

Fire and rescue services 2025–27

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

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Overall summary

In our inspection, we assessed how well Warwickshire 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		
	Promoting values and culture	Responding to major incidents		
	Right people, right skills	Best use of resources and future affordability		
	Ensuring fairness and diversity			
	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 Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service in April 2023. And in September 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 February 2024 and February 2025 to specifically consider the [cause of concern](#) that was previously issued for fire protection. And we published our findings in 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 Warwickshire 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 Warwickshire 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 763 square miles. It has a population of around 620,400, which is growing.

Warwickshire County Council is responsible for the governance of the service. The chief fire officer is responsible for its day-to-day running on behalf of the [fire and rescue authority](#).

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service cost £49.97 per head of population, which is less than the England average of £51.71.

I am pleased with the performance of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks. The service has made progress against all the [areas for improvement](#) we found in [our last inspection](#). We have closed 21 of 26 existing areas for improvement and haven't identified any in this inspection. This is thanks to the work of dedicated staff at all levels, effective internal governance and the service's monitoring processes.

We also recognise that, at the time of our inspection, the service was implementing service-wide changes. Known as Resourcing to Risk, these changes address issues that other fire services are also experiencing. The issues are:

- declining fire engine availability;
- not meeting response standards;
- duty systems not in line with firefighter employment terms and conditions; and
- making the service sustainable for the future.

Despite the changes not yet being fully in place, the service has already seen some benefits. We look forward to seeing how this work progresses.

To achieve a consistently good service, there are some areas that still need to be addressed. They include:

- how the service records learning after incidents and training;
- implementing a digital system to support [fire survival guidance](#); and
- understanding of collaborative work outcomes.

My main findings are as follows:

- The service has improved across all areas of inspection and has eight improved grades and no new areas for improvement.
- The service's internal governance model has improved and there is responsibility and accountability at all levels, which is supporting better decision-making through challenge and scrutiny.
- The service is using data to gain a better understanding of the most [vulnerable people](#) in its communities and is targeting prevention activity more effectively.
- The service is supporting its leaders with better access to nationally recognised training programmes, which is positively affecting culture and project work.
- The service has made important changes to its response model that are showing early signs of benefits, although at the time of our inspection, they weren't fully implemented and resilience teams weren't in place.

It will be interesting to see how this work progresses.

The service is making strong progress and is demonstrating clear and sustained improvement. This is supported by a robust governance structure with stable, self-aware leadership and improved data and [intelligence](#) to support decision-making at all levels.

The service still needs to do more work in some areas, including protection quality assurance, estates programmes and debriefing. It is aware of this and has clear plans in place.

Overall, I commend the service for the progress it has made. I am confident that it will continue to address the areas for improvement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. Stone', with a small dot at the end.

Kathryn Stone OBE

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

Good

Warwickshire 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.

Innovative practice

The service has an effective process in place to share situational awareness of risk that might affect operations

The service has introduced a daily meeting that representatives from all departments attend to share any issues or concerns that might affect the service over the next 24-hour period.

It has found this to be a beneficial approach for shared situational awareness across the service area. Examples of good sharing include:

- protection staff identifying concerns during fire safety audits and sharing their concerns with other departments;
- updating the workforce on equipment availability and crewing issues and putting measures in place to support these;
- fire safety activity following fires at commercial premises; and
- sharing of learning from incidents.

The meeting also gives the service an opportunity to review its fire engine availability and to make location changes to better suit risk that day and provide a better response time.

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 effectively to identify risk

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 local, national and global risk registers. The service uses data from the Office for National Statistics and its own incident data. It has identified 17 different hazard categories, against which it measures the risk in each of its areas. This helps it to identify where the highest cumulative risk is in its communities. The service then uses monitoring dashboards to share this information with its staff.

The service has plans to effectively address the main risks identified in its community risk management plan

Once it has assessed risks, the service records its findings in an easily understood plan called the community risk management plan. This plan 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. For example, it uses its risk information to create district-level risk-reduction plans. These give local managers targeted [intelligence](#) to support prevention activity. This includes, for example, carrying out prevention campaigns after an increase in kitchen fires or giving additional road safety advice in areas with higher road traffic collisions.

The service mitigates risk in prevention, protection and response through:

- universal offerings, which include making advice and guidance available to the public at all times online;
- targeted offerings, which include using trained staff to carry out tasks, such as operational firefighters carrying out [safe and well visits](#); and
- specialist offerings, which include using highly trained staff to provide a service or response, such as fire safety inspectors carrying out audits on high-risk premises.

The arrangements described in the plan also take account of the issues identified in the service's corporate risk register, which could compromise the implementation of these activities. The service has identified the following as corporate risks:

- fire engine availability;
- attendance times;
- shift systems not aligned to firefighter employment terms and conditions; and
- critical IT failure.

At the time of our inspection, the service was in the process of making changes to its duty systems and stations. These changes will support better fire engine availability and quicker response times. And they will make sure that the service's shift systems are in line with firefighter employment terms and conditions. The service has also upgraded its IT infrastructure to make it more resilient.

The service has continuity plans in place to make sure it can continue to provide a minimum level of risk-critical functions during periods of industrial action.

The service is effectively monitoring progress towards its main aims

Senior leaders have effective monitoring, feedback and scrutiny arrangements in place to make sure the aims they have set out in the community risk management plan for prevention, protection and response are being achieved.

Where the service isn't meeting its commitments to the public, senior leaders are fully aware of emerging issues and hold leaders at all levels to account. Service leaders are responsible for sharing performance data with the [fire and rescue authority](#).

The service has effective governance arrangements in place

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 in place. This assures it 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 in place for prevention, protection and response. 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. It assesses operational managers against performance measures. It holds update meetings every eight weeks, which align with board meetings. The service also monitors performance at all levels of governance each month.

Preventing fires and other risks

Good

Warwickshire 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 has a clear prevention strategy that targets the most vulnerable people in its communities

The service's prevention strategy is clearly aligned with the risks identified in its [community risk management plan](#). It includes priorities such as using targeted intervention to focus on the most vulnerable people in its communities. It also outlines how it will target risk groups to support people who display fire-setting behaviours through education programmes in schools or more tailored approaches.

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

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, changes to the service's duty system have helped its workforce to be more productive. This supports the provision of [safe and well visits](#). The service has an integrated approach to staffing. It has trained its staff so that they can work across different departments to provide additional support when needed.

The service targets prevention activity towards those most vulnerable to fire and other emergencies

The service uses a risk-based approach to clearly prioritise its prevention activity towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service carried out 81.8 percent (5,433 of 6,639) of its safe and well visits in households that contained at least one vulnerable person.

A person may be considered vulnerable for reasons including, but not limited to:

- being aged 65 years or over;
- having a physical disability or mobility issues;
- living alone;
- being a smoker or having a history of drug abuse; and
- having a mental health condition or learning disability.

The service uses a range of information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable people and groups, including those from [under-represented communities](#). For example, it uses data from the Office of National Statistics and deprivation data to target the most vulnerable people in its communities. Staff also work with young people through a 12-week Kings Trust initiative for people who aren't in education or employment.

The service carries out a range of interventions and campaigns, which it adapts to the level of risk in its communities. It creates its district plans by analysing previous incidents to predict what might happen in the coming months. This helps it to direct its prevention activity and campaigns. For example, in high fire-setting risk areas, the service has set up football sessions during the summer holidays to help educate young people and divert them away from setting small fires.

The service follows nationally co-ordinated events led by the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) on topics such as:

- student fire safety;
- electrical fire safety;
- dementia action;
- chimney fire safety;
- candle fire safety; and
- boat fire safety.

It gives fire safety presentations in all the primary schools in the county and uses data on deliberate ignition and [antisocial behaviour](#) to target areas at risk. It provides additional education packages for year seven [children](#) and carries out road safety campaigns in partnership with the council's road safety department. And it collaborates with policing colleagues to help run the motorcyclists' safety course [Biker Down](#).

In [our last inspection](#), we identified an [area for improvement](#) that the service should make sure its prevention activity was effectively prioritised and targeted to reduce risk. The service has made considerable progress in this area, and we have closed this area for improvement.

Staff carry out safe and well visits confidently and competently

Staff told us that they had the right skills and confidence to carry out safe and well visits. These visits cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. They cover advice on risks associated with smoking, cold homes, fuel poverty and health concerns or conditions. Staff also provide slips and trips assessments. We found that staff were confident about where and how to refer people for more support.

The service carries out proportionate quality assurance of its safe and well visits. It evaluates approximately 50 visits each month. The evaluations include reviewing the information recorded during the visits and calling service users for feedback.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity so staff carry out safe and well visits to an appropriate standard. As part of this inspection, we sampled 13 safe and well visits and found that staff completed them to a good standard. We also found that the service had a quality assurance process in place and was using it effectively. We have closed this area for improvement.

The service has effective evaluation arrangements in place, but could improve them

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should evaluate its prevention work so that it understands what works. The service has made some progress in this area. We saw evidence of annual assurance processes, evaluations by partner agencies and some evaluation that was in progress at the time of our inspection. We have closed this area for improvement.

The service has some evaluation tools in place. It uses these to measure how effective its activity is and make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to prevention services that meet their needs. For example, the service has evaluated how well its referral process works for partners. Most partners were satisfied with the system, but one asked for more fire safety training. The service told us that it planned to improve its fire safety training.

At the time of our inspection, the service was evaluating its Hospital to Home initiative. This supports the NHS in helping vulnerable members of its communities to settle back into their homes after time in hospital.

The service takes account of feedback from the public, other organisations and internal teams when planning its prevention activities. For example, the service records feedback from service users following safe and well visits. It also evaluates its partner referral process and reviews how to improve its approach using the prevention improvement team. This team meets every two months to discuss issues, concerns or improvements that the service could make to support service users and staff. For example, at the time of our inspection, the meeting addressed the need to make sure that items required for visits were regularly restocked. It also made a case for [body-worn video](#) use to support staff safety.

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 others to prevent fires and other emergencies

The service works with a range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. These include Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire Police, Age UK, the NHS and energy suppliers.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service carried out 6,639 safe and well visits. Of these, 1,291 were referrals from other agencies and 599 led to the service making an onward referral to at least one other organisation.

We found good evidence that the service routinely referred people at greatest risk to organisations that may better meet their needs. These included public health organisations, the police, social care services for adults and children and hospitals. Arrangements are also in place to receive referrals from others. The service has evaluated its referral processes to make sure they are easy to use.

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 has information-sharing agreements in place with the NHS to support its Hospital to Home initiative and the police to support work against deliberate fire setting.

The service has effective processes in place to safeguard vulnerable people

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.

The service provides four levels of safeguarding training. All staff receive level 1 training online. This is renewed annually. Frontline staff have additional face-to-face training to help them identify any safeguarding concerns or issues and to learn reporting processes. Service leaders receive level 3 training as they have strategic responsibility for safeguarding. The service has two level 4 safeguarding staff. They develop and provide training, and support other staff with queries or concerns.

The service is working with other organisations to tackle fire-setting behaviour

In the year ending 30 June 2025, the service attended 325 deliberate fire incidents, which increased from 262 in the previous year. Its attendance at deliberate fire incidents has decreased since the year ending 31 December 2022, when it reached a peak of 499. In the year ending 30 June 2025, the rate of attendance at deliberate fire incidents was 51.4 per 100,000 population. This was lower than the England rate of 125.1.

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. This includes targeted educational presentations to schools in areas where there is an increase in deliberate fires. The service also has an [antisocial behaviour](#) intervention team that works with community support officers to support fire setters or those showing fire-setting behaviour.

Protecting the public through fire regulation

Adequate

Warwickshire 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 for enforcing the legislation.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.

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 an effective protection strategy clearly linked to its community risk management plan

The service's protection strategy is clearly linked to the risks identified in its [community risk management plan](#).

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 both individually and as a team.

Staff across the service are involved in this activity and effectively share information as needed. For example, during the daily stand-up meeting, staff share information about incidents that have taken place in the previous 24 hours. The service then uses information to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between its prevention, protection and response functions. This means it properly aligns its resources with risk.

During our inspection, we saw examples of protection activity, such as staff issuing a [prohibition notice](#) at a takeaway with living space above it. We also saw evidence that staff visited an asylum hotel after receiving reports of unrest and that they informed the police.

The service has a prioritised and targeted risk-based inspection programme

The service's risk-based intervention programme is focused on its highest-risk buildings. The service has improved its data and [intelligence](#) to make sure that it is auditing the highest-risk premises in the county. It uses the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) method, which focuses on:

- life risk;
- firefighter risk;
- heritage premises;
- care homes; and
- hospitals.

There are 1,536 premises on the service's risk-based inspection programme. Of these, 290 are classed as highest risk. The service carries out standard fire safety audits at these premises every two years. It audits the remaining 1,246 premises every four years.

When we reviewed the service's audits of high-risk buildings, we found that it had completed them in the times frames it had set itself.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service set itself a high-risk building audit target of 174. It did achieve this target as it carried out 256 high-risk building audits.

The number of audits carried out by the service decreased from 557 in 2023/24 to 430 in 2024/25. It expected this decrease due to department changes and training. The service is assured that its staff can complete audits confidently and competently.

In [our last inspection](#), we identified an [area for improvement](#) that the service should make sure it has enough qualified staff to complete fire safety audits. In this inspection, we found that the service had enough staff to audit its highest-risk premises and to complete other statutory protection duties. It also told us that it had plans to recruit additional staff to help carry out the recommendations from the [Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report](#). We have closed this area for improvement.

The service has sufficient resourcing within protection but could use its trained staff better

The service has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of its risk-based intervention programme. As at 31 March 2025, the service had eight competent protection staff to carry out audits. At the time of our inspection, it had 15 staff in the department, with plans to recruit 2 more to support future work. This helps it provide the range of audit and enforcement activity needed both now and in the future.

The service also has approximately 60 operational crew and [watch](#) managers trained to level 3 in fire safety. This means that they can carry out audits on lower-risk premises. But at the time of our inspection, the service wasn't using them for this purpose.

Staff get the right training and work to appropriate accreditation, in line with the National Fire Chiefs Council's national competency framework. The service has further developed this training to include:

- letter writing;
- fire investigation;
- [continuing professional development](#);
- recruitment; and
- third-party professional accreditations.

The service can adapt 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](#). At the time of our inspection, the service was in the process of recruiting two additional members of staff to support any further recommendations.

The service is supporting the [Building Safety Regulator](#). It expects these arrangements to have limited 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 that the service had good arrangements in place 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 carries out fire safety audits to a good standard

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

- as part of the service's risk-based intervention programme;
- 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 that 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. [Mobile data terminals](#) are automatically updated with any changes to risk information, which is available to staff within 24 hours. Any critical findings are presented at the service's daily stand-up meetings to make sure that staff are aware of the situation.

The service is introducing new quality assurance processes

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.

The service carries out limited quality assurance of its protection activity. It has introduced a new policy and process, but at the time of our inspection, it was too early to assess their effectiveness. Using the new process, the service [dip samples](#) audits to check they have been completed in line with service policies.

The area for improvement will remain in place until the service has made sufficient progress and there is enough detail on how effective its new process is.

The service has good evaluation tools in place to measure how effective its activity is and to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to protection services that meet their needs. For example, it uses national guidance to make sure it is compliant with fire safety regulations.

The service uses enforcement to support and prosecute non-compliant businesses

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers and, when appropriate, it prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations. Staff told us that further training on the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order \(2005\)](#) had increased their confidence, and as a result, they were more willing to enforce when needed.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service issued 1 alteration notice, 430 informal notifications, 5 enforcement notices and 12 prohibition notices. It carried out two prosecutions. It completed three prosecutions in the five years from the year ending 31 March 2021 to the year ending 31 March 2025.

The service carries out joint protection activity with other enforcement agencies

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety, and it routinely exchanges risk information with them. It has completed joint visits with:

- Trading Standards;
- the police;
- Border Force; and
- the local authority food safety team.

The service also works with [safety advisory groups](#) to manage fire protection at large events. It works in collaboration with the police, ambulance, planning departments and event organisers.

The service has improved its response times to building and licensing consultations

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service responded to 100 percent of licensing consultations (157 of 157) and 82.2 percent of building consultations (295 of 359) within the required time frame. This means it consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings.

The service provides fire safety advice and guidance for businesses

The service proactively works with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. It has dedicated business safety officers who support businesses and provide advice and guidance. It provides fire safety advice and guidance online, which is available to business owners. It also has a [primary authority scheme](#) with Co-op to help the company provide a consistent approach to fire safety across its premises nationally.

Responding to fires and other emergencies

Adequate

Warwickshire 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.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has an effective system to learn 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's response strategy is aligned to the risks and priorities identified in its community risk management plan

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

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

The service locates its fire engines and response staff, and designs its working patterns, to help it respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources. For example, the service uses a dynamic cover tool to help it relocate available fire engines to provide better response times and mitigate high-risk areas.

At the time of our inspection, the service was implementing a new approach to its response. It aims to improve fire engine availability, response times and sustainability. It is also aiming to make its duty system align with the employment terms and conditions of firefighters. It told us that it was already seeing improved response times and fire engine availability. Since our inspection, the service has introduced additional resilience teams to support large-scale or major incidents. These weren't in place at the time of our inspection. We look forward to seeing how these changes affect the service's response to the public in the future.

The service is making changes to improve its response times to incidents

The service has response standards, but it hasn't set them out in its community risk management plan. The service doesn't always meet its standards. But at the time of our inspection, it was changing its duty systems to improve its response times and provide better fire engine availability. It told us that it was already seeing the benefit of these changes.

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 June 2025, the service's average response time to primary fires was 10 minutes and 36 seconds. This was slower than the average for services that are urban with significant rural communities. The average for services in this group was 10 minutes 25 seconds.

Using this measure, the service's average response time has increased from 10 minutes and 27 seconds in the year to 30 June 2024. This decline is predominantly due to an increase in drive time, which has increased from 7 minutes and 27 seconds to 7 minutes and 45 seconds during the same period.

We look forward to seeing the results of the service's changes in the future.

The service is making changes to improve the availability of its fire engines

In the year ending 31 March 2025, availability of [wholetime](#) fire engines was 98.6 percent. This was a decrease from the previous year when availability was 98.9 percent. During the same period, availability of [on-call](#) fire engines was 39.3 percent. This was a decrease from the previous year when availability was 42.4 percent.

This data may not reflect the changes the service has made since introducing its Resourcing to Risk project. The project aims to help the service improve fire engine availability. The service has made changes to its duty systems to address its decline in fire engine availability. At the time of our inspection, the service hadn't yet made all of its planned changes, but it was starting to see improvements. We look forward to seeing this work progress in the future.

As outlined in its community risk management plan, the service is committed to having 14 fire engines available during the day and 13 at night. These are supported by four resilience teams, which aren't included in the total availability count. At the time of our inspection, the service told us that it was close to meeting this commitment. It said it was confident that it would do once it had made all its planned changes.

Risk information is up to date and accessible to all staff

The service routinely collects and updates information about the highest-risk people, places and threats it has identified. This includes long and short-term risk information about people and premises. It also includes site-specific risk information for commercial premises across the county. The service categorises premises' risk into three levels. It reinspects level 2 premises every two years and inspects level 3 premises every year.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service identified 11,133 sites that posed more risk to firefighters if an incident took place. During the same period, the service visited 640 sites to update its records and familiarise itself with the firefighting risks at the sites. This is a decrease from the previous year when the service completed 810 visits.

In [our last inspection](#), we identified three [areas for improvement](#) linked to risk information. These related to:

- gathering of risk information and making sure that it is up to date;
- making sure that risk information in [fire control](#) is kept up to date; and
- making sure that operational and control staff have access to relevant cross-border risk information.

The service has clear policies and processes in place to support the gathering and recording of risk information. It has made improvements to its risk management system by upgrading to an up-to-date version. Fire control has a specific team that is responsible for updating the information on the [mobilising](#) system. All staff have access to cross-border risk information up to 10 km over the county border. They access and share this through the [ResilienceDirect](#) system. The service has done well to progress this work, and we are pleased to close these areas for improvement.

Risk information is readily available for the service's prevention, protection and response staff. This means that these teams can identify and reduce risk effectively. For example, during a review of risk information, we found examples of the fire protection team sharing information following a building regulations submission. And where appropriate, we found that the service shared risk information with other organisations. This included:

- during joint visits when carrying out fire safety audits;
- in referrals to other organisations following [safe and well visits](#); and

- as part of the [local resilience forum](#) to have a shared understanding of high-risk premises.

We sampled a range of risk information, including the information in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings and the information held by fire control. We reviewed short-term risk information for oxygen users, which the service updates regularly. And we reviewed risk information for a music event, which included site plans and rendezvous points.

The information we reviewed was up to date and accurate. Staff could easily access and understand it. Encouragingly, it had been completed with input from the service's prevention, protection and response functions when appropriate.

The service carries out proportionate quality assurance of its risk information. When a site visit shows changes to a high-risk premises, staff pass this information to a line manager for sign off. Once a manager has signed off the changes, the service updates its system with the new information. It updates [mobile data terminals](#) every 24 hours to make sure that staff have access to the most recent assured risk information. Staff still have access to the previous risk information if needed.

The service is able to command incidents effectively

The service has incident commanders who are trained and regularly and properly assessed. Incident commanders are required by the service to revalidate their accreditation every two years. The service also carries out an interim assessment of commanders between revalidations. This helps it to 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.

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](#).

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service needed 161 incident commanders to meet its demand. It had 157 accredited commanders. It had no incident commanders who were no longer accredited but still carried out the same work.

The service should improve how it records learning from incidents and exercises to improve operational performance

As part of our inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included domestic incidents, commercial premises, large multi-agency incidents and exercises involving other agencies.

The service has introduced a new system to record and share learning. However, at the time of the inspection, it wasn't being fully used. We were disappointed to see that the service hadn't shared learning from large-scale incidents with all staff.

The service told us it was using its new digital system to monitor staff involvement in the debriefing process and that it was seeing some improvement.

We saw examples of the service acting on and sharing learning from incidents using risk and safety critical notices and its 'FireMatters' publications.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should have an effective system for learning from operational incidents. The service has made some progress, but it could make further improvements to improve how it records learning from incidents and exercises. Therefore, this area for improvement remains in place.

Fire control staff are well trained and supported throughout the service

We were pleased to find that the service's fire control staff were integrated into its command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. A fire control representative attends the daily stand-up meeting to make sure that there is shared situational awareness of risk across the service and to support decisions for relocating fire engines. The service also told us that fire control staff were part of the same debriefing process as operational crews and could give feedback via the service's digital system.

[Control room](#) staff that we spoke to had good knowledge of the service's command structures and contingency plans. These plans are now supported through the use of a dynamic cover tool, which is a programme that gives live information on response times when staff are relocating fire engines. They use this alongside a mapping tool, which highlights areas of risk so that resources can be allocated appropriately.

The service has a process for implementing national operational guidance

The service is making sure that its policies are in line with [national operational guidance](#). It has a national operational guidance implementation team that works to align policies and procedures where needed. It has carried out a gap analysis. At the time of our inspection, it expected to complete the analysis recommendations within six to eight months.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

Adequate

Warwickshire 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).

Area for improvement

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

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 well 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 identified extreme cold weather and hot weather as a risk to the resources of [local resilience forum](#) members. And it has identified river and surface water flooding as a risk to homes, businesses and communities.

The service is also identifying future risks. For example, the growing popularity of air source heat pump technology means that the service has seen an increase in fires following the theft of pumps. As a result, it has identified a rise in fires after pump theft as a future risk.

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 wide area flooding and rail incidents due to HS2 passing through Warwickshire into neighbouring service areas. It has carried out training exercises to prepare for this risk. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. Services exchange information that is within 10 km of bordering services. The information is available to staff on [mobile data terminals](#) and through [ResilienceDirect](#).

The service is prepared to respond to major and multi-agency incidents but should improve how it shares live incident details

During this inspection, we considered how well prepared the service is to respond to foreseeable major incidents.

We found that the service had well-developed policies and procedures in place for safely managing these incident types. Staff at all levels understand them, and robust training and exercises have taken place to test them. The service has attended numerous exercises with members of the local resilience forum and neighbouring services, including scenarios such as aircraft crashes, marauding terrorist attack, car bombs, HS2 construction staff being trapped on site, and an NHS system-wide exercise based on a pandemic.

The service is working with other emergency responders to make local communities more resilient. It is part of the [risk assessment](#) advisory group that supports plans for high-risk sites across the county. It also leads the local resilience forum in setting up training and exercises for emergency responders.

We also reviewed the service's response to a fire at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Stratford. At the peak of the incident, there were over 40 firefighters supported by 8 fire engines and specialist vehicles.

In [our last inspection](#), we identified an [area for improvement](#) that 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 has an effective method in place to support callers as recommended in the [Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report](#). But it still doesn't have a digital way to share live information from callers with firefighters and incident commanders during incidents. Therefore, this area for improvement remains in place.

The service works collaboratively with neighbouring services

The service supports other fire and rescue services when they are responding to emergency incidents. It has arrangements in place with neighbouring services to support and receive support for incidents. It is intraoperable with these services and can form part of a multi-agency response.

It has successfully deployed resources to other services and has used [national resilience assets](#) such as high-volume pumps during wide area flooding.

Staff have a good understanding of the 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 strong evidence that it consistently follows JESIP. Commanders receive JESIP training every 12 months, and they take part in JESIP tactic training with West Midlands Ambulance and Police every 3 years.

The service exercises and train with neighbouring services

The service carries out cross-border exercises with neighbouring fire and rescue services. This helps them work together effectively to keep the public safe. Its community risk management plan includes the risks of foreseeable major incidents where the service could be required to give support or ask for help from neighbouring services. We were pleased to find that the service used learning from these exercises to inform risk information and service plans.

We saw examples of exercises carried out on the HS2 development, which crosses through Warwickshire into the West Midlands. The service has also carried out exercises with neighbouring services that focused on wide area flooding and with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service to simulate a staff shortage.

The service is an active member of the local resilience forum

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with agencies that make up the local resilience forum.

The service is a valued member of the local resilience forum. The chief fire officer co-chairs the forum. Representatives from the service attend tactical and strategic subgroups. The service leads the training and exercise groups and regularly organises these for forum members to take part in.

The service has processes to use and share national 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 has processes in place to make sure that it records this information and shares it across the service. It does this through action bulletins or by submitting the learning to the risk and assurance team, which provides strategic oversight. The service uses this learning to inform the planning assumptions it makes with other organisations.

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

Adequate

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate 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.

Areas for improvement

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

The service should make sure its fleet and estates management programmes are linked to the [community risk management plan](#) and it understands the impact future changes to those programmes may have on its service to the public.

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 effective governance and scrutiny arrangements in place

As part of Warwickshire County Council, the Warwickshire [fire and rescue authority](#) oversees the service. Its governance role includes setting the strategic direction of the service and providing scrutiny to monitor its performance and make sure that it achieves its strategic aims. The authority is part of Warwickshire County Council's overall governance arrangements.

The service has effective strategic oversight arrangements in place to manage financial and resourcing risks, performance and improvement plans. And it has effective processes, controls and internal governance arrangements in place to manage strategic risks.

The service reports accurate and suitably detailed financial, risk and performance information to the fire and rescue authority. Senior leaders give quarterly performance reports to the authority. They also provide progress reports on projects aligned to the service's community risk management plan (CRMP).

The [scheme of delegation](#) clearly sets out responsibilities for the service's senior leaders. There are effective internal governance arrangements in place to hold senior leaders to account for the corporate management of the service.

Since [our last inspection](#), the service has introduced three levels of internal governance, which are supported by appropriate terms of reference and schemes of delegation. We found that the people involved in this governance structure understood their roles and responsibilities. Members of the three governance levels meet regularly to monitor service performance against:

- 'key business measures', which give a strategic view of the service linked to CRMP priorities;
- 'key business indicators', which give more detailed targets for senior leaders; and
- 'key performance indicators', which give a tactical view of progress across the service linked to day-to-day activity.

This new internal governance structure has contributed to the progress the service has made in this area since our last inspection.

Resource allocation is proportionate and aligned to risk, but the service could better use its staff to support protection

We were pleased to find that the service had made improvements since our last inspection. The service's 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. It has introduced a project, called Resourcing to Risk, to try to address its four main issues. These are:

- having more operational resources available at night instead of during the day when risk is highest;
- not meeting set response times;
- a decline in [on-call](#) availability; and
- shift systems that are unsustainable as they don't comply with firefighter employment terms and conditions.

The service has evaluated its mix of crewing and duty systems. It has analysed its response cover and can show it deploys its fire engines and response staff to manage risk efficiently. It has changed some on-call stations to day-crewed or [wholetime](#), which means more fire engines are available when risk is highest. At the time of our inspection, the service was also introducing resilience teams based at strategic locations across the county to provide a response to major or lengthy incidents.

Having more fire engines available when risk is highest allows the service to use its dynamic cover tool to locate fire engines where they will most effectively help it meet its response standard. And changing from on-call to day-crewed or wholetime systems during the day means that the service has increased its availability.

The service has also removed duty systems that weren't in line with firefighter employment terms and conditions. This means that its duty systems are now sustainable.

During our inspection, the service could show that these changes were starting to have an impact, with better fire engine availability and quicker response times. We look forward to seeing how this improves in the future.

This work has also helped the service align its resources to the priorities in its CRMP. It has an integrated approach for resourcing so that trained staff across the service can support different departments in times of need. But we found that the service wasn't fully using this integrated approach in all areas, such as protection. For example, it had suspended referrals resulting from fire safety audits carried out by crew and [watch](#) managers as they were increasing the protection department's workload.

Prevention and protection are appropriately resourced to meet the service's statutory duties and more. And the increase in day-crewed or wholetime fire stations means that firefighter availability will also increase.

The service is using its resources appropriately to mitigate the issues identified in the corporate risk register that affect implementation of its CRMP. For example, the service identified that its IT systems were a risk and a priority. It has improved the resilience of its systems by upgrading from copper lines to fibre, and it is recruiting for a critical system post to better support the service.

The service has sustainable plans in place to resource its protection function if protection grant funding is reduced or withdrawn. It has moved fire protection positions that were funded by the grant to its baseline pay structure. This means that the service won't lose staff if the government funding for protection stops.

In our last inspection, we identified an [area for improvement](#) that the service needed to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities, which should reflect the risk and priorities in its CRMP. Following the improvements the service has made, we have closed this area for improvement.

The service has robust financial management and monitoring processes in place

In 2025/26, the service's net revenue budget was £27.3 million. The net revenue budget for 2024/25 was adjusted for inflation from £25.7 million to £26.9 million. This means that between 2024/25 and 2025/26, the budget increased by 1.4 percent in real terms.

The service has developed a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its main financial risks, such as future pay settlements, IT and inflationary pressures. The service has moved to a one-budget approach, which allows it to be more flexible with its budget and reallocate funding to support priority work. At the time of our inspection, the service funded pay settlements from a central county council budget, which reduced any immediate pressures. The service has invested in making its IT more resilient, reliable and future-proof. For example, it has made systems cloud-based where possible.

Its planning assumptions are relatively robust and realistic and based on improved data and [intelligence](#). They take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions.

The service builds its plans on sound scenarios. This helps make sure it is sustainable and underpinned by financial controls. Its three levels of internal governance help to reduce the risk of misusing public money. It also uses a prioritisation matrix. This helps the service decide which projects to carry out by plotting them on a grid and analysing cost, impact, effort and the link to CRMP priorities.

The service's capital programme is part of Warwickshire County Council's wider asset management plans. The county council manages capital financing costs and there have been some delays to the service's capital plan. However, the service's improved governance structure has helped it progress its plan. It has now carried out equipment replacement, refurbished its headquarters and implemented a new live fire training facility, which will help it make year-on-year savings.

Warwickshire County Council holds the service's reserves. There is a robust process in place for the service to access them. There are allocated reserves for the emergency service network, pensions, the [local resilience forum](#) and transformation projects. In the service's productivity and efficiency plan for 2025/26, the opening balance of allocated reserves was £1.56 million. At the time of our inspection, the service anticipated a closing balance of £1.4 million.

The service has effective arrangements to monitor service performance

The service's arrangements for managing performance clearly link resource use to its CRMP and its strategic priorities. Its new internal governance structure uses data and intelligence to support decisions. It has performance indicators for each level of governance, with its strategic focus overseen by its community risk management board.

The service uses data to improve staff productivity and make sure it uses resources efficiently and effectively to provide value for money. For example, it has worked with a partner organisation to carry out a thorough analysis of its workforce. And it has made changes to its operational response model and duty system to better support productivity.

The service understands how it uses its firefighters. It collects data on how they spend their time across day and night shifts. It makes the most of its capacity. For example, crew and watch managers are responsible for updating electronic station diaries with training to make sure all staff continue to be competent in risk-critical skills. The service has monthly targets for the number of [safe and well visits](#) operational firefighters should complete. It also has monthly targets for the number of site-specific risk information visits staff should carry out. Station managers meet with crews every month to review the data and information recorded on its Microsoft Power BI dashboard. They also discuss other areas of focus to support community safety.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and its time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in its CRMP. Following the improvements the service has made and the better oversight it has put in place, we have closed this area for improvement.

In our last inspection, we also identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of false alarms.

In this inspection, we found that the service had an effective, risk-based system in place to manage its response to unwanted fire signals. In the year ending 30 June 2025, 40.4 percent of incidents attended in Warwickshire were fire false alarms. The rate of attendance at incidents that were fire false alarms was 3.1 per 1,000 population. This was lower than the England rate of 4.3. The service has been working with local police to identify and speak with hoax callers.

There are call-challenging policies in place to help [fire control](#) staff deal with automatic fire alarms. This makes sure fire engines are available for emergencies. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the service's new call-challenging policies meant that it didn't attend 71.5 percent of automatic fire alarm requests.

The service is effectively managing the burden of false alarms, and we have closed this area for improvement.

The service is making efficiency savings but could better understand the benefits of collaboration

In 2024/25, the service's expenditure was £31.59 million, which is £49.97 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.

For example, the level of financial authorisation allowed is outlined in the [schemes of delegation](#) and terms of reference for its internal governance structure.

Warwickshire County Council provides a financial representative at all levels of governance to give advice and guidance, and it supports departments through annual budget setting and monitoring processes.

These internal structures make sure that the service consistently achieves the savings identified in its financial and efficiency plans. Between 2022/23 and 2024/25, it made all of its planned £164,000 savings.

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. The service has access to Warwickshire County Council's procurement team and uses its procurement processes to improve its purchasing power.

The service monitors and reviews the benefits and results of its contract arrangements, collaborations and improvement projects. But it could do more to show that it consistently achieves the intended outcomes. The service has introduced a new annual assurance and evaluation process. The process records learning that the service then feeds back to the organisations it works with for improvements or changes. The service uses an evaluation toolkit to support the process.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.

In this inspection, we found that the service carried out some collaboration. For example, we heard anecdotal evidence that it shares stations with police, whose presence deters thieves who might steal equipment. But the service couldn't provide enough detail about the benefits of these collaborations for all parties involved. For example, the service collaborates well with the NHS and supports the Hospital to Home initiative. But it couldn't tell us whether this resulted in people not returning to hospital or in fewer GP appointments. Therefore, this area for improvement remains in place.

The service needs to improve its estates

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure its fleet and estates management programmes are linked to the CRMP and it understands the impact future changes to those programmes may have on its service to the public.

In this inspection, we found that service was prioritising its Resourcing to Risk project, which meant it hadn't progressed its capital programme to modernise its estate. The service told us it had a plan in place and a gap analysis in progress to bring fire stations to a minimum standard across the county.

We also found that the service's capital programme and estate and fleet strategies had clear links to its CRMP. However, when changes in estates provision presented opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness, it didn't always exploit them. Therefore, this area for improvement remains in place.

The service has carried out some capital projects, such as the Minerva live fire training facility. This service told us that this would save it £1 million over a three-year period.

We look forward to seeing how the service uses its new internal governance structure to progress its capital programme.

The service has effective arrangements in place to monitor its fleet and make efficiencies where possible. It now uses vehicle tracking alongside remote-controlled fuel card access, which provides it with better data on vehicle movements. The service aims to replace its equipment and fleet a minimum of every five years to make sure it can stay up to date with the latest technology.

The service has made its IT more resilient, reliable and accessible

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure that its IT systems are resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible. In this inspection, we were pleased to find that the service had made improvements.

The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. It is part of Warwickshire County Council's digital and data strategy, which focuses on having robust and reliable cloud-based systems, better security and effective shared infrastructure. This leads to financial savings and better access to systems such as HR and health and safety.

The service has made improvements to software and hardware across the organisation. For example, it has:

- upgraded phone lines from copper to fibre across fire stations and its headquarters;
- improved conference facilities and installed up-to-date systems at fire stations;
- upgraded risk-management software;
- installed automatic vehicle location software, which informs the new dynamic cover tool; and
- started using Microsoft Power BI to monitor performance and generate better reports.

The service told us that it had plans for further improvements, which included continuing its upgrade from copper to fibre phone lines.

Due to the improvements the service has made, we have closed this area for improvement.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should maximise opportunities to improve workforce productivity and develop future capacity through use of innovation, including the use of technology.

We found that the service didn't consistently carry out IT projects on time or within budget. However, it told us that it had learned from past mistakes and had better oversight thanks to its new internal governance structure.

Following the changes the service has made through the Resourcing to Risk project and its improvements in IT, we have closed this area for improvement.

The service has the capability and capacity to effectively manage change

In our last inspection, we identified an area of improvement that the service should make sure it has the right skills and capacity to successfully manage change across the organisation.

In this inspection, we found that the service had the capacity and capability it needed to achieve sustainable change. Its new internal governance structure and leadership development programme means it can effectively manage change for future projects and workstreams. And it told us that it had carried out a staff-profiling exercise to better understand its workforce and find out who had the right skills to support specific work.

The service manages change through effective projects and programmes. It has a clear internal structure with appropriate governance arrangements in place to make sure progress against projects and programmes is monitored, scrutinised and challenged.

As a result of this progress, we have closed this area of improvement.

Promoting, embedding and improving values and culture

Good

Warwickshire 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.

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 values are well defined and understood by staff

The service has well-defined values, which staff understand. We found that most staff at all levels of the service showed behaviours that reflected service values. Where staff weren't displaying behaviours in line with the service's values, we found evidence that the service was taking action through development plans and additional training.

We were encouraged by the cultural improvements the service had made. It has implemented the [Core Code of Ethics](#) well, staff understand it and it is integrated within policies and procedures. We saw evidence of this at fire stations and its headquarters. The core code is also a standing agenda item at all service meetings.

In our workforce survey, 82 percent of respondents (112 of 136) agreed that their colleagues consistently modelled and maintained the service's values. We found that 84 percent of respondents (114 of 136) agreed that their manager consistently modelled and maintained the service's values and 57 percent of respondents (78 of 136) agreed that senior leaders 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. The service carries out standard DBS checks on all new staff and enhanced DBS checks for specific roles. It renews these checks every three years. In the year ending 31 March 2025, all 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, seven of the nine new recruits who needed a background check had one.

The service has clear policies and support in place for discipline and grievances cases

The service has robust systems in place to help it gather and scrutinise feedback from a range of activity 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. In collaboration with Warwickshire County Council, the service has established a professional standards function to oversee processes and outcomes and make changes if necessary. We found that there was good support from the county council for discipline and grievance cases, with staff welfare a priority.

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. As part of the county council, the service can use senior council staff to support processes to make sure hearings and appeals are carried out impartially.

The service is working to make communications open and transparent

The service has effective arrangements in place 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, including:

- using Microsoft Teams meetings to communicate with as much of the workforce as possible;
- using recorded video messages instead of written communications;
- a programme of senior leader visits across the service;
- briefings for middle managers to help them provide clear and concise information to their teams;
- an open chat with the chief fire officer every six weeks so that staff can raise issues or concerns; and
- fire service publications and emails.

In [our last inspection](#), we identified an [area for improvement](#) that the service should put in place mechanisms to engage with all staff and monitor how effective the mechanisms are.

During this inspection, we found that the service monitored the effectiveness of these arrangements by tracking hits and clicks on intranet pages and through feedback and surveys. Considering this evidence, we have closed this area for improvement.

But there is still some work for the service to do to make sure that staff trust its processes and are confident to use them. In our workforce survey, 38 percent of respondents (52 of 136) agreed that they were confident that their feedback would be acted on. And 53 percent of respondents (72 of 136) agreed that they felt confident in the processes for providing feedback at all levels of leadership.

We encourage the service to continue promoting workforce feedback and communication.

The service takes action if staff display inappropriate behaviour

There is a positive working culture throughout the service, and staff feel empowered and willing to challenge unacceptable behaviours when they come across them. We found that while the service didn't always let staff know the outcomes of investigations or complaints, it always acted on any issues or concerns raised. We also found that it used development plans and additional training to effectively support staff.

In our workforce survey, 61 percent of respondents (83 of 136) agreed that they felt safe to challenge unacceptable behaviour.

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, 20 percent of respondents (27 of 136) told us that they had felt bullied or harassed by members of their service in the past 12 months. And 22 percent (30 of 136) told us that they had felt discriminated against by members of their service during the same period.

We were pleased to find that the discipline and grievance cases we reviewed were all progressed in a timely manner. We asked the service to tell us about grievances that were related to [conduct matters](#) only (and not to include, for example, those against organisational policy). As at 31 March 2025, there were two live grievances and seven disciplinary cases. Of these disciplinary cases, four were [gross misconduct](#) cases.

The service follows the policies and procedures that it has in place. 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.

Some 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.

The service can show that it is adapting its processes using its professional standards function. But it doesn't share the learning it has gained from dealing with grievance and discipline cases with staff.

The physical and mental well-being of the workforce is a priority for the service

The service continues to have effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. These policies and procedures are readily available on the service's intranet, and leaders at all levels promote them effectively to all staff.

In our workforce survey, 90 percent of respondents (122 of 136) agreed that they knew how to access support for their mental health through their service.

The service also continues to have well-understood and effective well-being policies in place, which are available to staff. A wide range of well-being support is available to support and promote both physical and mental health. These include access to an employee assistance programme, [trauma support following incidents](#) and well-being ambassadors across the service. There is also a range of health, safety and well-being offerings from Warwickshire County Council.

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

In our workforce survey, 54 percent of respondents (74 of 136) agreed that service leaders treated their well-being as a priority. Staff reported that they understood and had confidence in the well-being support processes available.

The service has better oversight and scrutiny of overtime and secondary contracts

The service has effective policies in place to monitor staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts to make sure they comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours. These include regular meetings with staff line managers.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should monitor overtime and secondary contracts to make sure working hours aren't exceeded. The service now uses Fire Service Rota, a system with built-in limits to make sure staff aren't working over the working-time directive. If staff are working too many hours, the system automatically informs the line managers. The line managers can then address this. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

Training and developing the right people with the right skills

Good

Warwickshire 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 \(CRMP\)](#). 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 effective workforce planning in place

The service has good workforce planning in place. This makes sure that skills and capabilities align with what it needs to effectively carry out its CRMP. For example, the service carries out a workforce needs analysis every year. This helps it identify what skills and capabilities its workforce has and what it will need to support its CRMP for the coming year. The service prioritises the recommendations from the analysis at annual strategic planning sessions.

The service holds regular meetings to discuss and scrutinise workforce and succession planning. It uses its workforce framework and strategic needs analysis to better understand what it needs to carry out its CRMP priorities. It holds monthly meetings at a tactical level to provide monthly workforce planning. Representatives from each service department attend the meetings. The service uses Microsoft Power BI dashboards to track internal transfers and retirement profiles to support its planning.

The service monitors staff competence through monthly operational workforce meetings. It keeps its records of staff skills and risk-critical safety capabilities up to date using the Power BI dashboards. This approach means that the service can identify gaps in workforce capabilities and resilience. It also means that it can make sound and financially sustainable decisions about current and future needs.

In [our last inspection](#), we identified as an [area for improvement](#) that the service should make sure it has the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out the CRMP. Considering this evidence, we have closed this area for improvement.

Staff have access to appropriate learning and development to support their work

Most staff told us that they could access the training they needed to be effective in their roles. In our workforce survey, 73 percent of respondents (99 of 136) agreed that the service gave them the necessary training to carry out their roles. The service also has development pathways in place for staff to become firefighters or to join [fire control](#) or the protection team. We also found that staff could access non-operational courses through the service and Warwickshire County Council. These courses support staff in everyday working skills such as health and safety, manual handling and safeguarding.

Training isn't focused only on operational skills. It also includes management skills. The service's training plans make sure that staff can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, the service has adopted the [National Fire Chief Council](#)'s leadership and development programmes, which are openly accessible and available for all staff. The service also gives some staff the opportunity to complete a chartered management degree apprenticeship to support them in their roles as leaders.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure that it is able to record and monitor the training and competence of all its staff. The service now has a clear understanding of risk-critical and non-operational skills. And through monthly meetings, it has gained better oversight of workforce skills and capabilities. As a result, we have closed this area for improvement.

But the service could still improve the efficiency of its systems. It records training on three different systems. It has improved the reporting from these systems, but it could be more efficient. The service told us that it had plans in place to move all training requirements to one system.

In our workforce survey, 71 percent of respondents (97 of 136) agreed that they could access relevant learning and development opportunities.

The service promotes continuous development for all staff

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organisation, and it encourages staff to learn and develop. For example, the prevention and protection teams hold monthly improvement meetings to review what is working and how they could improve their day-to-day processes. Courses to support staff development are available through the service and Warwickshire County Council. Leadership and development programmes are also open to all staff.

We were pleased to find that the service had a range of easily accessible learning and development resources. These included a mix of e-learning packages, updates in its 'FireMatters' publication and face-to-face training. The service has changed its approach when necessary. For example, equality, diversity and inclusion training was previously available as e-learning. But the service felt this wasn't working as well as it had hoped, so a programme of face-to-face training is now in place to support staff understanding.

Ensuring fairness and diversity

Good

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service is good 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.

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 recruits a diverse workforce through fair and transparent processes

As part of our inspection, we reviewed a range of recent recruitment campaigns for firefighters, supervisory managers and senior managers.

We found that the service had an open, fair and honest recruitment process for existing staff and those wishing to work for it. There is an effective system to understand and remove the risk of [disproportionality](#) in recruitment processes. For example, job applications are open for a minimum of four weeks, in line with Warwickshire County Council standards. The roles are advertised on the [National Fire Chiefs Council's](#) website, the Warwickshire County Council website and through social media. There are agreed role requirements, covered by a single policy that has had an [equality impact assessment](#). The service also routinely uses gender decoding as part of its processes.

The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment policies so that they are fair and applicants can understand them. It has done this in consultation with union representatives for transparency. Its recruitment processes are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles.

The service advertises recruitment opportunities internally and externally. Where possible, it doesn't replace roles like for like. It reviews vacancies and opens positions up to operational or non-operational staff as long as it has enough staff available to maintain its rota. The service has also improved its maternity policy and how it supports returning breastfeeding mothers. We found that these changes had encouraged applicants from diverse backgrounds, including those applying for middle and senior leadership roles.

The service has made some improvements to increasing the gender diversity of its staff

As at 31 March 2025, 22.3 percent of the service's staff were women compared to an average of 20.8 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. In the same time period, the proportion of women firefighters was 10.7 percent (40 women), which was above the England average of 9.7 percent.

But the service needs to do more to improve the ethnic diversity of its staff. As at 31 March 2025, 2.5 percent of the service's staff were from an ethnic minority background compared to 10.9 percent in the local population and 6.4 percent throughout all fire and rescue services in England. However, 9.6 percent of staff hadn't stated their ethnicity.

The proportion of firefighters from an ethnic minority background decreased from 1.4 percent (5 people) as at 31 March 2024 to 1.2 percent (4 people) as at 31 March 2025.

The service has good development opportunities in place for all staff

The service told us that it was removing barriers to support recruitment from [under-represented groups](#). But it could gather more data to better understand the barriers that disproportionately prevent people from particular groups from progressing. At the time of our inspection, the service was recording equality data from job applicants but wasn't able to identify where individuals were unsuccessful.

Each staff member has individual goals and objectives and regular performance assessments. Staff have regular meetings with line managers about their performance, with topics linked to the [Core Code of Ethics](#). The service is trialling a '360° feedback' process to support development reviews in the future. This is a comprehensive evaluation method that involves getting anonymous feedback about an individual's performance from colleagues, managers and others. Some staff told us that they had confidence in the performance and development arrangements in place.

The service's promotion and progression processes are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. It uses anonymous sifting and external organisations to check its marking against set criteria to make sure that processes are fair and transparent. The service also uses colleagues from Warwickshire County Council to support some of its processes to provide an external view and transparency.

All staff understand EDI, and the service has processes in place to support impact assessments

The service continues to prioritise EDI. It makes sure it can offer the right services to its communities and support staff with [protected characteristics](#). For example, the service's EDI policy has a clear strategic intent. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of the service and staff to promote EDI and eliminate discrimination. Staff receive online and face-to-face training on EDI and completing equality impact assessments.

In [our last inspection](#), we identified an [area for improvement](#) that the service should make sure it has robust processes in place to undertake equality impact assessments and review any actions agreed as a result.

In this inspection, we found that the service had an effective process in place to assess equality impact. It uses policies and the National Fire Chiefs Council's equality impact assessment template to make sure it gathers relevant quantitative and qualitative data against protected characteristics. The service has trained all members of staff who might need to complete an impact assessment as part of their role. It has also provided extra quality assurance training for area managers and above.

But the service could improve how it monitors outcomes. At the time of our inspection, it had no central oversight of the outcomes from impact assessments, but it did review them regularly. Considering this evidence, we have closed this 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.

Staff have access to the 11 network groups within Warwickshire County Council. But thanks to passionate staff members, the service is starting to get requests for fire-specific network groups. These include a neurodivergent network group and a female network group, which at the time of our inspection, were new. The service was still understanding how to best to work with them to support its strategic direction.

Representative bodies and staff associations reported that the service worked well with them on EDI issues. And in our workforce survey, 80 percent of respondents (109 of 136) agreed that they felt comfortable being themselves at work.

The service has acted to address matters staff have raised. There are various processes that staff can use to raise concerns, ranging from formal discipline and grievance pathways to open meetings with the chief fire officer.

We saw evidence that the service had identified that covering longer station shifts could have a negative impact on women or sole parents. As a result, it decided to allow staff to work their normal booking hours when covering station shifts. It told us that staff had received these actions positively.

Leading people effectively

Good

Warwickshire 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](#) 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.

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

Main findings

Leaders communicate effectively across the service in open and transparent forums

Senior leaders effectively communicate the aims and objectives of the CRMP to staff at all levels. They do this in a variety of ways, which promotes open, two-way communication. These include:

- posters across the service;
- online meetings/briefings;
- video messages sharing important changes or news;
- senior leader station and department visits;
- open chats with the chief fire officer;
- the service's 'FireMatters' publication; and
- a recording system called Learnpro for risk-critical or safety-critical messaging.

We found that leaders at all levels supported this approach and made sure that staff understood the CRMP's aims and objectives. The service monitors the effectiveness of its messaging by tracking clicks and hits online and through spoken and written feedback.

The service has updated its intranet. This is where it keeps all its staff communications. It has worked hard to make sure that all information is available within three clicks. The communications team also works to a plain English style guide.

As a result, staff have a reasonable level of trust in their leaders. In our workforce survey, 67 percent of respondents (91 of 136) agreed that senior leaders clearly communicated the service's objectives.

The staff we spoke to understood how they contributed to the aims of the CRMP individually and as a team through personal development plans, station plans and communications provided by the senior leadership team.

The service identifies and develops leaders fairly

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

The service has clear career development pathways in place, but we found that some staff still didn't trust the processes for career development. The service proactively removes any barriers and supports all staff in accessing leadership development opportunities. And it uses anonymous sifting and an external organisation for checking against recruitment criteria.

The service has a list of people willing to volunteer to support projects and workstreams. And it has adopted the [National Fire Chief Council](#)'s training programmes, which are open to all staff.

The service is trialling a talent management process to identify high-potential individuals at performance reviews. It plans to link this process to its leadership programmes, but this wasn't fully in place at the time of our inspection.

There are talent management schemes in place to develop leaders and high-potential staff. For example, the service offers development through three-month temporary promotions to fit service needs. These are reviewed and signed off at the relevant internal governance meeting. The service also provides development opportunities by using its volunteers to support projects. The service advertises all talent and leadership opportunities fairly through the intranet or in its 'FireMatters' publication for all staff to consider.

The service has put considerable effort into reviewing and developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair and all staff can understand them. Staff told us that since the service's review, they felt that its policies and process were more structured and transparent. In our workforce survey, 47 percent of respondents (64 of 136) agreed that the promotion process in the service was fair.

The service manages selection processes consistently. It no longer keeps a list of candidates. Instead, it recruits from the most suitable candidates available at the time of recruitment. And it uses temporary promotions appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps. As at 31 March 2025, 1.2 percent of the workforce were on temporary promotion.

The service's leaders are equipped to lead

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

The service continues to have 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, 59 percent of respondents (80 of 136) agreed that the service's performance management systems allowed them to achieve their potential.

Leaders at all levels have received appropriate training, which helps them to confidently manage a range of challenges. The service and Warwickshire Country Council provide HR training. They have a standard offering, and the courses are part of the National Fire Chief Council's leadership development programmes, which the service has fully adopted. The service also uses thematic courses, such as Active Bystanders, which is a course that teaches people how to challenge inappropriate behaviour when they see it.

The service has effective programmes in place to develop its leaders. Leaders are exposed to different management scenarios that match and stretch their skills. This means that the service has leaders who are confident to step up to the next level of management when opportunities arise. Participation in leadership programmes is voluntary, which makes them available to more people across the workforce. At the time of our inspection, the service was planning to make the programmes mandatory as part of its progression pathways.

The service has effective arrangements in place to manage staff performance

Leaders are equipped to confidently manage staff performance and deal with any poor performance or behavioural issues through clear policies and procedures.

There is a good performance management system in place, which allows leaders to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff members. The service has made improvements to its performance meetings that reflect the [Core Code of Ethics](#). It also plans to introduce '360° feedback', which is a comprehensive evaluation method that involves getting anonymous feedback about an individual's performance from colleagues, managers and others. At the time of our inspection, the service was trialling this at station manager level and above before introducing it across the organisation.

But there is still work for the service to do to make sure that staff are confident in its performance and development arrangements. As at 31 March 2025, personal development reviews had been completed by 63.9 percent of [wholetime](#) firefighters, 59.6 percent of support staff, 53 percent of [on-call](#) staff and 63.2 percent of [fire control](#) staff.

Leaders promote a positive culture

We found that most leaders at all levels acted as role models. Staff told us that senior leaders consistently modelled and followed the Core Code of Ethics. The service is aware of some behaviours that don't align with its values. We saw examples of it acting to address this using development plans or additional training to support staff.

We found that staff were confident to challenge inappropriate behaviour or address concerns. The service use tools such as 'difficult conversations' starter cards, which are prompts designed to help people talk about sensitive emotional or complex topics.

In our workforce survey, 47 percent of respondents (64 of 136) agreed that leaders at all levels promoted a positive culture.

As a result, leaders are maintaining and developing the positive culture we found throughout the organisation. They do this through clear communication, setting examples, admitting mistakes, listening to feedback and making changes that support the priorities of the community risk management plan.

Leaders are active in challenging [misconduct](#), including bullying, [harassment](#) and discrimination. They have built good relationships across the service and staff trust them to take their concerns seriously.

