His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Fire and rescue services 2025–27

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

Contents

Overall summary

In our inspection, we assessed how well Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has performed in ten areas. We have made the following graded judgments:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Understanding fire and risk	Public safety through fire regulation		
	Preventing fire and risk	Responding to fires and emergencies		
	Best use of resources and future affordability	Responding to major incidents		
	Promoting values and culture	Ensuring fairness and diversity		
	Right people, right skills			
	Leading people effectively			

In the rest of the report, we set out our detailed findings about the areas in which the service has performed well and where it should improve.

Changes to this round of inspection

We last inspected Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in May/June 2023. And in October 2023, we published our inspection report with our findings on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how well it looks after its people. We followed this up with re-inspections in May 2024, September 2024 and January 2025 to specifically consider the causes of concern that were previously issued for prevention, protection and fairness and diversity. And we published our findings in July 2024, November 2024 and March 2025.

This inspection contains our fourth assessment of the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how well it looks after its people.

In our previous rounds of inspections, we assessed and gave graded judgments for 11 areas. For this inspection programme, we have combined our efficiency areas and reduced the overall number to ten. This is to reduce duplication and concentrate more on outcomes for communities and the workforce. Although we continue to use our five-tier system of judgments, these changes mean it isn't always possible to directly compare grades awarded in this round of inspections with those in previous years.

This report sets out our inspection findings for Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Our inspections provide a rounded assessment of the service. More information on how we assess fire and rescue services and our graded judgments is available on our website.

Terminology in this report

We inspect and report on policing in England and Wales and on fire and rescue services in England only. Our reports contain references to, among other things, 'national' definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, 'national' means applying to England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England and Wales and Scotland or the whole of the United Kingdom.

About the data

More information on data and analysis in this report is included in the 'About the data 2025–27' section of our website.

HM Inspector's summary

It was a pleasure to revisit Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way in which the service worked with our inspection staff.

The service is urban with significant rural communities and covers an area of 723 square miles. It serves a growing population of 870,000, which is centred around Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and High Wycombe.

Governance for this service is the responsibility of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

Since our last inspection, the service appointed a new chief fire officer in December 2023. Since then, the senior leadership team has undergone further significant changes. The service appointed a new deputy chief fire officer in November 2024 and filled new posts of assistant chief fire officer and director of people in 2024 and 2025.

The service has seen increased overall funding since our last inspection but is still required to manage its resources within a tight budget. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service cost £43.46 per head of population, which is less than the England average of £51.71. It has comprehensive financial and resourcing plans, aligned with its strategic priorities and sustainability strategies, which are achieving value for money for the public.

I am pleased with the performance of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks. However, it needs to improve in some areas to provide a consistently good service. For example, it should gather learning from all operational incidents and complete debriefs for relevant incidents consistently.

We were pleased to find the service had made progress since our inspection in May–June 2023. For example, it has worked hard to address its causes of concern and areas for improvement, implementing all cause of concern recommendations and addressing all but four of the areas for improvement. Its commitment to establishing a good internal governance model, which provides appropriate, timely and accurate oversight and scrutiny of its performance, has supported this improvement. Its senior leaders have accepted accountability and are now regularly assuring the service's performance.

Staff consistently said the new chief fire officer and restructuring of the senior leadership team had helped improve the service's culture since our last inspection. Communication from senior leaders about the strategic intention and service objectives is clear and well planned. Senior leaders are more visible, and they act as role models, promoting a positive culture through their behaviour. Although some staff feel this approach is yet to reach all middle and supervisory leaders, the service plans to develop all its leaders through training and development programmes in the coming year. This will help further establish and sustain its new leadership and behaviour framework.

My main findings from our assessments of the service over the past year are as follows:

- The service has developed a new community risk management plan that is based on thorough assessment of data and risk, informing the strategic objectives for its prevention, protection, response and resilience, people, finance and assets, and digital and data plans.
- The service needs to improve its assurance of operational learning and debriefing to continually and effectively provide a good incident response to the public.
- Financial and workforce plans, including the allocation of resources to prevention, protection and response, are now consistent with the risks and priorities identified in the community risk management plan.

The service shows clear improvement. This has been underpinned by a robust governance structure, stable and self-aware leadership, and improved data and intelligence to support decision-making at all levels.

There are still some changes that aren't fully established and the service will need to show evidence of these being sustained over time. These include the development of the on-call improvement programme, management of change and improvement projects, and maintaining a focus on risk and productivity in protection despite potential resourcing challenges. However, the service is aware of these issues, and leaders should remain committed to sustaining improvement and progress.

Overall, I commend the service on the changes it has made and expect it to continue working to resolve the further areas for improvement we have identified.

Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

Good

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at understanding risk.

Fire and rescue services should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks that could affect their communities. They should use their prevention, protection and response capabilities to prevent or mitigate these risks for the public. They should adjust these arrangements as appropriate, following robust feedback, scrutiny and oversight.

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

Main findings

The service uses data and community involvement effectively to identify risk

We were pleased to see the improvements the service had made in assessing the risks it faces. The service has assessed a suitable range of risks and threats using a thorough community risk management planning process. In its assessment of risk, it uses information it has collected from a range of internal and external sources and datasets, taking account of both local and national risk registers. For example, it has thoroughly analysed its incident response data against mapping of indices of multiple deprivation, flooding data and climate change data to consider what resources it needs to best serve the public.

In our last inspection, we identified two areas for improvement related to the service's use of data and consultation with its communities:

- The service should make sure it is informed by a comprehensive understanding of current and future risk. It should use a wide range of data to build the risk profile and use operational data to test that the risk profile is up to date.
- The service, through regular engagement with its local community, needs to build a more comprehensive profile of risk in its service area.

In the development and implementation of its latest community risk management plan (CRMP), the service has consulted the public and staff several times. When considering local risk and impacts of change proposed in the plan, it received over 200 responses online and via public focus groups from the public and staff. In 2024, the service consulted with its staff and the public on how it should respond to automated fire alarms. And in 2025/26 it consulted with the public on how it provides its on-call service, receiving more than 1,000 responses. It has committed to continuing to consult on any significant changes it makes to how it provides its services.

We are satisfied the service is now taking account of a wide range of data and is regularly involving its communities to build and test a more comprehensive risk profile of its area. Therefore, we have closed these areas for improvement.

The service has developed an effective CRMP

Once it has assessed risks, the service records its findings in an easily understood CRMP. This five-year plan is called the 'Community Risk Management Plan 2025–2030'. It describes how the service intends to use its prevention, protection and response activities to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats its communities face both now and in the future.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should make sure that the aims and objectives of prevention, protection and response activity are clearly outlined in its integrated risk management plan.

Since then, it has developed an annual plan for year one of the CRMP (2025/26). In this plan, the service summarises its annual objectives in six main areas – prevention, protection, response and resilience, people, finance and assets, and digital and data. For example, the service is using a data-led approach in both prevention and protection to target the highest-risk domestic and commercial premises for a visit, aiming to reduce risk through education and intervention. We were pleased with the progress the service has made, and we have closed this area for improvement.

The arrangements described in the CRMP also take account of the issues identified in the service's corporate risk register, which could compromise the implementation of these activities. For example, the service identifies financial sustainability, workforce stability and industrial action as high risks to the implementation of the CRMP. A dedicated risk officer and senior leaders regularly review the risks on the register, and the service has identified a range of suitable mitigation measures for each of the identified risks. For example, it has appropriate continuity plans to make sure it can continue to provide a minimum level of risk-critical functions during periods of industrial action.

The service has appropriate arrangements to monitor how it implements its CRMP objectives

Senior leaders have effective monitoring, feedback and scrutiny arrangements to make sure the aims they have set out in the CRMP for prevention, protection, response and resilience, people, finance and assets, and digital and data are being achieved.

Where the service isn't meeting its commitments to the public, senior leaders are fully aware of emerging issues and are holding leaders at all levels to account. For example, the service quickly became aware of a recurring trend in domestic false alarms. It acted quickly and saw a reduction in the following months. It is also aware it could improve its approach to mitigating road and water safety risk, including this as a main objective in its annual prevention plan 2026/27.

The service's governance arrangements provide accountability to the public

To make sure the service is accountable to members of the public and is meeting the commitments it has made to them, it is essential the service has robust oversight and governance arrangements. This provides assurance that its plans to reduce or mitigate risk are effective or are being adjusted where they aren't working.

The fire and rescue authority receives regular, meaningful updates on the arrangements the service has for prevention, protection, response and resilience, people, finance and assets, and digital and data. This helps it to hold the chief fire officer to account, set priorities for the service, reduce risk for the public and protect the health and safety of staff.

After consulting other fire and rescue services and public services to understand their internal governance arrangements, the service has designed and implemented a new internal governance structure. This involves monthly meetings of tactical delivery groups and strategic performance oversight groups. These help review a revised set of key performance indicators and projects and discuss any risk to progress against the service's objectives. The service has also developed a performance dashboard, which helps leaders across the service understand their area of the service's monthly performance.

Preventing fires and other risks

Good

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at preventing fires and other risks.

Fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, which includes giving fire safety advice. To identify people at greatest risk from fire, services should work closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary sectors, including police and ambulance services. They should share intelligence and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

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

Main findings

The service's prevention strategy targets high risk and is communicated well

In our last inspection, we identified a cause of concern about the service's inadequate identification and prioritisation of those most at risk of fire. Since then, the service has made enough progress in this area, so we have closed this cause of concern.

The service's prevention strategy has been updated and is clearly aligned with the risks identified in its community risk management plan. The service is using a data-led approach to identify those who may be at a higher risk from fire and other emergencies. It targets them for home fire safety visits, education and interventions. It has developed a domestic dwelling fire methodology, which helps crews understand where to target preventative activity.

Leaders responsible for prevention have clearly communicated the strategy and main prevention aims to the workforce. As a result, prevention staff and station-based staff understand how they contribute to the prevention aims of the service individually and as a team. For example, there are clear prevention targets for staff to achieve. And the service monitors progress against these targets in monthly team meetings and through the new internal governance structures. The number of completed home fire safety visits has increased year on year since our last inspection.

The service's teams work well together and with other relevant organisations on prevention. They share relevant information when needed. The service uses information to adjust its planning assumptions and direct activity between its prevention, protection and response functions. For example, following thorough evaluation of the prevention activity completed by specialist prevention staff in high-rise buildings, the service has reallocated this work to a different group of staff. This means staff are working to target the risks they are trained to reduce.

The service targets its prevention activity at those who need it most

The service uses a risk-based approach to clearly prioritise its prevention activity towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. For example, it has reviewed trends in its own incident data, including data from incidents with casualties and fatalities. It has compared this with Mosaic data, health and social care vulnerability data, and national insight data to make sure it understands who might be most at risk of a dwelling fire and need a home fire safety visit.

Using this information, it decides on the urgency of the home fire safety visit needed. Those referred to the service who are considered very high risk are prioritised for contact within 96 hours and are visited within 7 days. High-risk people are visited within 14 days and medium-risk people within 28 days. Low-risk people are referred to the service's online advice portal. The service has a very low number of cases awaiting a visit and understands the reasons for any delays in completing these visits.

It uses a range of information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable individuals and groups including those from under-represented communities. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service reported that 87.8 percent of home fire safety visits (4,434 of 5,050) had been at a household containing at least one vulnerable person. This is slightly above the national rate of 85.6 percent.

It carries out a range of interventions and campaigns, which it adapts to the level of risk in its communities. It uses social media messaging and connects to local groups to raise awareness of national and local campaigns, promoting fire and road safety.

Staff are trained to carry out home fire safety visits and school visits

Prevention and station-based staff told us they had the right skills and confidence to carry out home fire safety visits and school visits. These visits cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies.

Online and in-person training on prevention topics is helping the service sustain its improvements. Its specialist prevention staff have received training on hoarding, British Sign Language, stopping smoking and addiction. The service should continue to evaluate its prevention training as many staff described being keen to continue to learn how they can help support the most vulnerable people in their communities. This will make sure the service continues to improve its service to the public.

The service carries out proportionate quality assurance of its home fire safety visit activity. It reviewed quality assurance approaches from other fire and rescue services, as well as fire standards and the National Fire Chiefs Council's approach before developing its own tools. It has assessed its specialist prevention staff using its revised quality assurance approach and intends to extend this to all staff completing home fire safety visits. Staff described wanting to know more about insights from the quality assurance process so they could improve their practice.

The service effectively evaluates its prevention activity

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should evaluate its prevention work so that it understands the benefits better.

Since then, the service has put in place good evaluation tools to measure how effective its activity is and make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to the prevention services that meet their needs. For example, evaluation of the service's provision of fire-retardant bedding and sensory impairment equipment (such as vibrating pads and strobe lights) has resulted in an improved approach. This change means the service better supports individuals who need such interventions, focusing efforts on education and referrals to smoking cessation services or the provision of alarms for people with a hearing impairment. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

Prevention activities take account of feedback from the public, other organisations and other parts of the service. For example, the service requests feedback from the schools where it provides educational sessions. As a result, it has improved the content of these sessions as well as the booking process.

The service uses feedback to inform its planning assumptions and change future activity to make sure it focuses on what its communities need and what works.

The service works well with other organisations to reduce the risk of fires and other emergencies

The service works with a range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. It continues to provide fire safety education to children and young people via the Safety Centre in Milton Keynes and has secured funding for the next four years.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service carried out 5,050 home fire safety visits. The service completed 1,029 home fire safety visits that were referrals from other agencies and 268 that led to the service making an onward referral to at least one other organisation.

We found good evidence that it routinely referred people at greatest risk to organisations that may better meet their needs. These organisations include Buckinghamshire Council, adult social care, Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service, Age UK, Hoarding UK and Trading Standards.

Arrangements are also in place to receive referrals from others. The service provides training to partners who refer vulnerable people for a home fire safety visit. This has been evaluated and shown to improve the information shared with the service by partner organisations.

The service acts appropriately on the referrals it receives. For example, it acts promptly to triage the risk associated with the referral, contacts the occupant and carries out a home fire safety visit within the timescales it has set itself.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses this information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention activity. For example, it carries out serious incident reviews to understand if anything could have been done to prevent a fire or reduce its impact. It then shares this learning with other agencies.

The service continues to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified safeguarding problems. They told us that they felt confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. We reviewed cases in which staff had identified safeguarding concerns and had made a referral using the correct process. The service has dedicated staff to manage safeguarding concerns, and the out-of-hours contact process is clear.

The service has a team to tackle fire-setting behaviour

In the year ending 30 September 2025, the service attended 930 deliberate fire incidents, which has increased from 723 in the previous year. The rate of attendance at deliberate fire incidents was 105.1 per 100,000 population in the year ending 30 September 2025. This is lower than the England rate of 131.4.

The service carries out a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people with different needs who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. Staff are trained to carry out interventions and provide fire-setting education. They have provided this to over 30 children in the last year.

When appropriate, the service shares information with relevant organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists. But it knows it could do this more routinely with partners, such as Thames Valley Police, to prevent arson incidents. It has included arson prevention in its prevention plan for 2026/27, and we look forward to seeing the outcome of this work.

Protecting the public through fire regulation

Adequate

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at protecting the public through fire regulation.

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

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it responds to statutory building consultations effectively and within the required time frames.

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

Main findings

The service's protection strategy prioritises risk and is communicated well

In our last inspection, we identified a cause of concern about not providing clear direction so protection teams could prioritise work according to risk. Since then, the service has made enough progress in this area and we have closed this cause of concern.

The service's protection strategy is now clearly linked to the risks identified in its community risk management plan. It has clearly defined its RBIP, identifying which premises need regular audits as they are the highest risk to the public.

Leaders responsible for protection have clearly communicated the strategy and main protection aims to the workforce. As a result, protection staff understand how they contribute to the protection aims of the service individually and as a team.

Staff across the service are involved in this activity and share information as needed. For example, operational staff are informed when a building is given a prohibition notice so they are aware should they need to respond to an incident there. Similarly, operational staff inform the protection team when they identify risks and hazards relating to protection at a building. However, the service could do more to effectively use this information to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between its prevention, protection and response functions.

Capacity pressures can affect the protection team and reduce its effectiveness. The service is assessing how it can reallocate some low-risk protection activity to operational crews. This will free up more time for protection specialists to complete high-risk work, including building consultations, proactively making sure premises meet fire safety regulations.

The service is making sure it targets the highest risks for fire safety audits

The service's RBIP is focused on its highest-risk buildings. The service uses a data-led approach to assign each building a risk score, which determines inspection frequency. It completes a fire safety audit at very high-risk buildings every year and at high-risk buildings every three years. When we reviewed the service's audits of high-risk buildings, we found it had completed them in the time frames it had set itself.

The service reviews its RBIP regularly to make sure it keeps its focus on priority buildings. And it reports monthly on its performance to senior leaders and the fire and rescue authority for oversight.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service completed 571 fire safety audits against its target of 611, which equates to 2.5 audits per 100 known premises. This is above the national rate of 2.0, and is the first time the service has exceeded the national rate. According to its own performance report for the first three quarters of 2025/26, it had completed 525 fire safety audits against a target of 594. During our inspection, the service said it was on track to achieve its target for the year ending 31 March 2026 of 650 audits. It said monthly monitoring would give an early indication if it wouldn't meet this target.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service set itself a high-risk building audit target of 523. It didn't achieve this target as it carried out 398 high-risk building audits. This is 76.1 percent of its target achieved. The service told us this was due to other work, such as completing training and staffing changes in the protection team, reducing the capacity.

The service has enough qualified protection staff and staff in development

The service has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of its RBIP and follow up on enforcement action. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service had 14 competent staff, and a further 11 staff in development. In the same year, the service carried out 412 audits of buildings that were considered unsatisfactory and 412 enforcement activities following on from these. This shows the service has enough staff for proportionate enforcement activities.

Staff get the right training and work to appropriate accreditation. We found protection staff were trained and accredited in line with the National Fire Chiefs Council's Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators. The service also provides staff with regular continuing professional development and training opportunities. It quality assures completed audits and supports peer reviewing of audit work.

The service is actively responding to new legislation

The Building Safety Act 2022 and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 have been introduced to bring about better regulation and management of tall buildings.

This legislation has led to an increase in the time the service spends assuring the safety of tall buildings. It expects this demand to increase with the increased pace of remediation work that is underway to replace flammable cladding.

The service has worked closely with the local authority to develop strategic and tactical groups to oversee this work. These groups agree how to proceed with the work needed to make sure these premises aren't a risk to the public and they share information on the enforcement and audit action needed.

The service is supporting the Building Safety Regulator. It has allocated staff time to carry out training and complete audits of identified high-rise, high-risk buildings as part of its RBIP. It promptly escalates any concerns from these audits to the regional Building Safety Regulator team via regularly scheduled meetings. It expects these arrangements to have manageable impact on its other protection activity.

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 introduced a range of duties for the managers of tall buildings. These include a requirement to give floor plans to the fire and rescue service and inform it of any substantial faults to essential firefighting equipment, such as firefighting lifts.

We found the service had good arrangements to receive this information. When it doesn't receive the right information, it takes action. And it updates accordingly the risk information it gives its operational staff.

The service makes sure fire safety audits are completed consistently

We reviewed a range of audits the service had carried out at different buildings across its area. These included audits carried out:

- as part of the service's RBIP;
- after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies;
- after enforcement action had been taken; or
- at high-rise, high-risk buildings.

In our review, we found the service had completed the audits to a high standard, in a consistent, systematic way and in line with its policies. The service makes relevant information from its audits available to operational teams and control room operators. Staff receive a protection bulletin, which provides updates about high-risk buildings.

The service carries out proportionate quality assurance of its protection activity

Each member of the protection team undergoes a fire safety audit quality assurance process at least twice a year. Outcomes of the process have led to training in specific topics such as working with responsible persons.

The service has good evaluation tools to measure how effective its activity is and make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to the protection services that meet their needs. For example, the service completes post-fire protection reviews to make sure it has addressed any fire safety concerns for the public and gathered learning.

The service uses its enforcement powers proportionately

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers and, when appropriate, it prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations.

Of the buildings the service audited in the year ending 31 March 2025, it considered 72.2 percent (412 of 571) to be unsatisfactory. And it carried out 412 enforcement activities as a result. These included 4 alteration notices, 384 informal notifications, 12 enforcement notices and 12 prohibition notices. It carried out no prosecutions. It completed 1 prosecution in the five years from 2020/21 to 2024/25. It adds this information to the National Fire Chiefs Council's enforcement register, helping to keep the register up to date and accurate.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should ensure that its staff have the confidence to use the full range of enforcement powers.

Since then, the service has introduced key performance indicators, which help it monitor and understand its use of enforcement powers, training for staff from a legal provider in enforcement action and a peer review process for enforcement notices. The service has worked hard to address this area for improvement and we have now closed it.

The service works well with other enforcement agencies to ensure fire safety and protect the public

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety, and it routinely exchanges risk information with them. These agencies include other fire and rescue services, the Building Safety Regulator, local authorities, the Care Quality Commission, immigration services and safety advisory groups.

The service doesn't always complete building consultations in time

The service doesn't always respond to building consultations on time. In the year ending 31 March 2025, it responded to 73.2 percent of building consultations (657 of 898) within the required time frame of 15 days. This means it doesn't consistently meet its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings.

The service is aware of this. It explained that to make sure the highest-risk buildings identified in its RBIP were audited on time when team capacity was reduced, it chose to complete these audits instead of completing building consultations within the required time frame. We acknowledge the service is reviewing different options to prevent this loss in capacity. But it should make sure it responds to statutory building consultations effectively and within the required time frame to proactively reduce the risk buildings may pose to public safety. We have identified this as an area for improvement.

The service is proactively working with businesses to ensure fire safety

The service proactively works with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. It has developed a business engagement framework and has a dedicated business fire safety team, which actively promotes advice and guidance via events, visits and social media. The service has 13 active primary authority schemes to support various businesses to comply with fire safety regulation.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should make sure that it plans its work with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on how they can comply with fire safety regulations.

The service has worked to address this, and we have closed this area for improvement.

Responding to fires and other emergencies

Adequate

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at responding to fires and other emergencies.

Fire and rescue services must be able to respond to a range of incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies in their areas.

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure that its mobile data terminals are reliable so firefighters can easily access up-to-date risk information.

The service should make sure that it has an effective system for sharing and applying the learning from operational incidents.

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

Main findings

The service has revised its response strategy to align it with the community risk management plan

The service has linked its response strategy to the risks identified in its community risk management plan (CRMP).

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should assure itself that it understands what resources it reasonably requires to meet its foreseeable risk; it should make sure that all its fire engines can be sufficiently resourced, if required.

We were pleased to see the service had started to address this. It has completed a thorough analysis of its operational model to understand if it has the right resources to respond to both daily demand and infrequent events such as flooding or wildfires. It has committed to improving the availability and use of its on-call resources by changing and reshaping its operational response model throughout the term of the CRMP. It refers to this work as its on-call improvement programme. It has been clear that many of the on-call fire engines don't contribute to a faster response on a day-to-day basis and that the service maintains the ability to provide resilience during a high-impact event such as a flood or wildfire. The service has reviewed the overall number it needs for such events and has consulted with the public about how it intends to reduce and reallocate resources for better use elsewhere in the service. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

Leaders responsible for response have clearly communicated the strategy and main response aims to the workforce. The service also clearly reports on its response performance in its new internal governance structure and to the fire and rescue authority. As a result, operational staff understand how they contribute to the response aims of the service individually and as a team.

The service locates its fire engines and operational staff, and designs its working patterns, to help it respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources. For example, it has introduced rural firefighting vehicles at strategic locations across the county and maintains water rescue resources and urban search and rescue capacity.

It is positive that the service is also monitoring how its borderless mobilising approach with the other Thames Valley fire and rescue services is working. It knows how many of the incidents in its area are being responded to by other services and which service is first to attend. This is helping it know the impact of changing and reshaping its operational response model.

The service has set out a new response standard in its CRMP

The service has set out response standards in its CRMP and aims to respond to all incidents in an average of ten minutes (not including call-handling time). The CRMP clearly outlines that the response will be faster in more urban areas and rapidly developing areas, where wholetime fire engines are located, and perhaps slower in rural areas, which are covered by on-call fire engines and staff. The service reports on exceptions that are longer than the average incident response time in its quarterly performance reports to the fire and rescue authority and closely monitors the reason for any delay.

There are no national response standards, but the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) does publish data on response times to primary and secondary fires. However, locally set standards may be calculated differently to the data the MHCLG produces.

MHCLG data shows that in the year ending 30 September 2025, the service's average response time (including call-handling time) to primary fires was 10 minutes and 5 seconds. This is faster than the average for services that are urban with significant rural communities, which is 10 minutes and 37 seconds. Using this measure, the service's average response time has remained very similar to that in the year ending 30 September 2024: 10 minutes and 4 seconds.

As part of the service's governance and performance monitoring, it reviews any responses to incidents that are much longer than the average response time. This helps it understand any issues affecting its response standard and report clearly to the public about them.

The service has improved the availability of its fire engines

In the year ending 31 March 2025, availability of wholetime fire engines was 98.2 percent. This is an increase from the previous year when availability was 97.2 percent. The service aims to have 12 fire engines immediately available. We were pleased to see it was now more regularly meeting this aim. The service told us that in 2025 it had an average of 13 immediately available fire engines. It understands that this is due to making sure it meets its wholetime staffing level.

The service told us that, during the same period, availability of on-call fire engines also improved by 5 percent. The service understands this increase is due to reviewing the on-call contracts and staffing availability patterns, to make sure it can resource more fire engines. Through its on-call improvement programme it intends to increase the availability of these fire engines further during the length of the CRMP.

The service needs to assure itself staff can access risk information when responding to incidents

The service routinely collects and updates information about the highest-risk people, places and threats it has identified. It ranks this information from very high risk to medium risk. It aims to visit all high and very high-risk sites every year and medium-risk sites every three years.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service had identified 1,563 sites that pose more risk to firefighters if an incident took place. During the same period, the service visited 672 sites to update its records and familiarise itself with the firefighting risks at the sites. This is an increase from the previous year when the service completed 561 visits.

We sampled a range of risk information in the service's central database and on mobile data terminals, including the information for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings and the information held by fire control. The information we reviewed was up to date and accurate. But we found the service didn't always complete its quality assurance process consistently. Some of the risk information records we reviewed hadn't been signed off by a qualifying manager.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement related to making sure mobile data terminals were reliable. Firefighters use these to review the risk information on the way to an incident. The information helps them plan their response to the incident and consider any additional risks that might affect their approach. In this inspection we found firefighters still couldn't always easily access the information. We understand the service had resolved this issue, but a further change in the service's mobile connectivity to its mobile data terminals has resulted in access becoming difficult again. We are keeping this area for improvement open.

The service makes sure incident commanders are well trained

The service has incident commanders who are trained and regularly and properly assessed. It has detailed records for the assessments, which are completed at the Fire Service College, and regularly records continuing professional development hours completed. This helps it safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents it could face, from those that are small and routine to major and multi-agency incidents.

In 2024/25, the service needed 152 incident commanders and had 152 accredited. There were no incident commanders who were still carrying out the same work after their accreditation had expired.

As part of our inspection, we interviewed incident commanders from across the service. They were familiar with risk assessing, decision-making and recording information at incidents in line with national best practice as well as the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles.

The service could do more to evaluate operational performance

As part of our inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included a recent exercise, a fatal incident and a house fire. When the service had gathered feedback and debriefed an incident, it used staff trained in carrying out structured debriefs.

We were disappointed to find the service didn't consistently follow its policies to make sure that all staff were able to provide timely feedback about the command of incidents and that structured debriefs were taking place in line with identified triggers. As a result, it doesn't always update internal risk information after an incident or routinely improve its service to the public based on continual learning from incidents.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement related to the service sharing and applying the learning from operational incidents effectively. Despite some improvement in tracking the learning from incidents, the operational assurance team is still following a manual process to gather feedback via email and then collate it. And we found there was no monitoring of incidents that might have met the service's criteria for an operational debrief. The service doesn't record its decisions when determining if an incident should or shouldn't have a structured debrief. We are therefore keeping this area for improvement open.

Fire control is included in service activity

We were pleased to find that the service's control staff were integrated into its command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. The service also invites the control room manager to its regular operational assurance meetings.

The service is on track with implementing national operational guidance

The service is making sure its policies are in line with national operational guidance. It is using the new National Fire Chiefs Council online resources to track its progress.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

Adequate

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

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

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure it has an effective method to share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place.

The service should make sure it is well prepared to form part of a response to major and multi-agency incidents, and its procedures for responding are well tested and all staff understand them.

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

Main findings

The service continues to be prepared to respond to major and multi-agency incidents

The service has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. It has listed these in both local and national risk registers as part of its community risk management planning. For example, it has introduced rural firefighting vehicles into its fleet and holds tabletop exercises in preparation for the summer season. It works with local resilience forum partners to assess risk and prepare a Thames Valley risk register.

It is also familiar with the significant risks that neighbouring fire and rescue services may face, which it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. These include fires in high-rise buildings – tested by Exercise Caleo – and marauding terrorist attacks at sites such as Silverstone racetrack and the Milton Keynes Bowl. Firefighters have access to information from neighbouring services about risks within 10 km of the county boundary.

The service should assure itself of its ability to respond to major and multi-agency incidents

During this inspection, we considered how well prepared the service is to respond to foreseeable major incidents including severe weather events, such as flooding or wildfires.

We found the service had well-developed policies and procedures for safely managing these incident types. Staff at most levels understand them, and some training and exercises have taken place to test them. The service has a dedicated area on its intranet to provide staff with information about major and multi-agency incidents. Its operational assurance team creates an annual plan for major incident exercises and carries out each debrief within six weeks.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service completed 11 multi-agency training exercises. The number of multi-agency training exercises per 1,000 full-time equivalent firefighters is 29.3, which is lower than the England rate of 54.5.

The service is working with other emergency responders to make local communities more resilient. In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should make sure that it consistently gives relevant information to the public to help keep them safe during and after all incidents.

Since then, it has developed its out-of-hours communications response to make sure the public are well informed in the event of an incident. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

We also identified an area for improvement in our last inspection related to sharing fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and putting a dedicated communication link in place. The service has taken some action to address this issue, working with Thames Valley Fire Control and the other Thames Valley fire and rescue services. However, there still isn’t a single communication link between control, the bridgehead (the position where firefighters are carrying out firefighting operations) and the incident command unit.

We acknowledge an electronic means of communication between control and the scene of an incident has been developed and tested. We also acknowledge a different electronic means of sharing fire survival guidance information at the scene of an incident has been developed. But this method still needs manual updates and could lead to miscommunication of information. In addition, not all staff have received updated training on the new procedure. Staff referred to still using physical evacuation boards instead of the electronic system. As a result, we are keeping the area for improvement open.

The service hasn't declared a major incident in the last two years. We reviewed the service's exercises for a wildfire and a death in service.

The service has carried out some realistic training and exercises to test its policies and procedures for safely managing high-rise building fires, marauding terrorist attacks and extreme weather events, which might need a multi-agency or major incident response. But these didn't include all staff groups that would be expected to respond to incidents of this nature. We heard from many station staff that they hadn't been involved in a multi-agency exercise in the last 12 to 18 months, or in some cases not in the last three years. We have identified this as an area for improvement.

The service continues to work well with other fire and rescue services

The service supports other fire and rescue services when they are responding to emergency incidents. For example, staff at stations that border the other Thames Valley fire and rescue services described organising exercises across the border. And the service uses its tactical advisors to respond to incidents across its borders. It has successfully deployed resources to other services including its national resilience assets such as an urban search and rescue unit and rescue boats.

It has drafted plans for a joint response in the event of industrial action, which means the Thames Valley services would be able to provide a minimum level of service. It is intraoperable with these services and can form part of a multi-agency response.

The service follows Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP).

The service could give us some evidence it consistently follows these principles. Having recently taken part in a JESIP assurance review, the service was able to show it has strengths in training and staff competence.

But the service isn't taking the opportunity to carry out robust debriefs after multi-agency incidents, as described in the section 'The service could do more to evaluate operational performance'. This means it may not be identifying any problems it has with applying JESIP. This could compromise the service's ability to respond effectively with other emergency services when major incidents do occur.

The service carries out some cross-border exercises, but doesn't include all staff

The service carries out some cross-border exercises with neighbouring fire and rescue services. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service completed ten training exercises with neighbouring services. The number of training exercises with neighbouring services per 1,000 full-time equivalent firefighters is 26.7, which is higher than the England rate of 24.5. In our workforce survey, 94 percent of respondents who had operational roles (145 of 154) agreed the service carried out operational exercises effectively with neighbouring services. This helps the services work together effectively to keep the public safe.

But the service doesn't plan these exercises to include all staff, taking account of its resourcing demand, and doesn't include the risks of foreseeable major incidents where the service could be needed to give support or ask for help from neighbouring services. For example, some staff couldn't recall having completed a cross-border exercise in the last year to 18 months. We also found the service used only some learning from these exercises to inform risk information and service plans.

The service works well with other Thames Valley organisations

The service has good arrangements to respond to emergencies with agencies that make up the Thames Valley local resilience forum. These arrangements include providing regular training in initiating tactical and strategic command groups during a major or multi-agency incident.

The service is a valued member of the forum and chairs the warn and inform group. Staff also regularly attend the continuous improvement group, business continuity group, chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear group, risk group; technical communications group, and training and exercising group. The service takes part in regular training events with other members of the forum and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents. It uses its operational learning and assurance meetings to discuss the feedback from forum exercises.

The service continues to adopt national operational learning

The service makes sure it knows about national operational learning updates from other fire and rescue services and joint organisational learning from other organisations, such as the police and ambulance services. It uses this learning to inform the planning assumptions it makes with other organisations. It also contributes to this learning. For example, it recently submitted a national operational learning update about an electrical supply at a house fire.

Making best use of resources to provide an efficient and affordable service

Good

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making the best use of its resources to manage risk and to make sure it is efficient and affordable.

Fire and rescue services should manage their resources properly and appropriately, aligning them with their risks and statutory responsibilities. Services should make best possible use of resources to achieve the best results for the public.

Services should continuously look for ways to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. This includes transforming how they work and improving their value for money. They should have robust spending plans that reflect future financial challenges and efficiency opportunities, and they should invest in better services for the public.

Area for improvement

The service should assure itself that IT projects are well managed.

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

Main findings

The service's governance and scrutiny arrangements are leading to improvements

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority oversees the service. Its governance role includes setting the strategic direction of the service and providing scrutiny to monitor the service's performance and make sure its strategic aims are achieved. The service has worked hard to improve its internal governance arrangements. We were pleased to see they were leading to improvements in both the effectiveness of its service and how efficiently it operates.

The service has effective strategic oversight arrangements to manage financial and resourcing risks, performance and improvement plans. It has effective processes, controls and internal governance arrangements to manage strategic risks. Internal governance groups meet monthly to review progress against community risk management plan (CRMP) objectives, key performance indicators and risk registers. These groups report to a monthly strategic CRMP performance board or programme board, and a strategic leadership board. They report to the fire and rescue authority quarterly.

Since 2023, the service has also completed several internal audits to provide assurance to the leadership team and the fire and rescue authority that its controls and systems are effective. These audits have included the following:

- financial assurance reviews covering the medium-term financial plan, core financial controls, and contract and critical supplier management; and
- reviews of partnership working, community risk management planning and workforce planning.

The service reports accurate and suitably detailed financial, risk and performance information to the fire and rescue authority. The service's committee chairs have been selected based on their previous experience and skill set to enable effective scrutiny. Fire and rescue authority members attend workshops and receive training from the service to support them in their oversight and scrutiny roles. We found the authority was provided with additional scrutiny papers on request such as those needed to understand the sustained performance of the protection department.

The scheme of delegation clearly sets out responsibilities for the service's senior leaders. There are effective internal governance arrangements to hold senior leaders to account for the corporate management of the service. A strategic improvement board, health and safety committee, and culture and ethics steering group reinforce this new internal governance structure and encourage continuous improvement in day-to-day work.

The service allocates its resources according to risk

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities it sets out in its next integrated risk management plan.

We were pleased to find the service had made improvements since then. Its financial and workforce plans, including allocating resources to prevention, protection and response, are consistent with the risks and priorities it has identified in its CRMP. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

The service has evaluated its mix of crewing and duty systems. It has analysed its operational cover and can show it deploys its fire engines and operational staff to manage risk efficiently. It has increased the wholetime firefighter staffing level since our last inspection, which helps it provide the immediately available fire engines it states it needs to effectively manage daily demand. It has maintained its 12 immediately available fire engines each month during 2024/25.

The service is taking steps to maintain availability of its on-call crews. It has revised on-call contracts and reviewed the resources it can feasibly maintain. During the early months of 2026, it consulted on an on-call improvement programme, to address the issue of underused on-call fire engines and stations. It intends to implement further aspects of this programme throughout the length of the CRMP.

The service is using its resources appropriately to mitigate the issues identified in the corporate risk register that affect implementation of its CRMP. An increased number of staff in the prevention department and administration function is making sure those at risk from a fire are prioritised for a home fire safety visit.

The service has sustainable plans to resource its protection function if protection grant funding is reduced or withdrawn. It has invested in training resources, courses and staff development through funding apprenticeships.

The service still uses a form of voluntary overtime called ‘bank shifts’ to manage periods of absence and staffing levels. It monitors use of this closely and aims to reduce its reliance on it, now that the service is providing its full level of wholetime firefighters.

The service understands its future financial risks and plans well for these

In 2025/26, the service’s net revenue budget was £42.3 million. The net revenue budget for 2024/25 was adjusted for inflation from £39.5 million to £41.6 million. This means the budget increased by 1.7 percent between 2024/25 and 2025/26 in real terms. The budget was funded by £28.5 million from council tax, £7.6 million from business rates and £6.2 million from revenue support and other grants. The service’s total funding was £42.3 million, which is £47.80 per head of its population. This is within the typical range compared to all services in England.

The service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It planned for the outcome of the Government’s Fair Funding Review by using an external company to model different funding scenarios and the potential impact on the service. And the service describes in its CRMP the risk that insufficient funding would pose to the service’s ability to provide its core services.

It plans to mitigate its main financial risks. For example, it has identified its four main financial risks as funding reductions, inflationary cost pressures, pension cost increases and estate costs. Through its use of zero-based budgeting it identifies savings and reallocates funding to support its strategic priorities. And it plans to use revenue budget savings to fund its capital reserves, reducing future borrowing needs.

Its planning assumptions are relatively robust and realistic. They take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. It has carried out a sensitivity analysis, which has helped it consider the implications of different levels of funding and spending pressures, such as pay awards and inflation, on its financial forecast.

The service builds its plans on sound scenarios. This helps make sure it is sustainable and underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money.

The service's capital programme is set at £19 million, covering 2025/26 to 2027/28. It includes a new training centre, redevelopment of High Wycombe Fire Station, and replacement fire engines and specialist vehicles such as those with a turntable ladder for working at height.

Capital financing costs are 0.5 percent of the net revenue budget. They are set to decrease by 0.1 percent by 2027/28 under existing capital plans.

By 2027/28, the service has forecasted debt and reserves to be 10.1 percent and 7 percent, respectively, of the net revenue budget. This compares to forecasted levels of 10.8 percent and 17 percent, respectively, for 2025/26. This shows that the service expects debt levels to remain broadly the same and reserves to decrease over the period of its medium-term financial plan.

The service has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves. This plan is regularly reviewed to reflect the priorities of the CRMP and their use against the capital plan adjusted year to year.

Senior leaders take accountability for performance management and assure it

We were pleased to find the service had made improvements since our last inspection. Its arrangements for managing performance clearly link resource use to its CRMP and its strategic priorities. Its quarterly performance reports to the fire and rescue authority are clear and include commentary about what the service should be providing in line with its CRMP. Where a performance measure isn't being met, the reports include detail and reasons why not. Senior leaders are accountable for the performance of their areas and staff.

The service has made changes to improve staff productivity and to make sure resources are used efficiently and effectively and provide value for money. It has increased the number of home fire safety visits and fire safety audits it completes. It has also reduced its attendance to false alarms, helping crews to focus this saved time on prevention and protection activities.

The service has an effective, risk-based system to manage its response to fire false alarms. These are incidents where the service attends a location but on arrival discovers that no resources are needed to resolve the incident or that no incident occurred. In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should review its response to false alarms to ensure that protection and operational resources are used effectively.

Since then, the service has reviewed its policies, consulted with the public on a change of approach and implemented the change. In the year ending 30 September 2025, 33.1 percent of incidents attended in Buckinghamshire were fire false alarms. In the year ending 30 September 2024 42 percent of incidents attended had been fire false alarms. The rate of attendance at incidents that were fire false alarms was 2.7 per 1,000 population. This is lower than the England rate of 4.3. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

The service is more assured that its workforce is productive

The service understands how it uses its wholetime firefighters. It collects data on how they spend their time across day and night shifts. It makes the most of its capacity.

Staff showed an understanding of how their individual performance contributed to station plans and performance, department plans and CRMP objectives.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive, that its time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible and in a more joined-up way to meet the priorities in its integrated risk management plan.

Since then, we found the service has been taking steps to make sure its workforce was as productive as possible. This included putting in place new ways of working. For example, it has improved the use of electronic station-based calendars to manage staff time. These monitor staff contribution to activities including school education visits, familiarisation visits to sites of high risk and community engagement work. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

The service continues to make efficiency savings and understands all the benefits of its collaborations

In 2024/25, the service's expenditure was £38.45 million, which is £43.46 per head of its population. This is within the typical range compared to all services in England.

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. This scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money.

It consistently achieves the savings identified in its financial and efficiency plans. It made all its planned £878,000 savings between 2022/23 and 2024/25. Examples of savings achieved include vacating previously leased buildings and sharing the cost of buildings with other emergency services.

The service is taking steps to make sure it achieves efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. It is doing this in important areas such as estate, fleet and procurement. It has reviewed its procurement processes and assessed itself against the Fire Standards Board procurement and commercial fire standard. The service told us it was compliant with the standard. Through sound contract management the service achieved an overall reduction in the annual cost of software licences, which could have increased significantly otherwise.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should make sure that it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.

Since then, it has improved how it monitors and reviews the benefits and results of its contract arrangements and collaborations. It has completed work with the other Thames Valley fire and rescue services to better understand the outcomes of its collaborative work. It can show the intended outcomes are being achieved. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

The service knows from its project management peer review that it could improve how it records all the benefits from its internal improvement projects. We look forward to seeing how the service does this by the time of our next inspection.

Through its approach to value for money, the service has identified and achieved efficiencies that have improved its services to the public.

The service continues to improve its fleet and estate

The service's capital programme and estate and fleet strategies have clear links to its CRMP. The service has identified how it can invest in the estate during the term of this CRMP and contribute to its workforce strategy objectives, such as developing a local training facility and redeveloping High Wycombe Fire Station.

Both strategies exploit opportunities to improve effectiveness and efficiency. The service has considered the impact some of the estate facilities might have on helping to diversify its workforce. It is gradually improving station changing facilities. And it has plans to review its fleet, which will also help it track what is needed for maintenance.

The service regularly reviews these strategies so it can properly assess the effect any changes in estate and fleet provision, or future innovation, have on risk.

It consistently carries out estate and fleet projects on time and within budget and manages risks appropriately. Recent station updates have focused on the need to improve and provide adequate facilities for female and male staff.

The service uses technology to improve productivity but needs to improve how it manages IT projects

The service considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should assure itself that its IT systems are resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible.

Since then, it has introduced smartphones to all fire engines and made sure the hardware at stations is up to date. It has made improvements to its systems to make sure they are being used to record information accurately. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service needs to assure itself that it is maximising opportunities to improve workforce productivity and develop future capacity through use of innovation, including the use of appropriate and up-to-date technology.

In this inspection, we found the service aimed to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology. For example, it has invested in an IT trainer to help staff understand how they can use software available to them to manage their workloads more effectively. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

But the service doesn’t consistently carry out IT projects on time and within budget and doesn’t manage risks appropriately. A project to update the system used to record site-specific risk information has been ongoing since 2018, without being fully implemented. There have been several changes in the project lead and difficulties resolving specific issues in the project. Besides this, the IT team technical experts aren’t always involved in the scope, planning and implementation stages of significant IT projects. We have identified this as an area for improvement.

The service has increased its capacity and capability to manage change

The service has put in place the capacity and capability it needs to achieve sustainable change. It has invested in new roles. These include an assistant chief fire officer to support improvement in its service provision and a director of people to support change in the workforce and in the capacity of departments such as prevention and protection.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should make sure it has the right skills and capacity to successfully manage change across the organisation.

In this inspection, we found the service managed change through effective projects and programmes. It had a clear internal structure with appropriate governance arrangements to make sure progress against projects and programmes was monitored, scrutinised and challenged. It has also invested in project management roles and a performance management dashboard to help monitor the outputs of change projects across the service. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

Promoting, embedding and improving values and culture

Good

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at promoting, embedding and improving values and culture.

Fire and rescue services should have positive and inclusive cultures, which are maintained and improved through feedback from staff, scrutiny by leaders and oversight by the fire and rescue authority. Workforce well-being, both physical and mental, should be a priority, and unacceptable behaviour should always be challenged and managed appropriately.

Area for improvement

The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure staff don't work excessive hours.

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

Main findings

The service has a positive culture and staff understand and demonstrate the behaviours and values

The service has well-defined values, which staff understand. We found staff at all levels of the service showed behaviour that reflects service values. This includes senior and middle leaders, who take accountability for their actions and performance. However, senior leaders are aware some middle and supervisory leaders still need to complete the new leadership training and develop their skills in managing performance and communicating effectively. This will make sure this positive culture extends to all parts of the service.

We were encouraged by the cultural improvements the service had made. It has reviewed and renewed its values and behaviours since our last inspection and has aligned them well with the Core Code of Ethics. Staff understand the values and behaviours, and they are integrated within policies and procedures, such as the recruitment, probation and promotion processes. They are displayed across the service's headquarters and intranet, and staff have received online training in values, behaviours and equality, diversity and inclusion.

In our workforce survey, 91 percent of respondents (197 of 216) agreed their manager consistently modelled and maintained the service's values.

The service continues to be compliant with safeguarding legislation by completing appropriate background checks for all existing members of staff. In the year ending 31 March 2025, 94.5 percent of existing employees who needed a background check had one.

The service is also reducing the risk of abuse, harm and neglect for both the public and staff by completing background checks on new recruits and, if appropriate, existing staff who are applying for new roles. In the year ending 31 March 2025, 98 percent of new recruits who needed a background check had one.

The service is monitoring the impact of cultural changes on its workforce

The service has robust systems to take feedback from a range of activity, scrutinise it and understand the impact on staff and the public. Activity includes public complaints, staff grievances and disciplinary action. We found good examples of the service adjusting policies and procedures as a direct result of the scrutiny that had taken place.

The fire and rescue authority receives regular, meaningful updates about people-related issues. This helps it to hold the chief fire officer to account, set priorities for the service, reduce risk for the public and protect the health and safety of staff.

A new people delivery group and a culture and ethics steering group are helping the service to monitor and shape the actions for an improved culture. Staff reported the service as having improved in this area since our last inspection. They are proud to work for the service and now understand how their work contributes to community risk management plan objectives, making the working environment more positive.

The service is open to feedback from staff and communicates transparently

The service has effective arrangements to communicate with staff and representative bodies, such as trade unions, and to take account of their legitimate concerns. It has a range of formal and informal arrangements. These include annual surveys of all staff, an anonymous reporting line, robust whistleblowing, discipline and grievance procedures, and regular meetings with staff representative groups through a joint consultation forum. The service also provides an opportunity for staff and representative bodies to attend meetings of the internal governance groups.

Recently, staff networks have been established to support staff in raising concerns and promoting action. These include a women's network and a disability network.

The service has worked hard to be clear about the on-call improvement programme intentions and potential outcomes. This programme is intended to remove underused fire engines and fire stations from the service's fleet and estate, helping to improve on-call availability and resource allocation. Most staff we spoke to were happy with the approach the service had taken to communicate the plans.

In our workforce survey, 65 percent of respondents (141 of 216) agreed they felt confident in the processes for providing feedback to all levels of leadership. Some staff told us a few leaders could still be more open to feedback. The service is rolling out management training to all leaders over the coming year, and we look forward to seeing the result of this training.

Individual members of staff, representative bodies and staff network groups we spoke to gave examples of where they had raised legitimate concerns with leaders. They felt more confident to raise concerns due to the introduction of leadership forums and the anonymous reporting line. The service has been active in resolving concerns raised.

In our workforce survey, 82 percent of respondents (178 of 216) agreed they felt safe to challenge unacceptable behaviour. The service handles discipline and grievance cases in a timely and appropriate way.

In our workforce survey, 50 percent of respondents (108 of 216) agreed they were confident their feedback would be acted on. For example, prevention staff mentioned to leaders that a regular meeting would help them feel more connected to the service. Within a few weeks this meeting was scheduled and held.

Staff are confident to challenge unacceptable behaviour and are confident the service acts appropriately when behaviour isn't in line with policy

There is a positive working culture throughout the service, and staff feel empowered and willing to challenge unacceptable behaviour when they come across it. The service has reviewed and improved its discipline and grievance policy, to make sure staff could understand the process.

Staff have a good understanding of what bullying, harassment and discrimination are and their negative effects on colleagues and the culture of the organisation.

In our workforce survey, 10 percent of respondents (22 of 216) told us they had felt bullied or harassed by members of their service in the past 12 months. And 11 percent of respondents (24 of 216) told us they had felt discriminated against by members of their service during the same period.

We were pleased to find the discipline and grievance cases we reviewed were all progressed in a timely manner. We asked the service to tell us about grievances related to conduct matters only (and not to include, for example, those against organisational policy).

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the average length of time a grievance case had been open was 56 days. This is less than the England average of 93 days. The longest time a case had been open was 86 days, which is less than the England average of 202 days.

In the same period, the average length of time a discipline case had been open was 27 days. This is less than the England average of 111 days. The longest time a case had been open was 68 days, which is less than the England average of 307 days.

As at 31 March 2025, the service had no live grievances. During 2024/25, it reported 23 disciplinary cases. Of these disciplinary cases, 3 were gross misconduct cases.

The service follows its policies and procedures. The cases we reviewed were managed by the right people at each step of the process. This led to well-justified decisions with clear reasons.

The service offers good support to staff who are the subject of disciplinary action as well as those who raise concerns or grievances or who are victims of bullying or harassment.

The staff we talked to had confidence that if they raised a misconduct concern with their line manager, it would be dealt with in an appropriate and confidential manner.

Managers have the confidence and training to deal with grievance and discipline issues and feel able to do so. Some managers did describe wanting to have more continuing professional development in this area to help them learn from other cases.

The service can show it is adapting its processes and sharing with staff the learning it has gained from dealing with grievance and discipline cases. It has commissioned the support of external legal services to help it review its practices and understand how it can develop them. We look forward to seeing the outcome of this work.

The service has good workforce well-being practices

The service continues to have effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures. It has introduced rigorous cleaning procedures to ensure personal protective equipment is decontaminated following fire incidents. It continues to carry out fitness testing every six months and supports staff to improve if they fail.

These policies and procedures are readily available, and leaders at all levels promote them effectively to all staff. Some staff described discussing their well-being with line managers during one-to-ones.

In our workforce survey, 93 percent of respondents (200 of 216) agreed they knew how to access support for their mental health through their service. There are three levels of support offered to those involved in a discipline or grievance case:

- a referral to the welfare officer;
- the employee assistance programme; and
- a dedicated point of contact in human resources.

The service also assesses the welfare of an individual before issuing a suspension, to consider their mental health and well-being.

The service continues to have well-understood and effective well-being policies, which are available to staff. A significant range of well-being support is available to support both physical and mental health. For example, staff can access an in-house welfare officer, mental health champions, the employee assistance programme, incident trauma debriefs, regular medical assessments and physical therapy referrals.

The service is proactive in building resilience among staff, and we found examples of where it had intervened to support an individual's needs.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff well-being. The service's intranet hosts well-being information and information related to national campaigns, such as healthy eating or stopping smoking. And the welfare team works with the service's physical trainers to promote good musculoskeletal health.

In our workforce survey, 69 percent of respondents (148 of 216) agreed service leaders treated their well-being as a priority. Staff reported they understood and had confidence in the well-being support processes available.

As at 31 March 2025, 16.2 percent of wholetime firefighters had registered secondary employment, and 14.9 percent were on a dual contract with the service. In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should proactively monitor working hours (including overtime) to improve staff well-being.

Since then, the service has introduced effective policies to monitor 'bank shifts' (a form of voluntary overtime) worked by staff. This makes sure they don't work excessive hours. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

But the service doesn't sufficiently monitor staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts to make sure they don't work excessive hours. There are local arrangements to monitor their working hours but some staff were unsure of the policy on taking enough rest between shifts. In our last inspection, we identified this as an area for improvement, and we are keeping this area for improvement open.

Training and developing the right people with the right skills

Good

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at training and developing the right people with the right skills.

Fire and rescue services should have a workforce plan in place that is linked to their community risk management plan. The workforce plan should set out current and future skills requirements and address capability gaps. This should be supplemented by a culture of continuous improvement, including appropriate learning and development throughout the service. And the service should make sure that barriers to the development and progression of all staff groups have been identified and removed.

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

Main findings

The service has developed a good approach to workforce planning

The service has good workforce planning in place. This makes sure skills and capabilities align with what it needs to effectively carry out its community risk management plan. For example, it has now recruited enough firefighters to meet its wholetime staffing need of 300 firefighters. Its forward review anticipates when it might fall below this figure, and the service schedules recruitment ahead of time.

Workforce and succession planning is subject to consistent scrutiny in the form of regular meetings to discuss requirements. During the monthly people delivery group meeting, the service reviews workforce data, including expected retirement profiles, recruitment requirements, competence trackers, talent management processes and personal development review completion rates. This approach means the service can identify gaps in workforce capabilities and resilience. It also means it can make sound and financially sustainable decisions about current and future needs.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public.

Since then, the service has worked hard to address this and we have now closed the area for improvement.

The service has the right mix of workforce skills and capabilities

Most staff told us they could access the training they needed to be effective in their roles. In our workforce survey, 84 percent of respondents (181 of 216) agreed their service gave them the necessary training to carry out their roles. The service has invested in the training department to increase its capacity for training and assessment in core competencies, such as breathing apparatus and driving.

The service monitors staff competence via electronic records. It regularly updates its understanding of staff skills and risk-critical safety capabilities by completing reassessments or validation courses via the Fire Service College.

Training isn’t just focused on operational skills. It also includes management skills. The service’s training plans make sure staff can maintain competence and capability effectively. The service identifies – in its monthly training updates to the people delivery group – the completion rates for mandatory training, such as health and safety, equality, diversity and inclusion, and data protection. Managers are told about any staff not meeting these requirements.

In our workforce survey, 85 percent of respondents (183 of 216) agreed they could access relevant learning and development opportunities. For example, communication staff have been able to access bespoke courses to meet the needs of their developing roles. Prevention staff have been able to access teaching and learning qualifications to help them provide training. And protection staff are given opportunities to complete the relevant learning to meet the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council’s core competency framework.

We have now closed the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection, related to making sure that all staff are appropriately trained to fulfil their roles.

The service has developed a culture of learning and improving

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organisation, and it encourages staff to learn and develop. For example, it has connected its personal development review process to talent management and training needs as well as opening its development centres to all staff.

We were pleased to find the service had a range of easily accessible learning and development resources. These included online and in-person courses in topics such as safeguarding and neurodiversity. They allow staff to do their jobs effectively.

The service has identified parts of its training and development provision that some staff have found difficult to access or use. We were pleased to find the service had taken proactive steps to remove these barriers. It has evaluated new courses, including its Thrive leadership and development programme, and learned from feedback to improve them.

Ensuring fairness and diversity

Adequate

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at ensuring fairness and diversity.

Recruiting, retaining and developing a diverse and representative workforce gives fire and rescue services huge benefits. These include greater access to talent and different ways of thinking. It also helps them better understand and work with local communities. Each service should make sure that staff throughout the organisation firmly understand and show a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This includes successfully taking steps to remove inequality and making progress to improve EDI at all levels of the service. It should proactively encourage feedback from staff and respond to it and make sure any action it takes is meaningful.

Area for improvement

The service should review its policies and procedures to make sure those staff with a protected characteristic aren't disproportionately affected.

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

Main findings

The service is improving its processes to recruit a more diverse range of talented staff

As part of this inspection, we reviewed a range of recent recruitment campaigns for firefighters and senior leaders.

We found the service had an open, fair and honest recruitment process for existing staff or those wishing to work for it. There is an effective system to understand and remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. For example, applications are blind sifted, and interview panel members are trained in safer recruitment, disability confidence and interview skills and are selected from a range of diverse roles across the service to remove any potential bias.

Reasonable adjustments were fairly considered in all the processes we reviewed. And the service identified some of the barriers candidates had experienced during the recruitment process, such as women and ethnic minority applicants leaving the process at the physical assessment stage. It offers women-only ‘have a go’ days and physical conditioning sessions to help candidates with these protected characteristics prepare.

The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment policies so they are fair and applicants can understand them. It uses diversity data to help target some of its recruitment activity at women and ethnic minority communities in its area, developing an outreach action plan as part of every recruitment round.

Its recruitment processes are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. The service sometimes advertises recruitment opportunities internally and externally. This has recently encouraged applicants from diverse backgrounds, including those applying for middle and senior leadership roles. However, its policies don’t suggest it should consider this routinely. This means some roles may only be advertised internally, reducing the opportunity for the service to diversify its workforce.

The service has made some improvements to increasing staff diversity at all levels of the organisation. It has recently removed any unnecessary and unfair criteria in adverts for leadership roles to attract a wider range of individuals. It also provides both internal and external candidates with staff development pathway information to be clear about the expected levels of leadership for a role.

In 2024/25, 8 out of 54 new joiners (where ethnicity is known) were from an ethnic minority background. Overall, the proportion of firefighters in the service from an ethnic minority background increased from 6.5 percent (25 people) as at 31 March 2024 to 7.4 percent (30 people) as at 31 March 2025.

As at 31 March 2025, 8.6 percent (46) of the service’s staff were from an ethnic minority background compared to 22.7 percent in the local population and 6.4 percent throughout all fire and rescue services in England. This is an increase since our last inspection year on year, from 37 people in 2022/23, to 41 people in 2023/24, to 46 in 2024/25. However, for 2024/25, 6.8 percent of staff hadn’t stated their ethnicity.

At the same date, 19.6 percent of the service's staff were women compared to an average of 20.8 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. The proportion of wholetime women firefighters increased from 6.2 percent (19 women) as at 31 March 2024 to 7.6 percent (24 women) as at 31 March 2025. Over the same period the proportion of on-call women firefighters increased from 6.7 percent (7 women) to 10 percent (12 women).

The service has improved retention and development of staff

We found positive examples of where the service had identified and addressed barriers that disproportionately prevented individuals from particular groups from progressing. It has opened its development centres to all managers, both support staff and operational staff, which had traditionally been reserved for operational staff only.

The service monitors staff turnover in its monthly people delivery group meeting. It carries out exit interviews for staff leaving or moving within the organisation to understand if there were any factors that could have been a barrier to them progressing. The service provided good examples of addressing learning gathered from these interviews and reported it has seen a reduction in staff turnover.

Staff have individual goals and objectives set through regular performance assessments. The service has now included an EDI-related objective in personal development packs to promote service-wide understanding of EDI. Staff complete regular checks on these personal development goals with their managers. Most staff said they felt confident in the performance and development arrangements in place.

The service's promotion and progression processes are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. It has identified that staff with neurodivergent conditions may need additional support to progress. It has introduced neurodiversity training to help managers provide this support.

EDI practice is becoming more evident across the service

The service prioritises EDI. It makes sure it can offer the right services to its communities and support staff with protected characteristics. For example, it has invested in an EDI officer who can make sure the new EDI framework is being acted on. The service has improved equality impact assessment and started to train key staff in its use.

During this inspection, we reviewed a range of policies that affect different parts of the service including the safeguarding, fitness testing, and recruitment and selection procedures.

Although the service has a process to assess equality impact, it doesn't properly assess the impact on each protected characteristic or act on it. Only one of the three procedures we reviewed included an action plan to follow up and mitigate equality impacts. We have identified this as an area for improvement.

The service has developed several ways to work with staff on issues relating to EDI that affect them. These include methods to build all-staff awareness of fairness and diversity and targeted initiatives to identify matters that affect different staff groups. The service has successfully consulted with staff via newly developed staff networks on the provision of uniform and equipment, specifically what women need to meet their differing needs, such as access to hairdryers and better-fitting uniform.

In our workforce survey, 85 percent of respondents (184 of 216) agreed they felt comfortable being themselves at work.

The service has acted to address matters staff have raised. Staff have received these actions positively. Representative bodies and staff associations reported that the service worked with them well on EDI issues through the joint consultation forum.

Leading people effectively

Good

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at leading its people.

To be effective, fire and rescue services should identify and develop leaders throughout the organisation. Leaders should be able to translate and communicate the objectives of the service's community risk management plan (CRMP) to all staff and the public in a meaningful way. They should communicate openly, build trust, challenge unacceptable behaviour and use every contact with staff to maintain and improve a positive culture.

Innovative practice

A leadership and behaviour framework sets out expected behaviour for leaders

The service has developed a clear and robust leadership and behaviour framework, which is aligned to the service's values and sets out standards of expected behaviour for all leadership levels.

Throughout our inspection, staff referred to the framework as fundamental to:

- addressing poor performance;
- challenging unacceptable behaviour; and
- helping managers become accountable leaders.

It is supporting the service in making improvements in many areas, such as prevention and protection, while being a clear guide for all staff to understand what is expected of them.

We found senior leaders showed clear commitment to upholding the leadership behaviour expected of them.

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

Main findings

The service's leaders work with and communicate well with staff

Senior leaders are effectively communicating the aims and objectives in the CRMP to staff at all levels. They are doing this in a variety of ways, which promotes open, two-way communication. In addition to the new internal governance structure, senior leaders are using senior leadership days, middle manager forums, station visits, and all-staff video logs and blogs to share information about the direction in which the service is heading. We found this approach was supported by leaders at all levels, most of whom make sure staff understand the aims and objectives.

As a result, staff have a high level of trust in their leaders. In our workforce survey, 68 percent of respondents (146 of 216) agreed senior leaders clearly communicated the service's objectives. The service plans its communications for strategic changes, such as the on-call improvement programme. Most staff we spoke to were aware of the steps the service was taking to implement this CRMP objective.

The staff we spoke to also understood how they contributed to the aims of the CRMP individually and as a team.

The service has fair processes to identify and develop leaders

In our last inspection, we identified the following three areas for improvement:

- The service should put in place a system to actively manage staff careers, with the aim of diversifying the pool of future and current leaders.
- The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.
- The service should assure itself that it has an effective process in place for succession planning, including senior leadership roles.

In this inspection we found the service had well-understood arrangements to identify talented leaders. It had effective succession-planning processes in place, which it monitors monthly. These allow it to effectively manage the career pathways of its staff, including roles that need specialist skills.

We also found the service had a high-potential development scheme, which identifies staff through the assessment development centres for progression if they score above a certain percentage. All staff can access the development pathway and leadership programme, which is assessed against the new leadership and behaviour framework. However, some staff don't clearly understand or trust career development pathways. And the service isn't proactively removing all barriers to accessing leadership development opportunities.

Although the service has put considerable effort into developing its promotion and progression processes so they are fair, it still needs to do more to make sure staff consider them to be fair. In our workforce survey, 60 percent of respondents (130 of 216) agreed the promotion process in the service was fair. Staff described some of the additional exams during the promotion process as unnecessary and off-putting to some staff who wished to develop. The service has recognised this and supports staff to develop their knowledge for the exams. They are reviewing the impact of the inclusion of the exams on staff and the process.

The service manages selection processes consistently. It now uses a promotion panel to determine the outcome of its promotion processes. And it uses temporary promotions appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps. As at 31 March 2025, 4 percent of the workforce were on temporary promotion. The average length of temporary promotions was 195 days, which is lower than the England average of 245 days.

As a result of the hard work the service has put into succession planning across the service and developing and diversifying the workforce, we have closed these areas for improvement.

The service is equipping leaders with the skills and knowledge to lead

We found the service had leaders in place who were well equipped to lead.

The service has a good process in place for leaders to manage performance and development. Staff have specific and individual objectives or have had their performance assessed in the past year. In our workforce survey, 72 percent of respondents (156 of 216) agreed the service's performance management systems allowed them to achieve their potential.

Leaders at all levels have – or are due to receive – appropriate training, which helps them confidently manage a range of challenges. The service has introduced a clear and robust leadership and behaviour framework, which is aligned to its values and sets out standards of expected behaviour for all leadership levels.

The service has introduced coaching and mentoring programmes, which are developing leaders. Leaders are exposed to different management scenarios that match and stretch their skills. This means the service has leaders who are confident to step up to the next level of management when opportunities arise.

There is a good process to manage staff performance

Most leaders are equipped to confidently manage staff performance and deal with any poor performance or behavioural issues. The service is providing training in performance management through the newly developed Thrive leadership and development programme to all managers during 2026/27.

There is a good performance management system, which allows leaders to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff members. Staff can complete a comprehensive annual personal development review and half-year review with their line managers.

As at 31 March 2025, personal development reviews had been completed by:

- 77.8 percent of wholetime firefighters;
- 38 percent of on-call firefighters; and
- 37.3 percent of support staff.

The service's own performance report, published in January 2026, identified that 99 percent of staff had received their 2025/26 objectives and 85 percent had then had their half-year review by December 2025.

Most staff said they felt confident in the performance and development arrangements.

Senior leaders and most middle leaders promote a positive culture

Most leaders at all levels act as role models. For example, senior leaders demonstrate the service's revised values and act in accordance with the leadership and behaviour framework, holding others to account. They are aware that some middle and supervisory leaders still need to complete the new leadership training and develop their skills in managing performance and communicating effectively.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement:

- The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.

In this inspection, in our workforce survey, 67 percent of respondents (144 of 216) agreed leaders at all levels promoted a positive culture. Staff described senior leaders as having a leading role in developing the service's positive evidence-based and performance-led culture since our last inspection. Senior leaders are visible and approachable, acting promptly on feedback where they can. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

Most leaders are maintaining and constantly developing the positive culture we found throughout the organisation. They have done this through clear communications and making changes that support the priorities of the CRMP, such as the introduction of a new internal governance structure. Senior leaders are listening to feedback and making sure all leaders are held to account for their own and their team's performance.

Most leaders are active in challenging misconduct, including bullying, harassment and discrimination. And staff trust them to take their concerns seriously.

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