

# Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

## Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service



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# About this inspection

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This is our third inspection of fire and rescue services across England. We first inspected Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service in July 2018, publishing a report with our findings in December 2018 on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how it looks after its people. Our second inspection, in autumn 2020, considered how the service was responding to the pandemic. This inspection considers for a second time the service's effectiveness, efficiency and people.

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In this round of our inspections of all 44 fire and rescue services in England, we answer three main questions:

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

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

## What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

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








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





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







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

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

# Overview

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 <b>Effectiveness</b>	 <b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>
Understanding fires and other risks	 Requires improvement	Good
Preventing fires and other risks	 Requires improvement	Good
Protecting the public through fire regulation	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Responding to fires and other emergencies	 Good	Good
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	 Good	Good

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 <b>Efficiency</b>	 <b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>
Making best use of resources	 Requires improvement	Good
Future affordability	 Good	Good

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 <b>People</b>	 <b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Promoting the right values and culture	 Good	Requires improvement
Getting the right people with the right skills	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	 Requires improvement	Good
Managing performance and developing leaders	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement

### HMI summary

We are satisfied with some aspects of the performance of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping the public safe and secure, and how it looks after its people. I want to thank the service for working with us by accommodating the virtual approach of this inspection. Inspections usually take a hybrid, on-site and virtual, approach but inspecting during the pandemic meant we had to adapt. I also want to recognise the disruption caused by the pandemic. This has been considered in our findings.

The service has made some progress to address the concerns we raised in our first inspection. But progress has been slow, and the service still has a lot of work to do.

We have, however, been very encouraged by the service's progress in some areas. There is now a clear, well-documented plan for following [national operational guidance](#), which is being communicated to all staff.

The service's work to identify those in the community that are seldom reached and are most at risk is good. It must now target prevention work at those groups. The service's protection work is now more aligned with risk but the service needs to ensure it can complete its risk-based inspection programme.

There has also been improvement in how staff can access wellbeing support, and now 97 percent of staff we surveyed are confident they are able to access mental health services.

Recent investment in new software will help improve how the service records and monitors staff training.

But in other areas the service has regressed, and we have new causes of concern. One of these relates to the service not doing enough to make sure it has the resources to meet demand and protect the community. Also, there has been little progress in the past two years to make sure the service is a fair place to work, and to promote equality and diversity.

Many of the improvements that have been made are very recent and so we haven't been able to assess their effectiveness. We are aware that other measures are planned. But prevention and protection activity levels remain low, and there are backlogs of work because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The service needs to prioritise planning to make sure that staff have the right skills and capabilities to do their jobs, as set out in its [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#). It is worrying that so many operational posts are temporary. This can cause uncertainty among staff and be detrimental to their wellbeing. This also suggests a lack of workforce planning.

On too many occasions, areas for improvement we identified in our 2018 inspection still haven't been addressed. We are aware that there have been changes to the senior leadership team in the past few years, and these have undoubtedly affected the service's ability to make changes. But we hope that the service will be able to make extensive improvements in coming years to give the people of Lincolnshire the fire and rescue service they need and deserve.



**Roy Wilsher**

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

# Service in numbers



## Response

Lincolnshire

England

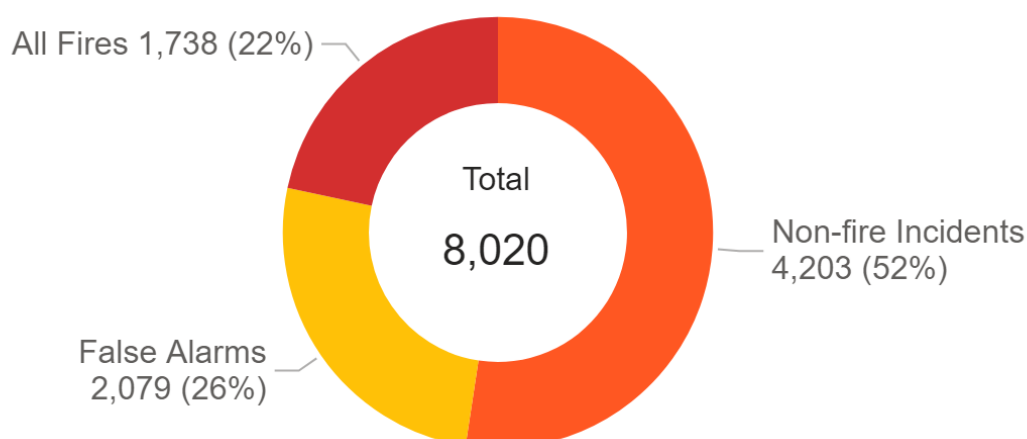
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	10.47	9.16
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	3.05	4.47
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2020	0.88	2.55
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2020	86.08%	83.07%



## Cost

Firefighter cost per person per year Year ending 31 March 2020	£21.38	£23.82
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### Incidents attended in the year to 31 March 2021

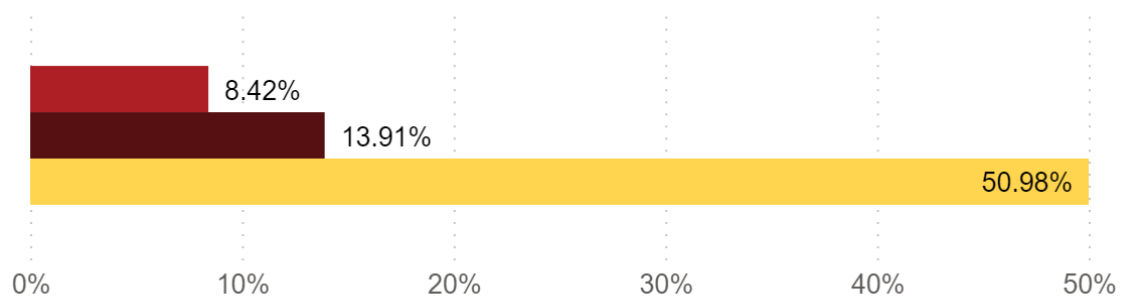




Five-year change in total workforce 2015 to 2020	-10.95%	-5.30%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2020	0.80	0.63
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2020	29.65%	65.10%

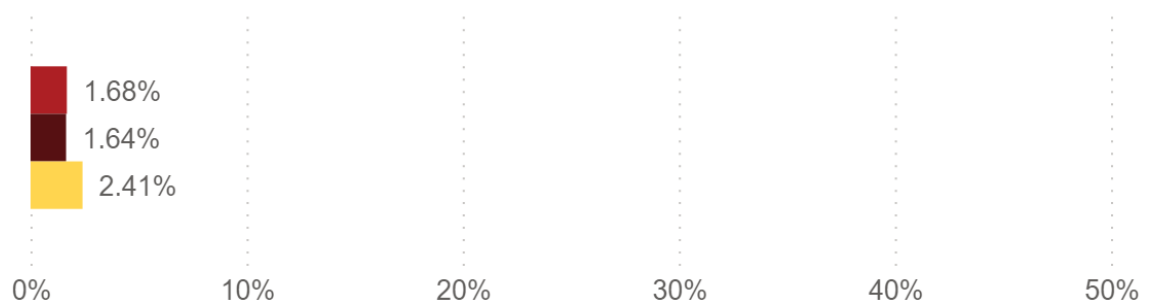
**Percentage population, firefighters and workforce who are female as at 31 March 2020**

Female ● Firefighters ● Workforce ● Local population



**Percentage of population, firefighters, and workforce who are Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) as at 31 March 2020**

BAME ● Firefighters ● Workforce ● Local population



For more information on data and analysis throughout this report, please view the [‘About the data’ section of our website](#).



# Effectiveness



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



## Requires improvement

### Summary

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

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In Round 1, the service received an overall good grading, with only 'protecting the public through fire regulation' being graded as requires improvement.

The service has published a new IRMP. However, at the time of our inspection, it still wasn't reporting on the progress of this plan. This plan describes how prevention, protection and response work will be resourced to reduce the risks and threats to the community. But the service still has work to do to make sure that it has enough resources to meet demand. It needs to focus on monitoring and assessing the results of its work, to establish what works and what it can do better.

The service still needs to improve how it works with local people to better understand risk in the community. The service needs to target the hard-to-reach parts of its community and those who are most [vulnerable](#). Levels of prevention activity are low and mainly carried out by its specialists, after referrals from other organisations. Although the service has arranged for its fire prevention work to be assessed by Lincolnshire University, this remains an area that still needs improvement since our first inspection.

It has improved its protection work and how it targets high-risk premises. This includes, for example, building owners and landlords who don't follow all the fire guidance and regulations that they should. Evidence of this is the increase in non-compliance rates. The service has invested in additional resources to support its risk-based inspection programme. Although it was too early to understand, at the

time of inspection, how effective these resources are. The way it stores and records protection data is also inconsistent, and it needs to improve how audits are quality assured.

Since our first inspection in 2018, the service has made good progress with putting in place [national operational guidance](#). The service sets response standards for arrival at fires and road traffic collisions. But it doesn't currently meet these targets. Since our last inspection in 2018, however, it is better at collecting risk data. Although the process does lack quality assurance.

Its control room function is resilient. This is, in part, thanks to its work with, and support from, the East Coast and Hertfordshire Control Consortium. This involves four fire services (Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Humberside) sharing resources. These include IT networks, training and strategic plans. But the service could do more to improve training for control room staff. Critically, it hasn't reviewed and published new fire survival guidance following the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations.

The service is ready to respond to major and multi-agency incidents. The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services. This helps them to work together effectively to keep the public safe. The plan includes the risks of major events that the service could provide support or ask for assistance from neighbouring services. Exercises have significantly reduced during the pandemic, with eight exercises being carried out in the year 2019/20 and none in 2020/21.

We also heard from some staff that they have not been involved in either a cross-border exercise or multi-agency training. The service should consider offering this training to all operational staff.

## Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



### Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at understanding risk.

Each fire and rescue service should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks that could affect its communities. Arrangements should be put in place through the service's prevention, protection and response capabilities to prevent or mitigate these risks for the public.

#### Areas for improvement

- The service needs to improve how it engages with the local community to build up a comprehensive profile of risk in the service area.
- The service should make sure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.

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

**Several sources of data inform the IRMP, but input from the public is limited. And the service doesn't regularly review its work with other organisations**

Following an [integrated risk management planning](#) process, the service has assessed a good range of risks and threats. When assessing risk, it has considered relevant information from a broad range of internal and external sources and data. This includes data from other blue light organisations (such as the police service and ambulance trusts), historical incidents, social and economic information, and the modelling of emergency response times.

During our first inspection, the service was told it needed to improve how it works with the local community. This would help it build a thorough risk profile in the area. While it has worked with communities and others (including health and social services, and blue light organisations), it recognises that it could improve how it collects and uses feedback.

Since our last inspection in 2018, it has improved how it works with other organisations. But the service recognises that it could do more to better understand risk in the community.

**The service produces a range of documents but isn't reporting on the progress of its IRMP**

After assessing relevant risks, the service has recorded its findings in a clear IRMP. This plan describes how prevention, protection and response work is to be resourced to reduce the risks and threats to the community, both now and in the future. It uses this to inform the IRMP's five supporting frameworks.

But during our inspection the service was still developing its service improvement plan. The aim is for this plan to set out the objectives and ways in which it will achieve its IRMP. As it was still being drafted, the service couldn't demonstrate how effective it is in implementing the current IRMP.

**The service has improved how it gathers information on risk, but it is not managing this information well**

The service regularly collects and updates risk information about people, places and threats it has identified as being the highest risk. This includes information crews collect, which is then reported and processed centrally.

Since our last inspection, it has improved how it gathers information. It has done this by introducing a generic template for station-based staff to collect all risk information.

While this now means that all data is collected centrally, we reviewed several records that showed updates to risk information could be done quicker and we found no quality assurance system in place. We sampled a range of risk information from nine files. These included information on the guidance in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk and high-rise buildings and what information [fire control](#) hold.

Our inspectors could only get limited information from the stored records and information reviewed wasn't always up to date or detailed. For example, important data such as why the site had been referred to the service or visited was not available, neither was the last or planned visit date. Also, the records hadn't always been completed with input from the service's prevention, protection and response functions when needed.

The service has upgraded mobile devices, which staff use to access up-to-date risk information although some staff reported connectivity issues. We also noted a significant delay between when short-term risk information is identified and when it is made available to operational staff.

That said, this information is available for the service's prevention, protection and response staff. This helps them to identify and reduce risk effectively. For example, operational crews and control room staff can access information via mobile devices and data terminals. Information is also shared between departments.

### **The service has improved how it learns from operational activity**

The service routinely updates risk assessments. And it uses feedback from its local and national operational work to challenge its planning assumptions. For example, the service produces a comprehensive risk profile using information from organisations it works with locally and nationally.

It also has a system to make sure that it reviews operational activity and resourcing against risk.

### **Following the Grenfell Tower recommendations, the service's response would benefit from better prioritising, recording and monitoring**

During this round of inspection, we sampled how each fire and rescue service has responded to the recommendations and learning from phase one of the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry. (Work on phase two of the inquiry is currently underway and hasn't yet been published.)

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service has responded to learning from this tragedy positively and proactively. It is on track to assess the risk of each high-rise building in its area by the end of 2021.

It has carried out a fire safety audits. It has also collected and passed relevant risk information to its prevention, protection and response teams about buildings identified as high-risk, and all high-rises that have cladding similar to the type installed on Grenfell Tower.

But its action plan needs to become a useful document that supports its response to the recommendations. Some staff told us that they were unaware of what actions the service had taken in relation to those recommendations.

## Preventing fires and other risks



### Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at preventing fires and other risks.

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

#### Areas for improvement

- The FRS needs to target its activity toward its most vulnerable and hardest to reach communities.
- The FRS needs to implement a programme of evaluation to assess its prevention activity to understand what works.

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

#### **Its prevention work is more aligned with risk. But activity levels are low and post-incident activity is inconsistent**

The service's prevention plan is clearly linked to the risks identified in its IRMP. And its community risk profile analysis uses data and information from other organisations to make sure activity aligns with risk.

During our inspection, we were told that the service had recently started to use information gathered from working with local communities to make sure that prevention activity clearly supports the IRMP.

A specialist prevention team carries out most of the prevention activity, with only some involvement from station-based staff. This is limiting the service's capacity to carry out this work. The service carried out 4.7 [home fire safety checks](#) per 1,000 people during 2019/20. This is compared with 10.3 checks per 1,000 people throughout all services in England. Prevention work isn't always carried out in isolation. There is evidence of relevant risk information being passed to the service's other departments.

Following incidents, crews should provide post-incident prevention activities. But the records we checked during our inspection were inconsistent.

## **The service needs to improve how it defines and targets vulnerability; its activity levels for visits and campaigns are low**

The service targets its prevention activity to the people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. It does this by responding to referrals from other organisations and using post-incident data. For example, of the 3,592 home fire safety checks carried out in 2019/20, 2,647 (74 percent) were aimed at people aged 65 and over and/or with a disability.

Since our previous inspection in 2018 the service has introduced a new way for organisations it works with to identify, and refer, vulnerable people. But during our most recent inspection in 2020, it wasn't prioritising these referrals in line with its own definition of vulnerability.

We were told that the service has recently started to use the feedback from the community risk profile to help prioritise its prevention work.

The service doesn't set levels of activity it expects from its station-based staff to spend on prevention. And activity levels are low. It could do more to communicate risks to people who have been identified as vulnerable. As there was limited activity during the pandemic, there is now a backlog of home fire safety checks.

## **Domestic prevention training, recording and activity throughout the service is inconsistent**

Full-time operational staff and the prevention team do complete some prevention training. But [on-call staff](#) aren't trained to carry out prevention work and the prevention team doesn't have a formal training plan. The service has a quality assurance process in place to check that the visits are being done well.

We reviewed several [safe and well visits](#) during our inspection, and all were in order, with relevant advice given. But the records of post-incident activity were inconsistent, with staff reporting that there is little activity. Also, that the information operational crews are given is either minimal or incomplete.

## **Staff know the safeguarding processes, and they make referrals to other organisations**

Staff told us that they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly to respond to any [safeguarding](#) issues. In 2020/21, at least 311 referrals were made to other organisations during safe and well visits. An example was provided where the fire service carried out a safe and well visit. The results were then shared with the police and ambulance service, and the individual was referred to Lincolnshire County Council for further support. This information sharing is a benefit of staff sharing a building.



## **The service should recognise the potential benefits of improving the way it works with other organisations**

The service works with a range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. These include the Age UK charity, electricity provider Western Power Distribution, and the East Midlands Ambulance Service.

But the way the service works with other organisations is inconsistent. This means that the service isn't using all available opportunities to prevent fires and other emergencies. Plus, some of the working arrangements haven't been reviewed or assessed. For example, we found that some data-sharing arrangements haven't been reviewed since they began. During our inspection, however, we were told that the service had just employed an advocate to make improvements in this area.

Arrangements are in place to receive referrals from other organisations. Since our first inspection, the service now supports other organisations in referring members of the community who would most benefit from a visit. But the risk assessment referral process pre-dates the current (2018) definition of vulnerability. As a result, it doesn't take into account several of the areas currently identified as vulnerable by the service. For example, hoarding, older people and those who live alone and need care or support. This means that the service isn't prioritising its referrals according to the most up-to-date assessment of vulnerability.

There is some evidence that the service exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at most risk. It uses the information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention work. For example, it shares information with the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership to support and improve road safety work.

## **The service shares information, and acts, to reduce arson**

The service has a range of effective ways to target and educate people of different ages who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. This includes a dedicated fire-setting prevention scheme, targeting those with fire-setting behaviour and linked to local council and community organisations.

When appropriate, it also shares information and works with other organisations on joint projects, such as arson reduction and anti-social behaviour campaigns with Lincolnshire Police.

## **The service has arranged research into the effectiveness of its prevention work. But there has been little progress since our first inspection**

After our first inspection, we recommended that the service improves how it evaluates its prevention work. Since then, it has asked Lincolnshire University to carry out a study. This was delayed due to the pandemic and is expected to be completed toward the end of 2021.

We will be interested to hear the result of this research and how the service uses this to improve its prevention activity.



## Protecting the public through fire regulation



### Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at protecting the public through fire regulation.

All 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 it must have a locally determined, risk-based inspection programme for enforcing the legislation.

#### Cause of concern

The service hasn't taken sufficient action since the last inspection to appropriately resource its protection function.

#### Recommendations

By 30 September 2021, the service should:

- produce a clear plan for how it will ensure all premises it has identified as high-risk are audited in accordance with the timeframe it sets out in its risk-based inspection policy;
- review its administration of the protection function to make sure it can record and review all activity in a clear and consistent manner; and
- make sure it has an effective quality assurance process in place so the service can assure itself that 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.

### **Protection activity is aligned with risk, and the team is improving how it interacts with other departments. But activity levels are low and there is no evidence that the service has achieved its risk-based inspection programme (RBIP)**

The service's protection plan is linked to the risk it has identified in its IRMP. Since our last inspection it has developed its RBIP, which is now informed by local risk. But the service hasn't been able to meet the demands of its RBIP.

Staff throughout the service are involved in this work, with information exchanged as needed. For example, protection team members carry out audits of premises. And full-time operational crews carry out hazard spotting to support protection work. Information is then used to adjust planning and direct activity between the service's protection, prevention and response functions. This means resources are properly aligned with risk.

## **The effect of the pandemic on protection**

We considered how the service had adapted its protection work during our COVID-19-specific inspection in October 2020. At that time, we found that the service was slow to adapt its protection work for the public. And it stopped most of its protection work between April and June 2020.

Since then, the service has carried out audits over the phone and has improved the way it works with other organisations to support enforcement activity. But it recognises that inspecting some premises has been delayed due to the pandemic. It expects to address the backlog of audits over the coming year.

## **Service leaders are confident that it is now targeting the right premises**

The service has a risk-based inspection programme, but recognises it has not completed the audits within the set timeframe. For example, 95 high-risk premises, out of 439 identified, were audited during 2020/21. Most (71) of these were short audits. We found that the service isn't consistently auditing the buildings it has targeted in the timescales it has set. During our inspection, we reviewed several protection files where the high-risk buildings hadn't been inspected in the last 12 months, contrary to the service's policy.

## **The service is on track to audit all high-rise buildings this year**

The service has carried out audits at all high-rise buildings in the area. Information gathered during these audits is available to response teams and control operators. This helps them to respond more effectively in an emergency.

## **The service doesn't inspect its high-risk premises in line with its policies. And information on its work is inaccurate and incomplete**

We reviewed a range of audits of different premises throughout the service. This included audits:

- as part of the service's risk-based inspection programme;
- after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applied;
- where enforcement action had been taken; and
- at high-rise, high-risk buildings.

Not all the audits we reviewed were completed in a consistent, systematic way, or in line with the service's policies.

## **The service carries out limited quality assurance of its protection work**

The service has a quality assurance policy in place for protection although it recognises that improvement is needed in relation to short audits. Officers carry out a local peer review. But this isn't monitored, and paper records were inconsistent.

The service isn't good at measuring how effective its protection work is. Or how to make sure that all sections of its communities get equal access to protection services that meet their needs.

### **The service hasn't carried out a prosecution in some time.**

The service doesn't routinely use its full range of enforcement powers. We found it has only occasionally progressed to prosecute those who fail to follow fire safety regulations. This is due to the time and resource needed to pursue these cases. But we are encouraged that the service is making improvements in this area.

In the year to 31 March 2020, the service issued one alteration notice, ten enforcement notices, four prohibition notices and didn't carry out any prosecutions. This is a reduction compared with the previous year. In the last five years, from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2020, it has only completed one prosecution.

### **The protection team doesn't have enough resources to meet demand**

After our first inspection, we recommended that the service improves its protection resources. This would help make sure it had enough to support a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme. During this inspection, we were shown a plan that addressed this. And more resources have been introduced over the last year.

During our inspection, it was too early to understand how good the service's plan is in supporting its risk-based inspection programme.

The service doesn't have enough qualified protection staff to support its audit and enforcement work.

Staff are trained in line with [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) (NFCC) guidelines. Currently, there is a focus on training protection staff who are 'in development' and needed to provide critical capacity that the department needs. (Staff 'in development' are receiving the training they need to complete to fulfil their role.)

### **The service has improved how it works with others, but recognises that it needs to do more**

The service exchanges information with other enforcement organisations to regulate fire safety. This includes the Care Quality Commission, building control and Lincolnshire County Council. The service also has a representative at the regional enforcement group. This group also includes staff from Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire fire and rescue services (FRSs). These FRSs form the NFCC East Midlands Region. They discuss matters relating to their protection responsibilities.

### **The service responds to building consultations promptly**

The service responds to most building consultations on time. This supports its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. In the 12 months to 31 March 2021, the service received 461 building consultation requests. It responded to 456 (98.9 percent) within the required time. It also completed 220 of 223 licensing consultations (98.7 percent) in the required time.

## The service's work with local businesses is limited

The service could do more to work with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation.

We were told that, due to a lack of capacity, the service doesn't take part in the [primary authority scheme](#). This is where local businesses could benefit from fire safety advice.

The service recognised that it needs to improve. It recently employed a new member of staff and signed up to the better business engagement scheme, a government project to encourage closer working with businesses and regulators.

## The service has reduced unwanted fire signals

An effective risk-based approach is in place to manage the number of unwanted fire signals (automated signals to the service from fire alarms). The service now has a policy to challenge any 999 call associated with a fire alarm. And it works with businesses and organisations to reduce the number of unwanted fire signals.

It gets fewer calls because of this work. In the year ending 31 March 2020, the service attended 2,541 false fire alarms. This represents 3.4 incidents per 1,000 people in Lincolnshire. This compares with an average rate of 4.1 per 1,000 people in England. Only 8 percent of emergency calls to the service in 2020/21 were automatic fire alarms (AFAs). This is one of the lowest proportions throughout all services in England. The service didn't attend 46 percent of these AFAs in 2020/21 (577 of 1,257).

Fewer unwanted calls mean that fire engines are available to respond to a genuine incident, rather than responding to a false one. It also reduces the risk to the public, with fewer fire engines travelling at high speed on the roads.

## Responding to fires and other emergencies



### Good (2018: Good)

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service is good 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 within their areas.

### Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure its [mobile data terminals](#) are reliable so that firefighters can readily access up-to-date risk information.
- The service needs to assure itself that Control Staff have the appropriate level of training and can respond to complex and challenging incidents.

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

### **Response standards and wholetime availability are good**

The service's response plan is linked to the risks identified in its IRMP. Its fire engines and response staff, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to help the service to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies. The service has introduced an assured level of response for its main stations. This means that its 15 fire stations are assessed and prioritised for availability to respond to incidents.

The service uses risk-based, pre-determined attendances to decide how many fire engines, and what types of resources, are needed to respond to different types of incidents.

### **The service has set response targets, some of which it doesn't meet**

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standards in its IRMP. The service details its response standards in the IRMP:

- First fire engine to arrive at domestic fires within the expected time, which is dependent on location, on 100 percent of occasions.
- Second fire engine to arrive at dwelling fires within 25 minutes on 100 percent of occasions.
- First fire engine to arrive at road traffic collisions within the expected time, which is also dependent on location, on 100 percent of occasions.

The service's performance data shows that it didn't achieve the first and third targets listed above during 2020/21. It achieved them on 90 percent and 81 percent of occasions respectively. Performance standards have improved following the introduction of the Lincolnshire Crewing System. This is in place at eight of the nine stations staffed by full-time members of the workforce. This involves staff working in the daytime and being on-call out of hours in fire service accommodation, for 24-hour periods. But some staff told us that they found this difficult to juggle with family and home life as they can be away from home for long periods of time.

Home Office data shows that in the year to 31 March 2020, the service's average response time to [primary fires](#) was 10 minutes and 20 seconds. This is in line with the average for other predominantly rural services (10 minutes and 27 seconds).

### **The service's on-call availability has been declining for several years**

To support its response plan, the service aims to have its on-call firefighters available 91 percent of the time. But it doesn't always achieve this standard. It achieved 87.6 percent availability during 2020/21. This was an increase due to the unique availability of on-call staff during the pandemic. The service also has a degradation plan that supports moving and adjusting resources when levels of staff availability fall.

## **Responding officers are competent in incident command**

The service has trained incident commanders. They are assessed regularly and properly. At 31 March 2021, 267 of the 273 incident commanders were accredited within the required times. The remainder (six) didn't carry out incident command. This means the service can safely and effectively manage the range of incidents that it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

As part of our inspection, we interviewed incident commanders from the service at all levels of command. The ones we interviewed are 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 \(JESIP\)](#).

## **The service could do more to improve the training given to control room staff**

We are disappointed to find that the service's control room staff aren't always included in command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance work. But control room staff do complete training as part of the East Coast and Hertfordshire Consortium. This ensures business continuity for each control room. This includes the fire services of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Humberside and Hertfordshire. Plus, they can access risk information from all services in the consortium.

## **The service has been slow to update fire survival guidance training**

The control room staff we interviewed are confident they could provide fire survival guidance to many callers simultaneously during a major incident. This was identified as learning for fire services after the Grenfell Tower fire. Staff have access to action plans and fire survival guidance. But we found that the guidance still pre-dates the learning recommendations. The guidance is currently being updated, then control room staff will be trained on it. This is expected to take place within the next 12 months.

The control room has good systems to exchange real-time risk information with incident commanders, and other responding organisations and supporting fire and rescue services. Maintaining a good awareness of emergency incidents as they are happening helps the service to provide the public with accurate and relevant advice.

## **Storing information following debriefs is inconsistent**

As part of our inspection, we tried to review a range of emergency incidents and training that should have resulted in debriefs to identify good ways of working or areas where lessons can be learned. But, due to the way this information is stored, it was not possible to find an audit trail for the debriefing process. We were told that the service intends to introduce a new system to address this. At the time of our inspection, this was due to go live in June 2021.

Since our last inspection, the service has introduced an operational learning board to improve the way it learns lessons. This is a local forum where information from the service's own debriefs and lessons learned, as well as from other services and responders throughout the country, is reviewed. Any learning is communicated to all staff via a quarterly publication and staff must confirm that they have read it.



We are encouraged to see that the service is contributing towards, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services. And it's using operational learning gathered from other emergency service organisations it works with.

### **The service is making progress with incorporating national operational guidance**

After our first inspection, we recommended that the service introduce a plan to make sure that national operational guidance was followed. This was to include joint and national learning, and the service was to make sure that it was clearly communicated throughout the organisation. It is making good progress with this and has a clear, well-documented plan.

This is communicated to staff in a newsletter and there have been dedicated events to promote this work.

### **Appropriate provisions are in place to communicate with the public if there is an incident**

The service has good systems in place to inform the public about incidents that pose a risk, and help keep them safe during and after incidents. This includes working with Lincolnshire County Council's communications team. Although the team doesn't work 24/7, alternative arrangements are in place for when there are incidents outside typical working hours.

## **Responding to major and multi-agency incidents**



### **Good (2018: Good)**

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

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

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

### **The service has plans and preparations in place for large or multi-agency incidents**

The service has anticipated and considered the risks and threats it may face. These risks are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its IRMP. For example, it has a corporate risk register that details risks such as flooding and high-rise incidents.

It is also familiar with the significant risks that neighbouring fire and rescue services could face that it might be asked to respond to in an emergency. The service has

systems in place to share and receive risk information. And firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services, which includes risks up to 10km from the county border.

### **Responses to large and multi-agency incidents are rehearsed and well resourced**

We reviewed the arrangements the service has in place to respond to different major incidents. This includes widespread flooding and large-scale industrial fires.

Staff reported that they are confident to ask for and mobilise national response assets. We were also told that multi-agency exercises take place. For example, an exercise at Lincoln Cathedral, and exercises with the RAF (with which the service has a long-term and strong relationship).

The service has good arrangements in place, and staff understand them. For example, the service has [national resilience assets](#) that include a high-volume pump, an [urban search and rescue](#) unit, and boat teams.

### **Specialist terrorist attack response teams are in place to respond to incidents in four counties**

The service supports other fire and rescue services that respond to emergency incidents. For example, it has a specialist marauding terrorist attack team that responds to incidents in Leicestershire, Peterborough and Nottinghamshire. It is intraoperable with services in these areas and can form part of a multi-agency response.

### **The service could do more to make sure that its cross-border exercises are available to more staff**

The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services. This helps them to work together effectively to keep the public safe. The plan includes the risks of major events that the service could provide support or ask for assistance from neighbouring services. Exercises have significantly reduced during the pandemic, with eight exercises being carried out in the year 2019/20 and none in 2020/21.

We also heard from some staff that they have not been involved in either a cross-border exercise, or multi-agency training. The service should consider offering this training to all operational staff.

### **The service has adopted JESIP principles**

The incident commanders we talked to had been trained in, and are familiar with, the JESIP.

The service could provide us with strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. This includes JESIP principles being incorporated throughout their training and all officers being able to confidently explain how and why they would apply them.



### **The service plays an active role in the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum**

The service has good plans in place to respond to emergencies with other organisations that make up the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum . The forum is a multi-agency network that plans and prepares for local and catastrophic emergencies. These arrangements include making sure that there's enough funding for the forum to work effectively.

The service is a valued member of the forum. The chief fire officer has carried out the deputy chair role, and often the chair role, throughout the pandemic. Service staff are also part of the programme management and project groups. The service takes part in regular training with other forum members. It uses the learning to plan responses to major and multi-agency incidents. The service takes part in the forum's joint exercise programme, and holds its own exercises and invites other forum members to take part.

### **National learning is considered and communicated to staff**

The service keeps up to date with joint operational learning updates from other fire services and from lessons learned from other blue light organisations. This is used to adjust plans that have been made with other organisations it works with. The service considers national learning at a regular forum, and relevant information is communicated to all operational staff.

# Efficiency



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



## Requires improvement

### Summary

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An efficient fire and rescue service will manage its budget and use its resources properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to the risks and priorities identified in its [integrated risk management plan](#). It should try to achieve value for money and keep costs down without compromising public safety. It should make the best possible use of its resources to achieve better outcomes for the public. Plans should be based on robust and realistic assumptions about income and costs. Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency requires improvement.

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The service received an overall good rating for the efficiency pillar in round one and was also rated good for making the best use of resources. The service has evidenced examples of collaborative estates projects and a balanced budget with the county council.

Overall, the service uses its resources effectively and efficiently. But there are areas for improvement.

The service needs to show a clear rationale for allocating its resources between prevention, protection and response activities. This should be based on making sure it can meet its priorities, and aligned with its IRMP.

The service works well with other organisations to share information and cut costs. But it now needs to monitor, review and assess the benefits and results of its collaborative working arrangements. This will highlight what works well and where things can be done better.

It should also align the way it manages its fleet and premises more with its IRMP, and update its planning in this area.

To carry out much-needed improvements to its IT systems, the service needs a clear strategy, a plan to put this in place and people with the right skills to do it. It has introduced some improvements, such as new mobile devices for fire crews to access

information more quickly and easily, but there are still problems to be resolved. We are aware that the service is reviewing its use of technology within the organisation.

Business continuity has improved since our last inspection and plans are generally up to date and tested.

## Making best use of resources



### Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at making best use of its resources.

Fire and rescue services should manage their resources properly and appropriately, aligning those resources to meet the services' risks and statutory responsibilities. They should make best possible use of their resources to achieve better outcomes for the public.

The service's budget for 2020/21 is £21,894,000. This is approximately a 1.9 percent increase from the previous financial year.

#### Areas for improvement

- The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection, and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities set out in its integrated risk management plan.
- The service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews, and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaborative activity.

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

#### **Plans identify objectives clearly, but the service needs to do more to make sure that operational activity supports its plans**

The service sometimes uses its resources well to manage risk, but there are several weaknesses that need addressing. For example, we found that its business plans are better at identifying priorities than achieving them. Foreseeable threats and risks are clearly set out in the service's Community Risk Profile 2020–2024 and its IRMP Community Plan 2020–2024. In identifying [vulnerable people](#) and commercial premises at risk, the plans draw on a wide range of data. This includes historic demand, statistical projections, information from other public sector bodies and commercial marketing organisations. For the plans to be more effective, the workforce needs to be more aware, and have a better understanding, of them. And resources must be better aligned with service priorities.

The service's plans aren't consistent with the risks and priorities identified in its IRMP. This includes allocating resources for prevention, protection and response activities. For example, we could find no clear evidence of how these three priority areas are linked to resource allocation. In terms of protection, we noted in our inspection in 2018 that the service was not meeting its target number of fire safety audits. We recognise that it has employed more staff, but progress has been slow. About a third of its risk-based inspection programme was completed in the financial year 2020/21. And this is an area where the service is outperformed by other fire and rescue services. Similarly, how often the service works with vulnerable people to reduce risks in their homes lags behind the national average. We found that prevention activity rests mainly with specialist prevention staff. Other FRSs use frontline firefighters' spare time better to increase their levels of activity. The service's protection and prevention departments are under resourced.

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service's revenue budget (£21.9m), which includes £321,000 for emergency planning capability, forms a relatively small part of Lincolnshire County Council's overall budget of c£500m. Lincolnshire County Council prioritises the service's financial requirements. This means that the service doesn't face the same pressures to balance budgets that we see elsewhere in the country. It is usual for Lincolnshire County Council to cover cost pressures. Recent examples include a £50,000 increase in business rates following a re-evaluation of fire service buildings.

### **The service needs to do more to finding better ways of working, and expectations of performance results are unclear**

The service's arrangements for managing performance are weak. And it doesn't clearly link resource use to its IRMP or its most important and long-term aims. The service plans aren't used, accepted or understood by everyone, neither do they encourage prevention and protection activity as they should. This affects departmental and individual performance. For example, departmental plans are outdated and relate to the service's previous IRMP.

A new service plan designed to link operational activity to the published IRMP was being drafted at the time of our inspection. Once introduced, the service must make sure that staff are aware of how they are to contribute to service expectations.

The service is taking some steps to make sure its workforce is as productive as possible. For example, some training is now available online. And there are now some measures to introduce flexible and home working to support the workforce. Weekend training is also now available for [on-call firefighters](#). This avoids interrupting their main employment during the working week. And opportunities to work at home, out of hours, and at weekends are now being offered. This meets both staff and service needs, and makes it easier to work around family commitments. We will review how the service assesses the benefits of these measures in the future.

## **Working with external organisations is constructive but the benefits have not been assessed**

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection.

We are pleased to see that the service meets its statutory duty, and often considers more opportunities to work with other emergency responders. The Lincolnshire Emergency Services Blue Light Collaboration Programme is the forum that encourages and builds on these opportunities to work together. It was set up in 2015 and there has been more progress to build on its success since our last inspection.

The service has established a [fire control](#) facility as part of a joint venture with Lincolnshire Police's control room. To support collaboration, the facility has several breakout rooms that are available for both services should incidents escalate. This provides both services with more resilience. This joint facility has played an important role during the pandemic.

This fire control facility forms part of joint arrangements with three other fire and rescue services in the East Coast and Hertfordshire Consortium. The consortium's software programme allows emergency calls to be answered and fire fighters to be despatched to incidents from any of the four FRSs. It also makes sure that critical services can continue if there's a technical failure in any one of the fire control centres.

The service works well with Lincolnshire County Council. Several collaborative estates projects have been completed in 2020, which means that the service and the wider Lincolnshire County Council can make better use of buildings. Also, to save revenue and capital costs, the service shares several buildings on an operational basis with other emergency services. The most recent example is the Blue Light Campus at South Park, Lincoln. This is a state-of-the-art new build hosting all three emergency services. And this joint venture builds on the experience at Sleaford and Louth where the service shares operational bases with the ambulance service. We found that frontline workers support these developments.

The service has monitored, reviewed and assessed the benefits and results of this collaboration. The Blue Light Steering Group assesses benefits for all blue light services for new ways of working.

## **Business continuity is managed well, and good plans are in place**

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection. And it has good continuity plans in place for high-risk activities. These are regularly reviewed and tested so that staff are aware of these plans and their responsibilities. Since our inspection in 2018, the service has introduced new ways to [mobilise](#) firefighters and equipment to other counties for major incidents. This forms part of the East Coast and Hertfordshire Consortium working arrangements. Technology is compatible throughout the consortium counties. This means that fire crews have access to risk information in every county they are working in.

These plans are regularly tested, cross-service communications are scrutinised, and lessons learned are identified and discussed in debriefings. Business continuity is a

frequent focus in fire control because of high levels of staff absence. Operational plans were working effectively during our visit. But we found some procedural inconsistencies, including the plan's publication date being missing.

Elsewhere, business continuity plans are good at both departmental and station level. The service accurately tracks the number of staff who have been trained to put the plans in place. There have been recent tests to establish how well the service would manage if there was industrial action.

### **The service's spending is not closely scrutinised, and planning is typically no more than annual**

The service has reduced non-pay costs, and as part of Lincolnshire County Council's financial planning the projected spending and finance available to the service forms part of Lincolnshire County Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Reference to the service in the MTFP is brief and the service's finances are largely considered annually rather than in the longer term. Any savings the service makes go into the county council's budgets and any financial pressures are referred to the council in a business case. For example, Lincolnshire County Council is paying £1.7m towards the service's increased employer pension contributions.

Actual expenditure compared with forecast expenditure is reviewed monthly, which the council supports. While this ensures a degree of scrutiny, there would be benefits from a closer link between the service's spending and the council's longer-term savings requirements.

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



### **Good (2018: Good)**

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making itself affordable now and in the future.

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

#### **Area for improvement**

The service should make sure that its fleet programme is linked to the IRMP, 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.



## **The service has a balanced budget and well-funded capital programmes**

LCC's high level of support means that the service has a degree of financial security and the capital programme is well funded. A total of £8m was available to the service in 2020/21 and this is set to rise by £2m in future years. The programme will address fleet replacement and ICT upgrades.

During our inspection, we found instances of the service working creatively to make savings. It makes more use of national frameworks to reduce procurement costs; LCC expertise is important in this area. The service is also working with the LRF to provide joint training to senior emergency services staff. Known as MAGIC (multi-agency gold incident command) training, this offers better value for money when compared with other leading training providers. Cases such as this should be gathered into a consolidated efficiency plan to support LCC's savings programmes.

## **LCC holds the service's reserves**

The service has access to the [reserves](#) of Lincolnshire County Council. These are maintained between 2.5 percent and 3.5 percent of the annual revenue budget. At the time of our inspection, LCC held £15m of general reserves.

## **LCC has invested in estates and fleet**

Since our last inspection, the service has appointed a new fleet manager and is in the process of replacing all its fire engines. LCC has secured funding for fleet for the next 15 years. But the service doesn't have fleet or estate plans that are linked to its IRMP.

We found that the procurement of Technical Response Units to be good value for money. Before the introduction of these vehicles, the service considered analysis of data, cost and options appraisal. Other efficiencies have been made by introducing trailer-mounted pumps, which reduce the number of vehicles needed to attend flooding incidents.

LCC has recently become the corporate landlord of all the buildings LFR uses. Recently, the focus on the use of the estate has been to make savings by premises sharing, mainly with other emergency services. Several good examples have been mentioned in this report, including the tri-service operational base at South Park. The co-location of different emergency services is resulting in better information sharing, for example instances of hoarding. It is also clear to us that savings to both revenue and capital spending will result because of cost sharing. The service is not able to clearly define these benefits and could do more to evaluate these initiatives.

## **There is investment in technology to increase connectivity and sustainability**

LFR's IRMP includes a priority to 'develop information technology capability'. We saw several examples of the speedy implementation of new technology. Technology has been used to promote agile working and the service is developing its own IT strategy (currently it uses LCC's). There are clear plans to invest in IT and develop the service's capabilities in this area. An example of this is the use of bar codes and scanners to check equipment on the fire engines.

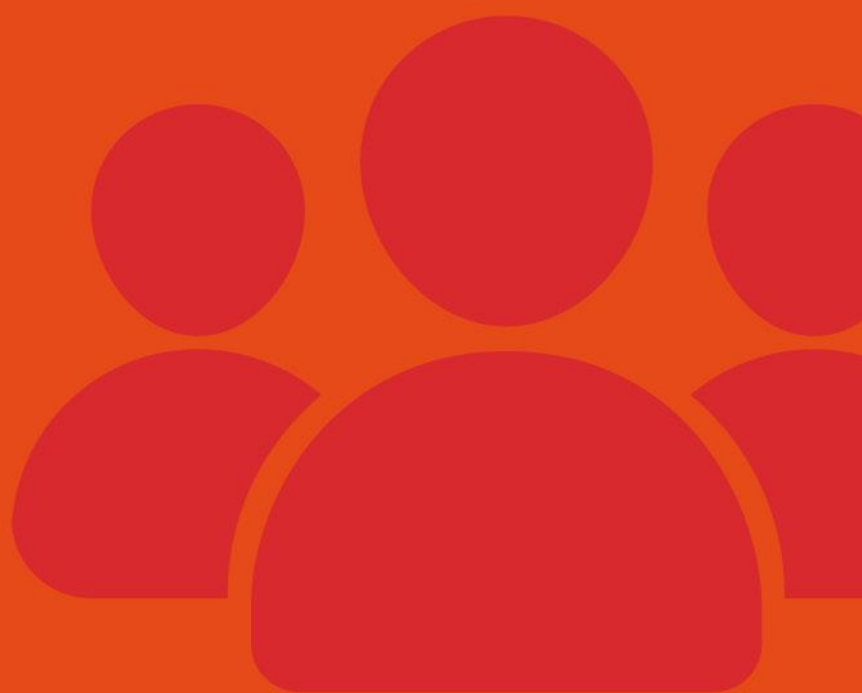


We also found progress in some specialist areas. For example, the service has introduced new [mobile data terminals](#) with upgraded software for fire crews. Also, as part of the East Coast and Hertfordshire Consortium, the new fire control facility brings resilience, efficiencies and operational benefits.

### **Income generation is not a priority for the service**

The service has previously operated a trading company to generate revenue, but this ended several years ago. The service's training centre receives a small income when external delegates attend its courses.

# People



# How well does the service look after its people?



## Requires improvement

### Summary

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A well-led fire and rescue service develops and maintains a workforce that is supported, professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse. The service's leaders should be positive role models, and this should be reflected in the behaviour of staff at all levels. All staff should feel supported and be given opportunities to develop. Equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded in everything the service does and its staff understand their role in promoting it. Overall, Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at looking after its people.

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The service needs to consider the whole organisation and staff needs when looking after its people; from looking after staff wellbeing to developing skills.

We are pleased to see that the service has recently made more wellbeing support available to staff. But there is still more work to do. For example, wellbeing must remain a priority and managers should make sure that they're having appropriate conversations with staff.

The service recently introduced a clearly defined set of behaviours, and has begun to promote this to the workforce. While it was too early for us to assess the impact of this during our inspection, the values and behaviours have been modelled throughout the service. Continued efforts need to be made to ensure these are understood at all levels.

The service needs to make sure that its workforce has the skills and capabilities needed to carry out its work. Its workforce and training plans must make sure that staff have the necessary skills to carry out the service's IRMP. This will ensure that the service can maintain a competent and effective workforce. For example, the service must assure itself that operational staff have had enough training to give them the risk-critical skills needed to do their job. And that its trainers and assessors are competent to carry out these assessments.

The service has improved how it records and monitors training. Recent investment in new software, for example, should help in this area. But we haven't seen a plan for how this will be made available to all staff.

The service's performance and development review process has been updated to include individual sessions for [on-call staff](#). [Wholetime](#) and green book staff appraisals objectives cover both personal development and personal performance. The newly launched on-call personal development review is still being implemented.

There is still no talent management process in place. And the service needs to improve how it manages the career pathways of staff; in particular, identifying, developing and supporting high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

It has made a good start on improving its grievance procedure. But it is early days and the service now needs to work to make sure that staff have confidence in it.

Although some progress has been made recently in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), we are concerned that this is slow. Awareness among staff is still low and training is very limited. For example, staff networks are limited and rarely held. And the service needs to do more to make sure its recruitment and promotion processes are fair. It recognises this and is making changes to address it.

Health and safety training needs to be improved. Staff generally consider the new absence policy to be an improvement. But its application can be inconsistent, and levels of long-term sickness remain high.

There is no evidence of workforce planning over the life of the IRMP, or to a level of detail that would support allocating resources when needed.

## Promoting the right values and culture



### Good (2018: Requires improvement)

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at promoting the right values and culture.

Fire and rescue services should have positive and inclusive cultures, modelled by the behaviours of their senior leaders. Health and safety should be effectively promoted, and staff should have access to a range of wellbeing support that can be tailored to their individual needs.

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure all staff understand and demonstrate its values.
- The service should make sure that wellbeing is sufficiently prioritised.

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

## **The service is actively promoting a new set of values and behaviours**

After our inspection in 2018, we recommended that the service should make sure that staff understand and demonstrate its values and behaviours at all levels of the organisation.

The service has made progress in this area by introducing a new set of clearly defined values and behaviours. These have been promoted to staff through regular conversations with line managers. Our staff survey showed that 90.5 percent (133 of 147) of those who responded are aware of the service's statement of values. But during our inspection we found that some of the staff we interviewed had limited understanding of them.

Staff we spoke to are proud to work for the service and 83 percent (122 of 147) of those who responded to our survey told us that they are treated with dignity and respect. Over 70 percent told us that the senior leaders and managers consistently modelled and maintained the service's values. But some staff we spoke to during our inspection felt that the visibility of senior leaders was low, although it is recognised this was during the pandemic when face-to-face visits were restricted.

The service should continue to build on its progress by actively promoting its newly implemented values and behaviours. This will make sure they are accepted and understood throughout the service and leaders always act as role models.

## **The service has improved access to its wellbeing support**

The service has improved the way staff can access its wellbeing support. This is after it was identified as an area for improvement in our 2018 inspection. Staff now have good access to a range of wellbeing support to help their physical and mental wellbeing. These include an occupational health service, a peer support team and a professional counselling service.

Ninety-seven percent of those who responded to our staff survey (143 of 147) are confident that they would be offered wellbeing services after an incident. And 95 percent (140 of 147) stated they are able to access services to support their mental wellbeing. To continue to meet the needs of its staff, the service should make sure that there are wellbeing conversations. While most staff told us that they found these discussions useful, 37 percent (54 of 147) stated that they only happened once a year or not at all.

The service has a wellbeing and inclusion board. But staff we spoke to questioned its effectiveness as its results are not widely communicated or known. The service should build on progress made in this area by making sure that the work of the board is effective, has appropriate oversight from senior officers, and is properly communicated to all staff.

## **Staff understand and have confidence in health and safety policies**

The service has clear health and safety policies and procedures. These are accessible to staff who are trained in a range of areas, including risk assessment processes and accident statistics.

Ninety-eight percent (143 of 147) of those who responded to our staff survey stated that they understood the policies. And 90 percent (132 of 147) are satisfied that the service took their personal safety and welfare seriously.

The culture of health and safety throughout the service is generally good. But we found limited evidence of regular refresher training. And there aren't enough resources to support consistent communications to staff about health and safety information.

**The service has introduced a new absence management policy, but results are sometimes inconsistent.**

We reviewed a selection of case files to consider how the service manages and supports staff through absence.

The service recently published a new absence management policy, which is clear and supported by effective processes. Absences are generally managed in line with the new policy and are reported into the service's performance board and corporate leadership team. But the level of autonomy given to individual managers means that staff may not always be treated equally. At times, this means results are inconsistent.

Plus, some managers told us that they find it challenging to find the time to manage absences thoroughly.

Sickness absence is reported to the performance board and corporate leadership team. But it is unclear how the service effectively manages sickness absence. Long-term sickness has increased from 6,317 days (or shifts) lost due to long-term sickness during 2019/20 to 6,997 days (or shifts) lost during 2020/21. Plus, feedback from the representative bodies via our survey states that the service isn't effective in managing sickness absence. This feedback came from the Fire Brigades Union and the Fire and Rescue Services Association (formerly the Retained Firefighters Union).

The service's data of 11.7 days lost to sickness a year per full-time equivalent is reduced when taking absences due to the pandemic and self-isolation into account.

**Getting the right people with the right skills**



**Requires improvement (2018: Good)**

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at getting the right people with the right skills.

Fire and rescue services should have workforce plans in place that are linked to their [integrated risk management plans](#), set out their current and future skills requirements, and address capability gaps. This should be supplemented by a culture of continuous improvement that includes appropriate learning and development across the service.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The service should make sure that its trainers and assessors are competent to carry out risk critical assessments.
- The service needs to make sure there is a plan in place to develop its training recording system and that formal corporate oversight of the system takes place.
- The service should make sure its workforce plan takes full account of the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out the integrated risk management plan.

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

### **The service doesn't plan its workforce requirements**

The service does some workforce planning. But it doesn't take full account of the skills and capabilities it needs to effectively meet the needs of its IRMP. We found limited evidence that planning allows the service to fully consider workforce skills and overcome any gaps. For example, a plan showing what staff and skills are needed to meet the requirements of the IRMP over the coming years. But this isn't available.

The service received a cause of concern from our inspection in 2018 relating to a need to assure itself that it has systems to record and monitor training. Investment in new software has allowed the service to significantly improve its ability to do this. We feel this specific area of the 2018 cause of concern has been discharged, but more planning and development of the software is required to cover all training for all staff.

The service's training plans make sure it can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, there is a thorough maintenance of competence programme available for some staff. But developing this system for other staff hasn't been prioritised.

Most staff told us that they could access the training they need to do their jobs well.

In February 2021, the service published a new service assurance policy. This stated that the station-based audits must change to provide assurance that the maintenance of competence programme is carried out by competent assessors. This was noted during our inspection as being imminent. These audits are vital to making sure that the service's training officers and assessors are competent to carry out the assessments.

The service needs to do more to improve how it considers future needs and carries out succession planning. The needs of the workforce are not incorporated into requirements of its IRMP.

There is a system in place to review workforce capabilities. But it is ineffective and there is a risk that staff may lack important skills for the future. Detailed planning beyond an annual cycle was limited.

**Overall, the service has a good approach to learning. But it could do more to improve the balance of training and development across the duty systems and with control room staff**

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organisation. And staff are encouraged to carry out learning and development work. For example, organisational learning is discussed regularly and staff benefit from a new regular publication that provides them with important information.

We are pleased to see that the service has a range of resources in place. These include access to integrated e-learning platforms that link to its training recording system. Generally, staff see this as a positive change.

Our staff survey shows that of those who responded (147), 47 hadn't had enough training to do their job effectively. Forty-eight are satisfied with the level of training and development available to them. Some managers report that keeping up to date with learning is challenging. This is service-wide, but particularly relevant to [fire control](#) and the on-call workforce who do not always get the same level or offers of training as full-time staff.

**Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity**



**Requires improvement (2018: Good)**

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

Creating a more representative workforce will provide huge benefits for fire and rescue services. This includes greater access to talent and different ways of thinking, and improved understanding of and engagement with their local communities. Each service should make sure that equality, diversity and inclusion are firmly embedded and understood across the organisation. This includes successfully taking steps to remove inequality and making progress to improve fairness, diversity and inclusion at all levels within the service. It should proactively seek and respond to feedback from staff and make sure any action taken is meaningful.



### **Cause of concern**

The service hasn't done enough since the last inspection to improve its EDI.

### **Recommendations**

By 30 September 2021, the service should:

- give greater priority to how it increases awareness of EDI across the organisation;
- make sure that all staff receive appropriate EDI training;
- improve how it works with its staff and provides feedback in relation to EDI issues;
- improve the understanding and use of equality impact assessments in all aspects of its work, and consider if its policies and procedures are inclusive and support those with protected characteristics; and
- make sure that there is a programme of positive action to support its recruitment.

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

### **The service needs to do more to gather, and act on, feedback from staff to help it become more inclusive**

The service needs to improve its approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion. The level of training it offers to staff is limited. Staff networks are limited and rarely held, and members of these groups don't see a link to the service's priorities and long-term aims.

Although the service does have ways of getting staff feedback, these are inconsistent and not wide ranging. The senior team has been available to staff through remote sessions. But we heard mixed views about whether senior staff were approachable, and about the value of their communications with staff.

Encouragingly, senior leaders recently introduced engagement sessions and created videos for staff. There is now clear direction for the senior leadership team to be more visible and to make sure they work with staff. Some staff we spoke to didn't often see senior leaders and reported that the remote sessions weren't scheduled regularly.

Staff have limited confidence in the ways in which the service obtains feedback and don't think they are effective. A total of 42.2 percent (62 of 147) of those who responded to our staff survey disagreed with the statement: "I feel confident in the mechanisms for providing feedback to all levels". Staff have mixed views on how effective the service's processes for seeking feedback and involvement from representative bodies are. But staff did often report that they felt confident to challenge decisions where necessary.

The service has a process in place to carry out equality impact assessments. But the impact on each of the protected characteristics wasn't being properly assessed. It has a limited number of equality impact assessments available, and these differ in quality and usefulness. The service recognises this and has recently trained relevant staff in this.

The service has increased staff diversity at all levels within the organisation, but these changes are minimal. As of 31 March 2020, 14 percent (12) of all joiners were women and 2 percent (two) of new joiners self-declared as being from a black, Asian, or minority ethnic (BAME) group. This shows an increase in headcount for both women and people from BAME groups since 2017/18, although the percentage is unchanged. For firefighter recruitment, as of 31 March 2020, 13 percent (10) of all new recruits were women and 3 percent (two) were from a BAME background. This is an improvement when compared with previous years (which were very low for BAME recruitment). Of the service's entire workforce, 1.6 percent (11) are from a BAME group and 13.9 percent (95) are women. This compares with 1.2 percent (seven) and 12.7 percent (92) respectively, five years ago.

The service needs to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds into middle and senior level positions. These positions tend to be filled internally, which means that the service isn't making the most of opportunities to make its workforce more diverse.

### **The service doesn't have an inclusive promotion process**

The service needs to do more to make sure its recruitment and promotion processes are fair. Recruitment campaigns aren't directed at, or accessible to, under-represented groups. And the service isn't leading change in this area to increase the diversity of its workforce. It recognises this and has employed a recruitment manager, and has plans to introduce positive action days later this year.

While it does have a clear progression pathway for its operational staff, there is no similar process for fire staff. This means that there are far fewer promotion and progression opportunities for this group.

But we were told that there are progression opportunities for fire staff within the wider county council structure. Our staff survey showed that 54.4 percent (80 of 147) of those who responded don't agree that the promotion process in the service is fair. Plus, 25.2 percent (37 of 147) feel that the service is not effective in ensuring that recruitment processes are fair and accessible.

### **Feedback from staff is that the grievance procedure has improved. Bullying and harassment is being reported, but the service could do more to improve staff understanding in this area**

The service could do more to improve its staff's understanding of bullying, harassment and discrimination. This includes their responsibilities to end it. Of those who responded to our staff survey, 15.6 percent (23 of 147) told us that they had been bullied or harassed. And 22.4 percent (33 of 147) told us that they had faced discrimination over the past 12 months.

The service does have clear policies and procedures in place. But staff have limited confidence in the service's ability to deal effectively with cases of bullying, harassment, discrimination, grievances and discipline. Of the 17 staff who told us that they had reported this behaviour (formally and informally), seven confirmed that action has been taken. But only two felt that the action would make a difference.

Following our 2018 inspection, the service was told that it needed to improve its grievance procedures. It has since worked with Lincolnshire County Council to draft a new policy. Some staff have had training, and there's a plan to roll this out to the entire workforce.

Our survey of representative bodies found that they don't feel the service is effective in managing grievances. Although staff report that the process for managing grievances has improved following a recent review and investment in training. Data shows an increase in grievances relating to bullying and harassment. There were three in 2020/21, compared with none in the year before. But the staff we spoke to thought that, in general, grievances weren't that common and told us that they weren't aware of any issues.

Feedback from staff and representative bodies highlighted that some facilities aren't appropriate for female staff. This wasn't a problem at many premises we inspected in person. But some staff reported that the standard and level of facilities can be a problem. And that they don't always have privacy when changing into suitable workwear before responding to incidents.

## Managing performance and developing leaders



### Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at managing performance and developing leaders.

Fire and rescue services should have robust and meaningful performance management arrangements in place for their staff. All staff should be supported to meet their potential and there should be a focus on developing high-potential staff and improving diversity in leadership roles.

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should improve all staff understanding and application of the performance development review process and ensure they are completed for all staff.
- The service should put in place a specific process to identify, develop and support high potential staff and aspiring leaders.
- The service should assure itself it has an effective mechanism in place for succession planning including senior leadership roles.

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

### **The service needs to do more to make sure all staff have regular appraisals that support its overarching plan**

The service still has an inconsistent approach to performance and development. Staff don't all have specific and individual objectives, and some have not had their performance assessed in the last year. Through our staff survey, some staff did report that they had regular, meaningful discussions with their manager.

On-call staff told us that the appraisal system has recently been made available to them. But the service's own data indicates that completion rates for on-call staff are between 60 and 75 percent.

Results from our staff survey also shows that 45.6 percent (67 of 147) of those who responded only have a conversation about learning and development once a year or less. And 11.6 percent (17 of 147) reported that they have never had one. A total of 74.1 percent (109 of 147) of staff have had a personal development review or appraisal in the last 12 months.

### **The service needs to do more to identify and develop high-potential staff**

After our first inspection, we recommended that the service put in place a process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

The service still needs to improve how it manages the career pathways of staff. This includes those with specialist skills and for leadership roles. During our latest inspection, staff told us that there aren't routine development opportunities or processes in place. Also, that promotion for new managers is on the assumption that individuals will meet the cost of membership of the Institution of Fire Engineers, coursework, and annual exams themselves (the service reimburses the exam fee for all those who pass).

Temporary promotions aren't well managed, and we found evidence of them being in place for long periods. The service has a relatively high number of temporary posts in place. This is considered detrimental to staff wellbeing and shows a lack of workforce planning.

The service doesn't have talent management schemes in place to develop leaders and high-potential staff. We were told that there are plans to introduce one but that this will take some time. Our staff survey showed that 25.9 percent of those who responded (38 of 147) didn't feel the service was effective in supporting their progression and development.

The service should consider putting in place more formal arrangements to identify and support members of staff to become senior leaders. There is currently a significant gap in its succession planning.

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