31 March 2017

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, '[Number of incidents by 1-minute response bands, England](#)'.

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

- Before 1 April 2009 fire incident statistics were based on the FDR1 paper form. This approach means the statistics for before this date can be less robust, especially for non-fire incidents which were based on a sample of returns. Since this date the statistics are based on an online collection tool, the Incident Recording System (IRS).
- The IRS collects fire data on all incidents that FRSs attend. Some records take longer than others for FRSs to upload to the IRS, so incident totals are constantly being amended (by relatively small numbers).

### Figure 4: Number of home fire risk checks per 1,000 population in the 12 months to 31 March 2018 and the percentage targeted at the elderly (65+) and those registered as disabled

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 does not include checks carried out by partners.



Please consider the following points when interpreting results 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.
- 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 fire and rescue authorities can't supply these figures.

FRSs may also refer to home fire risk checks as home fire safety checks.

**Figure 5: Number of safety audits conducted on known premises for the 12 months to 31 March 2011 to the 12 months to 31 March 2018**

The number of safety audits refers to the number of audits fire and rescue services carried out in known premises. According to the Home Office definition, "premises known to fire and rescue authorities are the fire and rescue authority'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 results from this data.

- Royal 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 fire and rescue authorities report 'Premises known to fire and rescue authorities' as estimates based on historical data.

### **Figure 3: Activities included in a prevention visit as at 31 March 2018**

We collected this data directly from the 14 FRSs we inspected in Tranche 1 inspections. These FRSs are:

- Avon Fire and Rescue Service;
- Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service;
- Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service;
- Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service;
- Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service;
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service;
- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; and
- Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service.

### **Figures 7 and 8: Percentage of female firefighters and percentage of 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 results 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 – Tranche 1 judgments

Table 4: Effectiveness inspection judgments for each fire and rescue service

Service	Effectiveness	Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	Preventing fires and other risks	Protecting the public through fire regulation	Responding to fires and other emergencies	Responding to national risks
Avon	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Requires improvement	Good
Bedfordshire	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Good
Cambridgeshire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Cheshire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Cornwall	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Good
Hampshire	Good	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Good
Hereford & Worcester	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Good
Hertfordshire	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Good
Isles of Scilly	Good	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Not inspected

<b>Service</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>	<b>Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies</b>	<b>Preventing fires and other risks</b>	<b>Protecting the public through fire regulation</b>	<b>Responding to fires and other emergencies</b>	<b>Responding to national risks</b>
<b>Isle of Wight</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Good
<b>Lancashire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Lincolnshire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Good
<b>Surrey</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good
<b>Warwickshire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Good

**Table 5: Efficiency inspection judgments for each fire and rescue service**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Making best use of resources</b>	<b>Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future</b>
<b>Avon</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Good
<b>Bedfordshire</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good
<b>Cheshire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good
<b>Cornwall</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Good
<b>Hampshire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good
<b>Hereford &amp; Worcester</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Good
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
<b>Isles of Scilly</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Requires improvement
<b>Isle of Wight</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good
<b>Lancashire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good
<b>Lincolnshire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good
<b>Surrey</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	Inadequate	Requires improvement
<b>Warwickshire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good

**Table 6: People inspection judgment for each fire and rescue service**

<b>Service</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Promoting the right values and culture</b>	<b>Getting the right people with the right skills</b>	<b>Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity</b>	<b>Managing performance and developing leaders</b>
<b>Avon</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	Inadequate	Good	Inadequate	Requires improvement
<b>Bedfordshire</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Cheshire</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Good
<b>Cornwall</b>	<b>Good</b>	Good	Good	Good	Requires improvement
<b>Hampshire</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
<b>Hereford &amp; Worcester</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
<b>Isles of Scilly</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
<b>Isle of Wight</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
<b>Lancashire</b>	<b>Good</b>	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
<b>Lincolnshire</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement
<b>Surrey</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
<b>Warwickshire</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement

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