

Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service



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About this inspection

This is our third inspection of fire and rescue services across England. We first inspected Surrey 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.

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 Surrey 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
 Effectiveness	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Understanding fires and other risks	 Requires improvement	Good
Preventing fires and other risks	 Good	Requires improvement
Protecting the public through fire regulation	 Good	Requires improvement
Responding to fires and other emergencies	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	 Requires improvement	Good

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

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

HMI summary

It was very heartening to see the progress made by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service since our first inspection. I am grateful for the positive and constructive way that the service engaged with our inspection.

The service is in much better shape than at the time of our 2018/19 inspection. It is becoming more effective and efficient at keeping people safe from fire. And, on balance, it is improving how well it looks after its people. It knows that there is a great deal of work to do to change and improve its organisational culture, but it is approaching this challenge positively.

I want to thank the service for working with us by accommodating the virtual approach of this inspection. Inspections usually take a hybrid 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.

In our first inspection we identified two causes of concern. We are pleased to see that the service has resolved these concerns in its [Making Surrey Safer Plan](#), which has led to a period of significant change in the organisation. This resulted in challenges for the service's industrial relations, including how senior managers work with staff, but that hasn't stopped the chief fire officer and the service making progress.

The service has been a proactive member of the [local resilience forum](#) throughout the pandemic. As a result, other organisations in the forum see the service as a credible and reliable partner that will work with them to help those members of the public who are most in need.

Changes to staffing arrangements during the pandemic meant that the service didn't maintain the protection work we would have expected. However, the service has increased its resources in prevention, protection and other areas of the organisation. We look forward to seeing how this supports improvements.

In this inspection, we identified no new causes of concern, but there are several areas for improvement. The service needs to evaluate its prevention work to make sure its activity is working. It needs to make sure it gives firefighters up-to-date and useful risk information. And it needs to learn from operational activity, both internal and external.

We look forward to seeing how the service puts our recommendations into practice at our next inspection.



Matt Parr

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Response

Surrey

England

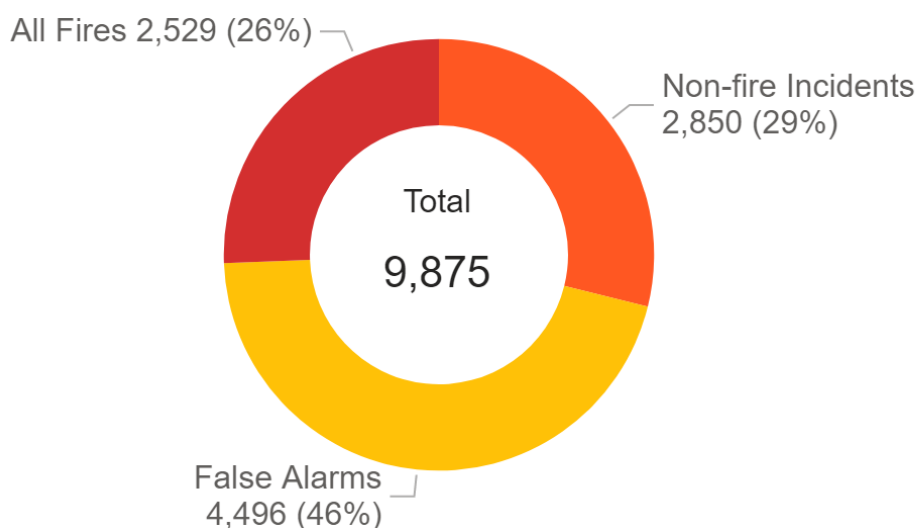
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	8.23	9.16
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	1.73	4.47
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2020	3.53	2.55
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2020	68.21%	83.07%



Cost

Firefighter cost per person per year Year ending 31 March 2020	£23.92	£23.82
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Incidents attended in the year to 31 March 2021

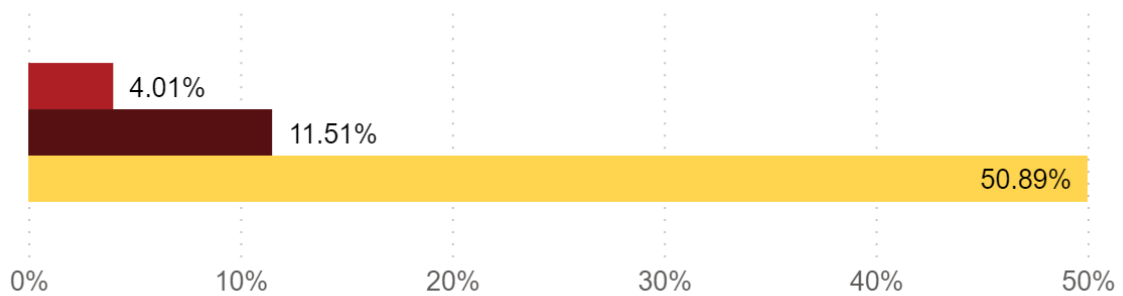




Five-year change in total workforce 2015 to 2020	3.44%	-5.30%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2020	0.50	0.63
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2020	79.63%	65.10%

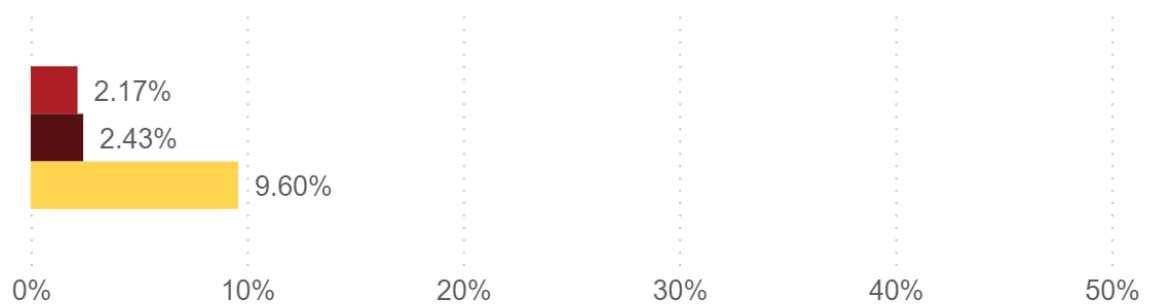
Percentage population, firefighters and workforce who are female as at 31 March 2020

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

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. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness requires improvement.

We are encouraged to see that the service has responded well to the areas we identified in our first inspection. Overall, we have seen a positive direction of travel. However, there are still areas that need improvement.

When we inspected in 2018, we identified a cause of concern with the service's effectiveness. It didn't have a robust and long-term system to support its operational response model. We are pleased to see that, since then, the service has created a new [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#), which it has called the [Making Surrey Safer Plan](#) (MSSP).

To develop the MSSP, the service brought in third parties to scrutinise its plans and help make them stronger. The service has continued this external oversight with independent evaluation of the change process.

The service has increased the size of the prevention and protection teams. This is already leading to improvements in those areas, allowing the service to target risk more effectively.

The service needs to make sure its processes for handling information about operational risk are robust so that firefighters can be sure the information they are accessing is up to date and useful. The service has a plan in place to improve the use and communication of risk information, and has increased resources to the team

responsible. It also needs to make sure that lessons from operational activities are learned by all firefighters.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Surrey 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.

We were particularly impressed with how the service identified risk in the community and approached the development of its new IRMP, called the [Making Surrey Safer Plan](#) (MSSP). In isolation this part of understanding risk would have been judged as at least good. The judgment of requires improvement reflects the work that still needs to be done within operational risk information.

Area for improvement

The service should ensure 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.

The service is good at identifying risk in the communities it serves

Since our last inspection, the service has carried out a thorough integrated risk management planning process, and has improved the way that it assesses an appropriate range of risks and threats. When assessing risk, it considers relevant information from a broad range of internal and external sources, including both data about fire incidents and about society more broadly. For example, the service uses county council data to help identify which people are most [vulnerable](#). It also works with the [local resilience forum](#) to assess the risks from flooding and wildfires. The service has had its data externally scrutinised to make sure that the proposals set out in its IRMP are supported by the data.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service has made progress since our last inspection in engaging with the local community to build its risk profile. It has consulted with the community and members of the voluntary sector, faith groups, and the Surrey police independent advisory group to both understand the risk and explain how the service intends to mitigate it.

The service has increased its communications team's resources. This has improved communication with the public, which helps the service understand risks and explain

how it intends to mitigate them. The consultation on its IRMP received its highest response so far.

The service has an effective integrated risk management plan

After assessing relevant risks, the service has recorded its findings in an easily understood IRMP, called the Making Surrey Safer Plan (MSSP). This plan describes how the service's prevention, protection and response activity will be effectively resourced to mitigate the risks and threats the community faces, both now and in the future.

The service's MSSP for 2020–24 sets out how the service will:

- do more to prevent emergencies from happening in Surrey;
- make sure it has the right resources in the right places at the right time to respond when needed;
- continuously assess ways to improve effectiveness and efficiency;
- strengthen collaboration with other organisations;
- invest in people by ensuring they have the best training and development, and are as motivated as possible;
- create a culture that is collaborative, inclusive and diverse to maximise understanding of communities' needs.

The service reports quarterly to the cabinet members of Surrey County Council's [fire authority](#). These reports detail the service's performance and progress against important indicators, which are aligned to the priorities in the MSSP.

The service can't be sure that the operational risk information it holds is accurate and up to date

We were disappointed to find that, despite raising this as an area for improvement when we last inspected the service, the service still couldn't be sure that the risk information its firefighters used was relevant and up to date. During our inspection we found that 51 percent of risk information about premises was out of date.

The service is aware of this problem and has an improvement plan that is monitored regularly. It has increased the resources of the team responsible for risk information. We were told that by the end of our inspection no high-risk premises were out of date.

Although we saw out-of-date risk information, we found that the way the service communicated the risk information that was collected was good. Staff in the control room could demonstrate that they were able to communicate information about risk. Urgent risk information is processed within 24 hours, and staff in the control room can clearly demonstrate the use of flash messages, which are used to alert staff to a temporary risk.

The service doesn't consistently use the information that is learned during its operational activity to test its risk profile and challenge its risk management plan

We found limited evidence that the service sought out and acted on feedback from either its own operational activity or that of other services and organisations nationally. We reviewed a range of significant incidents where we would have expected the service to learn operational lessons in line with its policy. However, we were disappointed not to find any evidence that this had happened.

As a result, the service is missing the opportunity to review its risk assessments and challenge the assumptions made in the MSSP.

The service has used learning from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry to reduce risk

During this round of inspections, we sampled how each fire and rescue service had responded to the recommendations and learning from phase one of the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry.

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service has responded positively. It has established a working group with the building control team and the local authority housing department to share information and learning. The service has:

- assessed the risk of each high-rise building in its service area;
- carried out fire safety audits, as well as [safe and well visits](#); and
- collected relevant risk information about buildings identified as high risk and all high-rise buildings using cladding that is similar to the cladding installed on Grenfell Tower, and passed this on to its prevention, protection and response teams.

Preventing fires and other risks



Good (2018: Requires improvement)

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service is good 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.

We are encouraged to see the improvements in the service's prevention work since our last inspection. We previously identified areas for improvement in how the service targets prevention work at the people most at risk, and how staff identify and [safeguard](#) the most vulnerable people.

Area for improvement

The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands what works.

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 linked its prevention resources to its integrated risk management plan

The service has a 'delivery of services' strategy for 2020–2024, which aims to align its prevention, protection and response activities. To support this strategy, the service has a prevention plan. The strategy and prevention plan are clearly linked to the risks identified in its MSSP. The prevention plan contains objectives for improving community safety, such as:

- universal messaging, to make sure that as many people as possible can understand and respond effectively to fire, road and water safety messages;
- involving members of the community of all ages, which is linked to lifelong learning where risk can be linked to vulnerability of individuals or others as people age; and
- person-centred engagement, where the service will work with other organisations to help identify and target people with specific vulnerabilities.

The service works well with its teams and other relevant organisations on prevention and it passes on relevant information when needed. Information is used to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between the service's prevention, protection and response functions. This helps the service to manage and respond appropriately to risks that are identified – for example, where an individual is hoarding in their home, which could increase the risk to occupants and firefighters if there was a fire.

The pandemic has had an impact on, and become part of, prevention work

Between 21 September and 2 October 2020, we carried out a COVID-19 specific inspection to consider how the service adapted its prevention work. At that time, we found that it had adapted its public prevention work appropriately. Since then, we are encouraged to find that high-risk individuals are still being visited following an initial assessment, despite an overall reduction in safe and well visits due to the pandemic. At the time of our inspection there was no backlog of high-risk visits caused by the pandemic.

Since the implementation of the MSSP, the way that prevention activities are prioritised is clearer. The prevention team is now more focused on supporting those most at risk.

The service has been an integral part of the local resilience forum's response to the pandemic. For example, it provided support for surge testing when this became necessary. Lessons from this were used to help the local resilience forum plan for future testing arrangements.

The service has improved the way it targets some high-risk groups through safe and well visits

Prevention activity is clearly prioritised using a risk-based approach that prioritises people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. The service has created a Community Risk Profile, to identify the people most vulnerable to fire, using a range of data. This includes information on those receiving oxygen at home, NHS data, demographic information, vulnerability data from the county council and historic incident data. The prevention team applies a scoring mechanism to help identify those most at risk from fire. Different activities are then used to target the risks that have been identified.

The service is currently using operational crews to carry out medium and low-risk visits. Each station is given targets to achieve. But the service knows it needs to consider how the operational staff can provide activities that are more focused on reducing risk. For example, stations with a higher level of road traffic collisions could prioritise road safety activity.

Staff are confident in carrying out safe and well visits, but training could be improved

Staff told us they had the right skills and confidence to make 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. The service has created the One Stop Surrey leaflet to provide information to the public about where people can access further support for their health and wellbeing. It covers foodbanks; social activities; support for mental health or a hearing or visual impairment; and help reducing or stopping smoking, alcohol or drug use. It also identifies support for environmental problems such as flooding risks and weather alerts.

Operational staff told us they would like more training to help them provide prevention activities. The service is aware that it isn't doing enough to make sure that its prevention work is of a good enough quality. But it has plans to do this now there are more people in the prevention team.

Staff understand vulnerability and have the confidence to respond to safeguarding concerns

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified safeguarding problems. They said they felt confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. Staff explained that members of the fire investigation team had been trained to respond to any safeguarding concerns raised by operational personnel, because members of that team were always on duty.

The service is improving how it works with others to reduce the number of fires and other risks

The service works with a wide range of organisations such as Surrey police, adult social care and the safeguarding board to prevent fires and other emergencies.

We found good evidence that it routinely referred people at greatest risk to other organisations that may be better able to meet their needs. These organisations include Age UK, foodbanks, sensory services, and drug support organisations. Arrangements are in place to receive referrals from other organisations including the NHS and adult social care. The service acts appropriately on the referrals it receives. At the time of our inspection there was no backlog of referrals from other organisations.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses the information to test its planning assumptions and target its prevention activity. For example, the service has been working with Surrey police to raise awareness among operational crews of other risks for the public, such as domestic violence and children involved with [county lines](#). The service has been working with police colleagues on its 'safe drive, stay alive' road safety programme, which targets young drivers.

Members of the prevention team have been involved in the provision of the vaccine programme. While in the vaccine centres, staff have communicated fire safety messaging towards vulnerable people.

The service has built on its improved relations with the other organisations it works with since the start of the pandemic, and has started new activities to support wider public safety. For example, operational staff are supporting Surrey police in locating vulnerable missing persons.

The service acts to tackle fire-setting behaviour

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people of different ages who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. This includes having a trained group of staff who work with fire-setters to change their behaviours. During the pandemic, the service introduced a risk assessment process, which allowed staff to continue working with those involved with fire setting.

The service works with other organisations including the police and local authority to share information and support a multi-agency approach.

The service should evaluate its prevention activity to identify what works and how it could be improved

We found limited evidence that the service evaluates how effective its activity is or makes sure all its communities get equal access to prevention activity that meets their needs. For example, the prevention activity conducted by operational crews appeared to be driven by quantity rather than quality. The service doesn't routinely use the feedback it receives to improve what it does. It did recently add an online feedback tool to the website so the public can tell the service what it thinks of the safe and well visits that have been carried out – but many people don't have access to the tool.

The service doesn't routinely consider evaluation when doing prevention activities. For example, the 'safe drive, stay alive' road safety packages are well attended, but it is unclear if these are having an impact or if they are being targeted at those most

at risk. The service has recently created an animated education package, but it isn't clear how this will be evaluated. As a result, the service is missing opportunities to improve what it provides to the public.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Good (2018: Requires improvement)

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service is good 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.

We are encouraged to see improvements in the service's protection work since our last inspection. We previously identified areas for improvement in how the service resources and prioritises its risk-based inspection programme, how it resources false alarms and how it engages with businesses. While there has been clear progress, the service still has some work to do.

Area for improvement

The service should ensure 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.

The service has a 'delivery of services' strategy linked to its integrated risk management plan that supports protection activities

The service's 'delivery of services' strategy is clearly linked to the risk it has identified in its IRMP, the Making Surrey Safer Plan (MSSP), which it has introduced since our last inspection. This aims to integrate prevention, protection and response.

The MSSP is subject to monitoring and review. Staff across the service are involved in this, and exchange information effectively as needed. For example, operational staff carry out business safe and well visits at commercial premises to raise awareness of how businesses can comply with fire safety regulations and let businesses know where they can get further support and guidance. The information learned on these visits is in turn used to adjust planning assumptions and to direct activity between the service's protection, prevention and response functions. This means that resources are properly aligned to risk.

The effect of the pandemic on protection

At the start of the pandemic, the service decided to move staff with an operational background away from protection work and place them in fire stations. This was done to maintain an operational response in case there was an increase in sickness among operational staff. However, we found that the service was slow to move those staff back into protection once it was clear that sickness levels weren't high. As a result, the service didn't maintain its work on the risk-based inspection programme (RBIP).

Since then the service has progressed well with its protection work. It is now being more proactive and is maintaining its RBIP work, alongside the more reactive work. The protection team regularly updates its area of the website to make sure the advice to businesses is correct and relevant.

The service aligns protection activity to risk

In our last inspection we identified the RBIP as an area for improvement. The service needed to make sure it allocated enough resources and prioritised its protection work. It has just reviewed and updated its RBIP, which identifies how it will prioritise its work. The RBIP is focused on its highest-risk and medium-risk buildings. Operational crews carry out business safe and well visits at low-risk premises that wouldn't normally be visited by the fire service. This is subject to continuing review to understand whether it changes the number of fires at commercial premises. We found that fire safety audits were recorded in line with the policy and timescales the service has set itself.

The service has carried out fire safety audits at high-rise buildings

Audits were carried out in 2019 at all three of the high-rise buildings the service identified as using cladding that is similar to the cladding installed on Grenfell Tower. Information gathered during these audits is made available to response teams and control operators, enabling them to respond more effectively in an emergency.

The service is on track to visit all the high-rise, high-risk buildings it has identified in Surrey by the beginning of November, ahead of the national target of the end of 2021.

Limited quality assurance takes place

We reviewed a range of audits carried out at different premises across the service. These included audits carried out as part of the service's RBIP, after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applied, where enforcement action had been taken, and at high-rise, high-risk buildings.

The audits we reviewed were completed to a high standard in a consistent, systematic way, and in line with the service's policies. Relevant information from the audits is made available to operational teams and control room operators.

The service only carries out limited quality assurance of its protection activity. Those staff working towards becoming qualified are coached and mentored by qualified inspectors. However, once they have qualified there's no systematic process to make sure they're carrying out audits to a consistently high standard. We were told this was because until recently there hadn't been enough staff to do this. But with an increase in staff, the service is starting to develop processes for all inspecting officers.

The service doesn't have good evaluation tools in place to measure its effectiveness or to make sure all sections of its communities get equal access to protection services that meet their needs. The service is aware of this and is starting to work with community groups to improve this. For example, it is liaising with owners of takeaways collectively to help them understand how they should comply with fire safety legislation.

The service carries out enforcement activities

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers and, when appropriate, prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations. It maintains 24/7 availability of staff who are appropriately trained and qualified to carry out the full range of enforcement activities.

In the year to 31 March 2020, the service issued no alteration notices, 12 enforcement notices and 3 prohibition notices, and carried out no prosecutions. It completed three prosecutions in the years from 2016/17 to 2019/20.

The service has increased its protection resources

Our 2018 inspection highlighted an area for improvement for the service to make sure it has enough resources to complete its RBIP. Our COVID-19 inspection also found that the service didn't always allocate enough resources to the protection team to allow it to be effective.

The service has made good progress in this area. The size of the team has increased from 28 to 50 since the start of the pandemic. This helps it to provide the full range of audit and enforcement activity needed, both now and in the future.

Staff get the right training and work to appropriate accreditation. The service plans to train a small number of staff to become fire engineers.

The service works closely with other organisations to regulate fire safety

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and routinely exchanges risk information with them. As part of the Community Protection Group, the service shares information and works closely with Trading Standards. The service also works with the Care Quality Commission to share information and carry out joint visits to care homes.

The service's response to building consultations is timely and supports its statutory responsibility

The service responds to most building consultations on time, so consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. The most recent figures, for the first half of 2020/21, show that 94 percent of the service's building consultations were carried out within the required timescale. In the same period, 89 percent of licensing consultations were completed within the required timeframe.

The service works with businesses to promote compliance with fire safety legislation

Our inspection in 2018 identified an area of improvement for the service to work more with local businesses and large organisations to share information about how they can comply with fire safety regulations.

During the inspection we found that the service now does this. It regularly updates its website to include detailed information to help businesses comply with fire safety legislation. Operational staff carry out business safe and well visits on lower-risk premises. This allows the service to engage with many businesses that wouldn't normally be visited by the service. This is a new activity and is subject to continuous review. The team has also engaged with 96 schools over 2 online webinars, to help them understand fire safety legislation and how to prevent fires at their premises.

The service acts to reduce unwanted fire signals

Our inspection in 2018 highlighted an area for improvement for the service that it should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of unwanted fire signals (false alarms).

The service is developing its approach to reducing unwanted fire signals. It has looked at how other fire and rescue services approach this problem to try to find good ways of doing this. As a result, control staff now conduct a call challenge process. When there is an alarm, they phone the person responsible for a building before dispatching a response. This wasn't previously in place. However, due to the periods of lockdown during the pandemic, the service is taking a measured approach to making further changes. It is considering charging those businesses that produce excessive unwanted fire signals, but hasn't done so yet. The figures for 2019/20 indicate that the service attended 79 percent of the unwanted fire signals it received.

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

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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 ensure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents.
- The service should ensure it understands what it needs to do to adopt [national operational guidance](#), including joint and national learning, and put in place a plan to do so.
- The service should ensure it participates in a programme of cross-border exercises, with learning from them captured and shared.

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

The service aligns its resources with the risks identified in its integrated risk management plan

In our inspection of 2018, we identified a cause of concern where we found the service didn't have a robust and long-term system to support its operational response model. We recommended that the service should:

- put in place a response plan based on a thorough assessment of risk to the community;
- make sure it has appropriate resources (people and equipment) available to respond to risk in line with its IRMP;
- make sure it understands and actively manages the resources and capabilities available for deployment; and
- tell the residents of Surrey what benefits its service provision and ways of working in the operational response model will give them.

In this inspection we found that the service had met those recommendations.

The service's plan for responding to fires and other emergencies is linked to the first three risks identified in its IRMP, the Making Surrey Safer Plan (MSSP). It reviewed where its stations, fire engines and response staff were located as part of integrated risk management planning. It also reviewed the crewing models it used to make sure appropriate numbers of staff were available when needed.

The service achieves its target for the time taken to respond to life risk incidents

The service's 'delivery of services' strategy is linked to the risks identified in the MSSP. Its fire engines and response roles, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to help the service to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources.

As we saw in our last inspection, the service uses a dynamic cover tool to maintain fire engine availability. When fire engines respond to an incident, the cover tool suggests which fire engines should be moved from their base locations to maintain cover across the area.

There are no national response standards for how services should respond to the public. But the service has set out its own response standards in the MSSP. These say that a [critical incident](#) should be attended by a fire engine within ten minutes.

The service consistently meets that standard. Home Office data shows that in the year to 31 March 2020, the service's response time to [primary fires](#) was 9 minutes and 49 seconds. This is slower than the average for services, like Surrey, that cover both urban and rural areas. The service is aware of this and is continuing to monitor. Since implementing the MSSP, its response times are improving.

Appliance availability is improving to meet the service's response standard

The service met its response standards in 2020/21 with an average availability of 68 percent for all its 30 fire engines. While this figure appears to be low, the service's 'delivery of services' strategy, based on the MSSP risk profile, aims to have 20 fire engines available during the day and 16 fire engines available during the night. According to its own figures, the service is meeting, and often exceeding, this standard. The service is continuing to monitor availability to look for further improvements.

The service can effectively command incidents

The service has appropriately trained its incident commanders and assesses them every two years. The incident commanders must meet appropriate standards in these assessments.

In 2019/20, 98 percent of incident commanders were accredited within the timeframe. This helps the service to safely, confidently and effectively manage the whole 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 across the service. Those we interviewed 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 \(JESIP\)](#).

Control staff aren't regularly involved in operational learning and debriefing

We are disappointed to find that the service's control staff aren't always included in the service's command, training, exercise, debrief and quality assurance activity.

Control staff regularly test and exercise their [fall-back](#) arrangements with Merseyside Fire Control ([fire control](#)). Fire control also has its own staff training programme, which is in line with national standards.

Fire control can provide fire survival guidance to multiple callers

The control room staff we interviewed were confident they could provide fire survival guidance to many callers simultaneously. This was identified as learning for fire services after the Grenfell Tower fire. We saw that the [mobilising](#) system had prompts and checklists for staff to follow when dealing with multiple fire survival guidance calls.

Control has good systems in place to exchange real-time risk information with incident commanders, other responding partners, and other supporting fire and rescue services. The service has recently introduced new co-ordinating roles to liaise between control and incident commanders. At the time of our inspection, this was being exercised and tested. Maintaining good situational awareness helps the service to communicate effectively with the public, providing them accurate and tailored advice.

Risk information is easily accessible to staff

We sampled a range of risk information associated with several premises involving long and short-term risks, including what is in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings, and what information is held by fire control.

As previously noted, the information we reviewed wasn't always up to date. But it was detailed and could be easily accessed and understood by staff. Encouragingly, it had been completed with input from the service's prevention, protection and response teams as appropriate. Staff we spoke to were positive about the risk information and said that they used it regularly at incidents.

Since Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service merged their control room function in 2019, there has been an improvement in sharing risk information between the two services.

The service should improve the way it evaluates operational performance

During our inspection in 2018 we identified as an area for improvement that the service should make sure it has an effective system to help staff use learning and debriefing to improve operational response and incident command.

We saw evidence that the service carried out some debriefs, but this wasn't done in a systematic or consistent way. For example, the service dealt with a major incident at Chobham Common in August 2020. We saw the debrief report for this, which included lessons to learn. However, when we spoke to operational staff, most were unaware of the report's recommendations.

However, we recognise the service has recently started to improve its approach to learning from operational incidents. Since the start of 2021 the operational assurance team has developed a debrief process that involves trained facilitators who will obtain the information. A clear structure has been introduced to make sure learning is gathered and communicated through the organisation.

The service would benefit from a more structured cross-border exercise programme

While the service routinely operates with neighbouring fire and rescue services, there is no cross-border exercise plan. Such a plan would help the services to work together more effectively to keep the public safe. Some operational staff told us that they trained with staff at cross-border stations, but these were ad hoc arrangements and not part of a service plan. The service and its neighbours don't routinely share information to improve their understanding of risk and operational performance.

The service needs to use national operational guidance to inform its policies

We found only limited evidence that the service contributed to and acted on learning from other fire and rescue services or other emergency service partners. When we spoke to operational and control staff, they couldn't highlight learning from any recent high-profile national incidents.

The service is working in co-ordination with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service to adopt national standards. But it isn't clear when this will be achieved.

The service is good at communicating incident-related information to the public

During our inspection in 2018, the service had limited resources in its communications team. These have now increased and the service has good systems in place to inform the public about incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. The communications team now has enough staff to keep the public informed about continuous incidents, or wider problems, on a 24/7 basis. The team is now also able to make sure that the website is regularly updated for incidents as well as safety messages.

The communications team works well with the local resilience forum to provide consistent messages to the public.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents



Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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).

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it is well prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to major incidents, and its procedures for responding are understood by all staff and well tested.
- The service should ensure it is well prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to a terrorist incident, and its procedures for responding are understood by all staff and are well tested.

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 test its preparations for major and multi-agency incidents

In our inspection in 2018 we identified an area of improvement for the service. This was that it should make sure it was well prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to each community risk identified by the local resilience forum, including a marauding terrorist attack, and that its procedures for responding to terrorist-related incidents were understood by all staff and well tested. While the service has improved its approach to planning, it isn't testing its plans through regular exercises.

The service has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. These are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its integrated risk management planning. For example, the service has developed plans to deal with large-scale flooding and wildfires.

It is also familiar with the significant risks that could be faced by neighbouring fire and rescue services that it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. These include incidents on the River Thames and the motorway network. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. This has improved since the introduction of the joint control room with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.

We reviewed the arrangements the service had in place to respond to different major incidents, including incidents relating to high-rise buildings, wide-area flooding and a marauding terrorist attack. We saw during the COVID-19 inspection that the service dealt with a major wildfire incident at Chobham Common while supporting the local resilience forum's response to the pandemic. The service has good arrangements in place that are well understood by staff, who can learn about them through e-learning training packages.

However, we found that the service didn't routinely test these plans and its staff's understanding of them through regular exercises. We saw some limited evidence that the service carried out exercises with the local resilience forum, but no evidence that the service maintained an exercise programme.

The service needs to be sure that its staff are prepared to respond safely and effectively to a terrorist incident. And it needs to make sure the learning from exercises feeds through into improvements to its plans.

The service needs to be sure that it works well with other fire and rescue services

While the service supports other fire and rescue services in responding to emergency incidents, it needs to make sure that it is working effectively with them. Surrey is bordered by seven different services. It needs to be able to work seamlessly with these services to form part of a multi-agency response. Since the introduction of its joint control with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, the two services operate a process of borderless mobilising. Control staff will send whichever fire engine can get to the incident quickest. The same approach will be applied when East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service joins the control arrangements.

The service has successfully deployed to other service areas and has used national assets in its own service area. During the Chobham Common incident in August 2020, national resources were deployed to Surrey for up to a week to help extinguish the fire. Learning was captured from this using a debrief process.

However, we saw no evidence that working together was evaluated on a day-to-day basis, nor that lessons were learned and shared between the neighbouring fire and rescue services.

Staff understand and apply JESIP

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

The service was able to provide us with strong evidence that it consistently followed these principles. All staff use online training packages on JESIP. All incident commanders we spoke to have a good understanding of the JESIP principles.

The service is an active member of the Surrey Resilience Forum and its staff work routinely with other emergency services

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with the other organisations that make up the Surrey Resilience Forum. These arrangements include working with other organisations to warn and inform the public of continuous incidents. The organisations worked well together during the COVID-19 pandemic to produce consistent messages for the public.

The service is a valued partner and the chief fire officer chairs the Surrey Resilience Forum. The service takes part in regular training events with other members of the Surrey Resilience Forum and uses what it learns to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents. The training events stopped during the pandemic, but there are plans to re-start them as soon as possible. We saw during our COVID-19 inspection that the service had enhanced its reputation as an effective partner since the start of the pandemic. It has co-ordinated and led several joint working groups, including PPE management and mortuary management.

The service needs to share national learning

The service has limited awareness of joint operational learning updates from other fire services and [national operational learning](#) from other blue light partners. As a result, the service hasn't done enough to improve its services for the public in line with the recognised best ways of doing things.

Until 2020 the service hadn't contributed to national operational learning or joint operational learning. However, it has now started to do so and submitted five case studies in 2020.

We appreciate that the service has dealt with challenging industrial relations, which will have affected staff engagement and productivity.

Efficiency



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



Requires improvement

Summary

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. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency requires improvement.

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made in its efficiency since our last inspection, when we identified this as a cause of concern. It has improved a grade on both the questions we ask in this section. Previously, the service wasn't using its resources efficiently to manage risk; nor was it using its financial and physical resources effectively to keep people safe. The service has addressed this cause of concern through its IRMP, called the [Making Surrey Safer Plan](#) (MSSP), which improves the way that it targets its resources at areas of highest risk.

The service has improved its approach to collaboration and has created savings through its joint control room with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. However, it needs to make sure it evaluates the end results of its collaborations. It would also benefit from carrying out more [benchmarking](#) – comparing its spending to that of other fire and rescue services – to make sure its procurement processes are providing value for money. It also needs to expand its financial scenario planning to prepare for any future financial problems.

The service used the pandemic to introduce agile working for staff, supported by improved IT. It has improved its governance arrangements and quality assurance throughout the service. This has helped senior leaders develop more effective relationships with the county council and its cabinet members, who have supported the service through a period of significant change and internal and external problems.

Making best use of resources



Requires improvement (2018: Inadequate)

Surrey 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 2021/22 is £31.7m. This is the same as the previous year.

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 have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and that their time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in the IRMP (the Making Surrey Safer 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's current financial plans support its objectives

During our last inspection in 2018 we identified as a cause of concern that the service didn't use its resources efficiently to manage risk, and didn't manage its financial and physical resources to effectively keep people safe. We recommended the service should make sure that:

- its resourcing model met risk demand sustainably;
- its workforce model supported its operational model to manage risk efficiently and sustainably; and
- it used the available budget prudently to support its risk management activities.

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since the last inspection. The service's financial and workforce plans, including allocating staff to prevention, protection and response teams, reflect and are consistent with the risks and priorities identified in the MSSP.

Plans are built on sound scenarios. They help make sure the service's work is lasting, and they are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. The MSSP marks a new way for the service to approach its risk planning and use of resources, and is subject to continuous review. The data used to inform the plans has been scrutinised and agreed by a third party. There are clear links between

the MSSP and the prevention, protection, and response strategies. This has been a significant change for how the service and its staff work.

The service needs to make sure its workforce's time is used effectively and efficiently to meet the priorities in the MSSP

The service's arrangements for managing its performance are improving, but they don't yet clearly link how the service uses its resources to the MSSP or to the service's most important and long-term aims. Operational staff have targets for the number of [safe and well visits](#) to be achieved. But in 2019/20 Surrey was among the lowest services in the country for the number of safe and well visits carried out per head of population.

The service has introduced a revised performance management framework, with the aim of making sure the workforce's time is used productively. But it needs to do more to make sure its workforce is as productive as possible. This includes considering new ways of working. For example, the service has introduced partnership managers who make sure that prevention work at stations is targeted at local risks. But the service hasn't evaluated how this improves productivity at its stations.

The service had to adapt its working practices as a result of the pandemic, and these are still part of its day-to-day activity. For example, along with the wider county council, the service has introduced agile working: staff can work from the most convenient location, whether that's at home, at a local fire station or a county council building. As part of the county council, the service is moving to more cloud-based technologies. But the service hasn't evaluated how this impacts its workforce's productivity.

During our last inspection in 2018, we found that the service relied too heavily on staff overtime to maintain fire engine availability. We are pleased to see that, due to the crewing changes introduced as part of the MSSP, overtime is being used far less.

The service collaborates with other emergency services but needs to evaluate this work

In our last inspection in 2018 we identified an area for improvement in this area. This stated that the service should assure itself that it makes the most of collaboration opportunities and that these improve its capacity, capability and service to the public, and are good value for money.

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

We are pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate, and routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. In December 2019 a joint control room was established between Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. This has achieved cashable savings in the region of £0.6m per year. East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is due to join the control arrangements in September 2021, although the service is unsure of the savings this will create.

As noted previously, the service worked well with other organisations during the pandemic. External organisations told us the service was now seen as a more reliable and proactive partner than it was at the time of our last inspection. The service is currently considering an opportunity to collaborate with Surrey police in its vehicle workshop arrangements.

The service's collaborative work is aligned to the priorities in the MSSP. For example, the service is active in the [primary authority scheme](#), acting as the single point of contact for 18 national organisations. This allows the service to engage with businesses and supports them in complying with fire safety legislation. But the service needs to assure itself that this work isn't being completed at the cost of its main activities.

The service needs to do more to monitor, review and evaluate the benefits and end results of its collaborations. For example, we were told about the financial savings from the joint [fire control](#) collaboration. But we were provided with little information about the potential benefits from the future control arrangements involving East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, or how these would be evaluated.

The service has business continuity plans in place

The service has good continuity arrangements in place for industrial action by operational staff. The service has been through a period of industrial action since our last inspection and this tested the continuity arrangements.

Control staff were confident in the continuity arrangements for control. These are tested regularly, including the [fall-back](#) arrangements with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

The service is improving its financial management

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

The service carries out regular reviews of all its expenditure, including its non-pay costs. The process of continuously challenging its spending arrangements helps to make sure the service gets value for money. The service has improved its arrangements with the county council finance team through regular review meetings. Finance and performance are reported and scrutinised regularly by cabinet members.

At the time of our last inspection, the service was being asked to provide a further £6m in savings. However, that is no longer the case. The county council has supported the service's MSSP through additional transformation funding to help the service to change its operating model. The new operating model has been scrutinised by an independent third party to assure the county council of its sustainability.

The service is taking steps to make sure important areas, including estates, fleet and procurement, are well placed to achieve efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. For example, the service is aware it needs to procure a suitable electronic system to replace the paper-based asset management system currently used to monitor the use and maintenance of operational equipment.

The service is also aware that it needs to conduct more benchmarking (checking its spending in particular areas against that of other fire and rescue services) to make sure it is getting value for money in its procurement processes.

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



Good (2018: Requires improvement)

Surrey 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 must ensure scenario plans for future spending reductions are subject to rigorous analysis and challenge, including the impact on services 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 should improve its understanding of future budget challenges to make sure it can secure long-term funding

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since the last inspection. It has developed a sound understanding of future financial challenges, and has plans to mitigate its main financial risks. For example, the service has used an independent third party to assure itself and the county council that its new operating model, as outlined in the MSSP, is achievable and lasting. The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic and prudent, and take account of the wider external environment for the duration of the current MSSP (until 2024).

We were pleased to see that the service has identified savings and investment opportunities to improve the service to the public and generate further savings. For example, the joint control with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is making savings of around £0.6m per year.

However, we didn't see evidence that the service is planning beyond the current MSSP. The current MSSP runs until 2024 and we would expect to see financial planning beyond this date.

The service doesn't have its own reserves

The service doesn't hold its own [reserves](#) as these are held by the county council. However, we have seen that the service receives financial support from the county council when required. For example, in our COVID-19 inspection we saw that the service was able to request funding to cover additional costs incurred directly due to the pandemic. The county council has provided transformation funding from its reserves to allow the service to achieve the new operating model identified in the MSSP. However, with county council reserves now being depleted, the service needs to make sure it has plans in place to deal with different future financial scenarios.

The fleet and estates strategies are aligned with the MSSP

[Our last inspection in 2018](#) noted that “the service has not invested well in its estate and fleet. The service's hot fire house is unusable for realistic breathing apparatus training. But it has alternative arrangements in place. The service is using fire engines for longer than was planned instead of renewing them.”

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

The service's estate and fleet strategies have clear links to the MSSP. Both strategies exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The service is investing £16m in replacement fire engines. It also has a £4.5m replacement programme for other vehicles and equipment across the service. A further £32m investment is being planned for new training facilities and replacement/refurbishment of four fire stations.

The strategies are regularly reviewed so that the service can properly assess the impact on risk of any changes in estate and fleet provision or of future innovation.

The service is investing in technology to improve its efficiency

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since the last inspection. The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. The [mobilising](#) system used in joint control means that the nearest fire engines from either service are sent to incidents in Surrey and West Sussex. This supports firefighter and public safety.

The service also seeks to exploit any opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness that are presented by changes in technology. As part of the wider county council, fire service staff can work in a more agile way. Technology is being used to support people to work at the most appropriate locations, whether at home, the fire service or county council premises.

The service has put in place the capacity and capability needed to achieve long-term change, and it routinely seeks opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency and provide better services in the future. For example, the service has been part of a procurement collaboration with East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council since 2017. This partnership provides the service's IT.

The service could do more to generate income

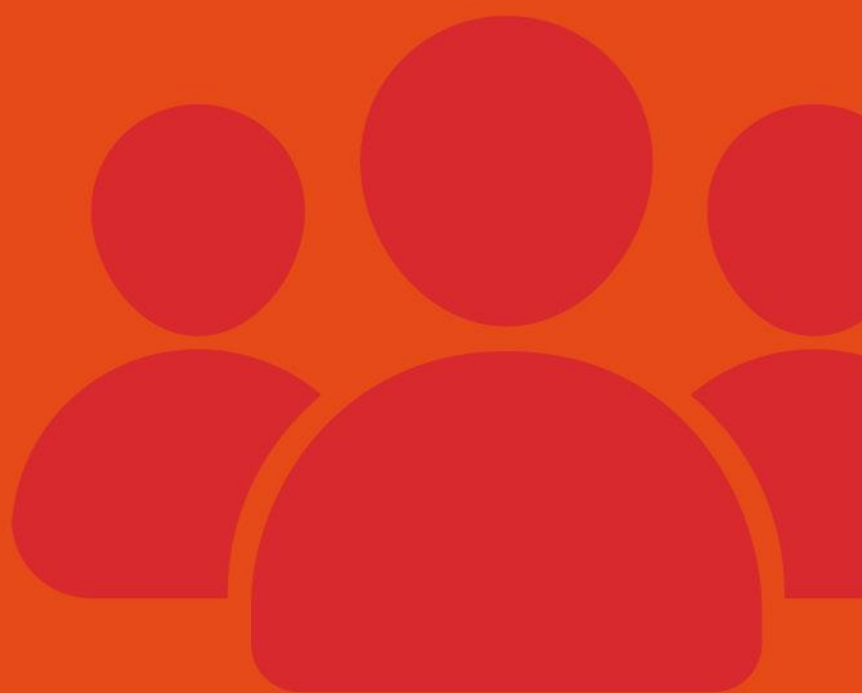
The service considers options for generating extra income, which includes applying for grants, but its ambition and track record are limited. It currently doesn't have a plan to do more in this area.

The service used to benefit from income from its trading arm. However, due to the risk of fluctuating income negatively affecting its budget, a decision was made to stop the income going directly to the service. The county council increased the service's base budget by £300,000 to compensate for this. The county council felt its larger budget was better able to withstand fluctuations in this income than the service's. The trading arm is now the single trading arm for the whole of Surrey County Council.

Fire service staff are seconded to the trading arm to provide advice and guidance on the courses and training the service provides. A senior fire service officer is a director on the board of the trading arm, and makes sure there are no potential conflicts of interest between the work of the trading arm and fire service activities.

Where appropriate, the service has secured external funding to invest in improvements to the service provided to the public. These include government funding linked to the Grenfell Tower work, and funding to recover costs incurred during the pandemic. For example, the service has used funding from the Building Risk Review (a national government-funded programme to understand and help reduce the fire risk in high-rise residential buildings) to buy smoke hoods to help make people safer in fires.

People



How well does the service look after its people?



Requires improvement

Summary

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, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at looking after its people.

The service's [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#), the Making Surrey Safer Plan (MSSP), has led to a period of significant change since our last inspection. Although the service has implemented the changes in the MSSP, relationships between senior leaders and operational staff remain challenging. The service is aware of this and is trying new ways to improve discussion and feedback. It is also using an external provider to create a cultural change programme.

Since our first inspection the service has recognised that it needs to do more to improve its equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). It has appointed a lead for EDI and is introducing improved governance and ways of working. However, more needs to be done to improve diversity in the workforce and at all levels of management. Recent recruitment hasn't improved the diversity of the organisation.

The service has recently updated its performance management procedures. It needs to make sure these are understood by all staff, and should develop more robust succession planning and talent management processes. We found that the service managed absence well and provided a good range of health and wellbeing support. We are pleased to see that the service manages overtime more effectively than when we last inspected.

In our previous inspection, we saw that grievance procedures weren't being used effectively. Since then the service has improved its procedures and governance, and is starting to introduce training. However, it needs to do more to understand and address bullying and harassment.

Promoting the right values and culture



Good (2018: Requires improvement)

Surrey 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.

Area for improvement

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

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

While staff at all levels understand the values, these aren't always demonstrated

The service has made some progress in this area since our last inspection. This has been during a period of significant change, which has led to tension in industrial relations. However, there is still more to do. The service now has a clearly defined set of values. In response to our staff survey, 97 percent of respondents said they were aware of the service's values (179 out of 185). However, while 90 percent of respondents felt that their colleagues consistently modelled and maintained these values, only 35 percent said that senior managers did so. Senior leaders always need to make sure that they act as role models for a service's values.

The staff we spoke to were proud of the service. But they told us that they didn't always feel engaged in decisions that affect them. Many operational staff told us they didn't feel part of the transformation process. Engagement between senior leaders and many station-based staff is challenging. The service is aware of this and has increased contact between management and staff. Members of the senior team visit fire stations each week to understand their concerns and help to improve working relationships. However, staff told us that they didn't always receive feedback on the problems they raised during these visits.

The service is aware of the new national code of ethics and needs to consider how this will be implemented across the organisation.

Staff have access to services that support their mental and physical health

The service's wellbeing policies for staff continue to be well understood and effective. A significant range of wellbeing support is available to support both physical and mental health, including occupational health services, external counsellors, and traumatic incident support.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff wellbeing. This includes closer monitoring of staff overtime, which we highlighted in the last inspection as an area for improvement. Following the introduction of new staffing arrangements, there is less reliance on overtime to maintain fire engine availability. Most staff told us that they understood and had confidence in the wellbeing support processes available. In response to our staff survey, 78 percent of respondents (145 out of 185) agreed or tended to agree that they could access services to support their mental health.

However, the staff survey also indicated that 57 percent of staff discussed their wellbeing with managers only twice a year or less (105 out of 185). The service could do more to engage with the workforce to understand and support individual needs.

Since our last inspection there have been improvements in processes for monitoring and managing staff who have secondary employment.

Health and safety policies and procedures are well understood across the service

The service's health and safety policies and procedures continue to be effective and well understood. Our survey showed that 95 percent (176 out of 185) of respondents felt that the service had clear procedures to report all accidents, [near misses](#) and dangerous occurrences. Health and safety training is provided predominantly through online training packages.

The service has a comprehensive reporting and monitoring system in place to identify and address any trends in accidents. Accidents, near misses and hazards are flagged to the duty officer who assigns an appropriate level of investigation. The health and safety team and representative bodies are also notified. The occupational health, safety and wellbeing working group monitors accident information to improve performance. For example, due to an increasing number of incidents involving working-at-height training, a decision was made to change the training, which reduced the number of incidents without affecting the service's operational ability.

The service manages absence well

As part of our inspection, we reviewed some case files to consider how the service managed and supported staff through their absences, including sickness, parental and special leave.

We found there are clear processes in place to manage absences for all staff. There is clear guidance for managers and support is available from the human resources team. Absences are managed well and in line with policy. Although managers told us that they hadn't received formal training in managing absence, they were confident in the process. The staff we spoke to also understood the process and their responsibilities when absent from work.

Overall, the service has seen a decrease in staff absences over the 12 months between 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Good (2018: Requires improvement)

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service is good at getting the right people with the right skills.

Fire and rescue services should have workforce plans in place that are linked to their IRMPs, 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.

Area for improvement

The service should ensure operational officers use its competence recording system and e-learning platform effectively.

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

Workforce planning makes sure that the required skills and capabilities are available

The service has good workforce planning in place, which ensures that skills and capabilities align with its IRMP, the Making Surrey Safer Plan (MSSP). The recruitment strategy for 2020–24 focuses on how the service should attract, select and retain staff in a way that is in line with the MSSP. The strategy is supported by updates, which are given in regular meetings to provide an accurate picture of the current workforce and future requirements.

Most staff told us that they could access the training they needed to be effective in their role. Our survey showed that 72 percent of respondents, (133 out of 185) agreed that they had received the training they needed to allow them to do their job effectively. However, most operational staff told us that they would like more prevention training to improve the way they did this work.

The service's training plans ensure it can maintain the competence and capabilities of its staff effectively. The service regularly monitors and assesses the competence of its firefighters, crew commanders and [watch](#) commanders. This is overseen by a central team using an electronic recording system. This team books those staff on appropriate training courses and reports which of them need to complete assessments to maintain their competence. This approach means that the service can identify gaps in workforce capabilities and resilience, and can make sound and long-term financial decisions about current and future needs.

However, while operational officers (station managers and above) are supposed to maintain their own competency records, this isn't monitored. We also noted that the training wasn't recorded for non-operational staff. They are supposed to follow county council policy – although most staff we spoke to couldn't explain how this worked.

Having a very small team to maintain the system for recording training means that this function has limited resilience.

The service is improving its approach to learning and development but needs to extend this to all staff

A culture of continuous improvement is promoted across the service and staff are encouraged to learn and develop. For example, the service has invested in making sure that the training of the protection team is in line with the national competency framework.

The provision of learning and development has been adapted for the pandemic, with more being done virtually. However, some staff felt that the level of learning and development available to them had decreased during this time.

Most staff survey respondents told us that they were able to access a range of learning and development resources. This includes 64 percent (119 out of 185 respondents) who were satisfied with the learning and development available to them. However, staff told us that learning and development opportunities weren't as good for non-operational staff. Non-operational staff told us that they joined the service in specific roles and that most of these roles had no chance of career progression.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)

Surrey 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.

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it takes timely action in response to feedback or concerns from its staff.
- The service should ensure that all staff understand the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and their role in promoting it.

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 improving the way it seeks and acts on staff feedback, but it needs to do more

The service is improving its means of gathering staff feedback. For example, each senior manager works one day a week at a fire station. During that day they speak with the firefighters to understand their views and concerns. The service then updates the staff using a fortnightly email newsletter that is sent to every member of the service.

However, we found that many staff had limited confidence in the ways the service gathered feedback and didn't think these were effective. Our staff survey found that only 26 percent of respondents (48 out of 185) felt confident in the ways for providing feedback to all levels.

The service is making slow progress in implementing its plans to improve EDI

Since our last inspection the service has recruited a lead for EDI. This has resulted in more activity in this area. However, the service needs to make sure its plans for EDI are clear to all staff. We found that many staff were unaware of EDI issues.

Although the service has a process in place to carry out equality impact assessments, the impact on each of the protected characteristics isn't being properly assessed or dealt with. More could be done to engage with both internal and external networks to inform this.

During our inspection, a new equality impact assessment process was introduced, which appeared to be more robust than the previous process. The new process has a clear governance structure to make sure that it works effectively, and that the impact of the process is understood and reviewed. The service needs to make sure that the new process is having a positive effect.

Alongside the new equality impact assessment process, the service has introduced a fairness and respect network to improve the way it works with under-represented groups. This is in its early stages and is supported by senior managers. The service has started to use informal 'lunch and learn' sessions to improve staff awareness of EDI issues. The subjects covered include race, gender and sexuality, as well as issues such as domestic abuse. The sessions are given by internal and external staff.

Staff are starting to work with external EDI organisations, such as the Asian Fire Service Association, but this is currently led by individuals rather than being a part of any systematic approach by the service.

The service needs to make sure it understands the needs of its workforce. For example, 8 percent of respondents (14 out of 185) to our staff survey stated that they didn't have access to gender-appropriate workplace facilities.

The promotion process lacks fairness and transparency

The promotion process has been reviewed since our last inspection and is now more open and transparent. However, there is still more to be done, because there is a lack of transparency at the final stage.

We reviewed three recent promotion processes for different operational roles and found assessment centres were open and fair. The service maintains a record of how staff perform at the assessment centres and feeds this information back to the individuals. Staff from human resources often support the process and provide independent scrutiny. However, we found no independent scrutiny of the subsequent process used to appoint a person to a role.

The service needs to do more to improve the diversity of its workforce

More needs to be done to increase staff diversity. There has been limited progress to improve both BAME and female representation across all staff in the service. Between 2017/18 and 2019/20, 0.7 percent (1 out of 140) of new joiners self-declared as being from a BAME group (7 percent chose not to state their ethnicity), and 14 percent (20 out of 140) were female. For firefighter recruitment specifically, 3 percent (3 out of 97) of all new recruits were female and none were from a BAME background (7 percent chose not to state their ethnicity). In relation to the whole service's workforce, 2 percent are BAME and 12 percent are female (based on figures from 2019/20).

Since our last inspection the service has regularly recruited [wholetime](#) and [on-call](#) firefighters, but this hasn't been used as an opportunity to increase diversity of operational staff.

The service is aware of the lack of diversity in its workforce and is starting to introduce new ways of working. For the first time, the service is examining whether there are particular 'fail points' in the recruitment process that are disadvantaging underrepresented groups. If there are, it intends to offer more support to people from those groups through those parts of the process.

The service needs to do more to improve the way it tackles bullying, harassment and discrimination

The service could do more to improve staff understanding of bullying, harassment and discrimination, including their responsibility for eliminating it. Through our staff survey, 29 percent of staff (53 out of 185 respondents) told us they had been subject to harassment, and 30 percent to discrimination (56 out of 185) over the past 12 months. Of these staff, only 4 percent thought their concerns had been properly dealt with.

Although the service does have clear and up-to-date policies and procedures in place, staff have limited confidence in its ability to deal effectively with cases of bullying, harassment and discrimination, and grievances and discipline. In the staff survey, 54 percent of the respondents who stated they had experienced bullying or harassment (14 out of 26) told us they didn't report it as they felt nothing would happen as a result. The service needs to consider how to improve staff awareness and training in this area.

Since our last inspection the service has improved its approach to investigating and recording grievances. In our last inspection we identified as an area for improvement that the service should make sure it has effective grievance procedures that include clearly documented actions and end results. It has published a new grievance policy and staff are starting to be trained in its use. A senior manager now oversees the procedure and informal and formal end results are recorded.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)

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

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 inconsistent at managing individuals' performance

The service's process for performance and development is still inconsistent. The staff survey highlighted that only 69 percent of staff (127 out of 185 respondents) had received a personal development review in the previous 12 months. Few staff reported that they had regular, meaningful discussions with their manager. Of the respondents,

34 percent said they had performance meetings with their line manager monthly or more frequently (62 out of 185). But 64 percent (113 out of 176) found the meetings useful when they did happen. Nine respondents told us that they never had performance discussions with their manager.

The service introduced an updated performance management system for staff during our inspection. The intention is that this will make sure all staff objectives are linked to the MSSP.

The service isn't effective at developing leadership and high-potential staff at all levels

This was highlighted as an area for improvement in our last inspection and limited progress has been made.

The service needs to improve how it actively manages the career pathways of staff, including those with specialist skills and suitable for leadership roles.

The service doesn't have a talent management scheme to develop leaders and high-potential staff. It is improving the openness and fairness of its promotion processes, but there are still areas where more independent scrutiny would help.

The service should consider putting in place more formal arrangements to identify and support members of staff to become senior leaders. There is a significant gap in its succession planning at present. The service is aware of this and is developing plans to make improvements. But currently the only process it has in place is the promotion process for operational staff – it has nothing for non-operational staff.

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