

Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Cleveland Fire Brigade



Contents

About this inspection	1
Overview	2
Service in numbers	5
Effectiveness	7
<hr/>	
How effective is the service at keeping people safe and secure?	8
Summary	8
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	9
Preventing fires and other risks	11
Protecting the public through fire regulation	15
Responding to fires and other emergencies	19
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	22
Efficiency	26
<hr/>	
How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure?	27
Summary	27
Making best use of resources	28
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	31
People	35
<hr/>	
How well does the service look after its people?	36
Summary	36
Promoting the right values and culture	37
Getting the right people with the right skills	40
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	42
Managing performance and developing leaders	45

About this inspection

This inspection is from our third round of inspections of fire and rescue services in England. We first inspected Cleveland Fire Brigade in July 2019. We published a report with our findings in December 2019 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 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 Cleveland Fire Brigade.

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.


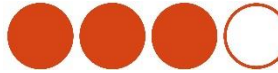




If we find shortcomings in the service, we will judge it as requires improvement.

If there are serious, critical or systemic failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of inadequate.

Overview

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

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

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

HM Inspector's summary

It was a pleasure to revisit Cleveland Fire Brigade, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way that the brigade engaged with our inspection.

I am pleased with the performance of Cleveland Fire Brigade in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks. For example, the brigade continues to respond quickly to fires and other emergencies, continuously meeting its stated target of arriving on scene within seven minutes for all property fires. The brigade also provides a good range of prevention activities for the local community, and an active fire protection service to help ensure local businesses are safe and legally compliant.

We were pleased to see that the brigade has made progress since our 2018 inspection. The brigade has made improvements against all the areas we identified. It has resolved 12 areas for improvement, and made progress on 4 others. Areas where we have seen the greatest improvement are in fire protection and operational response. We have also seen good improvements in efficiency and in how the brigade looks after its people.

My principal findings from our assessments of the brigade over the past year are as follows:

- The brigade has made clear changes to its culture, with staff telling us both directly and through our staff survey that this has improved since our last inspection. The brigade also has a strong set of values, which are now underpinned by the national [Core Code of Ethics](#).
- The brigade has improved at recruiting women into operational roles.
- The brigade has made improvements to its prevention, protection, and operational response.
- The brigade has improved staff productivity to drive efficiencies.

This is a good example of the improvements that can be made when a service focuses on the main findings of our inspections.

Overall, this is a good performance from Cleveland Fire Brigade, both for the communities it serves and for the people who work for the brigade.

The brigade should continue to make progress with the remaining areas for improvement. We look forward to seeing how it has built on this success at our next inspection.



Roy Wilsher

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Response

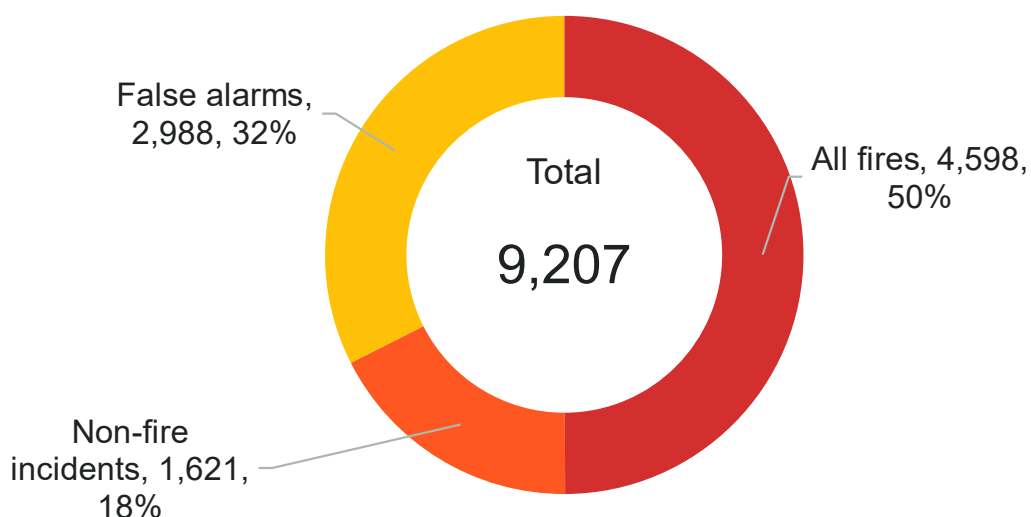
	Cleveland	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 31 December 2021	16.16	9.82
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	27.28	4.47
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2021	5.30	1.70
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2021	86.2%	86.4%



Cost

Firefighter cost per person Year ending 31 March 2021	£30.24	£25.02
--	--------	--------

Incidents attended in the year to 31 December 2021



Five-year change in total workforce 2016 to 2021	-3.81%	-1.60%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	0.72	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2021	77.8%	64.4%

Percentage of population, firefighters and workforce who are female as at 31 March 2021



Percentage of population, firefighters and workforce who are from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2021



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?



Good

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, it should respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. Cleveland Fire Brigade's overall effectiveness is good.

Cleveland Fire Brigade is good at providing an effective fire and rescue service.

It has improved its understanding of risk, its fire prevention, its fire protection, how it responds to fires and its planning for major incidents, so we grade it as good. But improvements to the quality assurance of prevention activities need to continue developing and to become established.

The brigade has introduced a new community risk management plan (CRMP) (which is what it calls its [integrated risk management plan](#)) for 2022–26, with 9 clear priorities. We look forward to seeing how the brigade meets these commitments, and how it evaluates the effect of its activities.

There are still problems with staff recruitment and retention in fire protection, although we saw how new operational staff are being trained in this area to support succession planning.

The brigade is still good at operational response and at how it plans to deal with major incidents. It is actively involved with the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#).

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Good (2019: Good)

Cleveland Fire Brigade is good 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 set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The brigade is good at identifying and understanding community risk

The brigade has assessed an appropriate range of risks and threats after a thorough IRMP process. When assessing risk, it considers relevant information collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and datasets, including:

- local population and social demographics;
- local health authority profiles;
- crime rates and the [indices of deprivation](#);
- national and local risk registers;
- previous demand for services;
- private and business property risks;
- transport risks;
- environmental risks; and
- transport-related risks.

When appropriate, the brigade has consulted and undertaken constructive dialogue with communities and others such as:

- employee and staff groups;
- members of the public;
- health and [safeguarding](#) partner organisations;
- industrial and commercial businesses; and
- local and regional politicians and political groups.

This helps the brigade both to understand the risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it.

The CRMP is up to date and easy to understand

After assessing relevant risks, the brigade has recorded its findings in an easily understood CRMP. This plan describes how prevention, protection and response activity is to be effectively resourced to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces, both now and in the future. For example, the CRMP details nine priorities for the brigade over the next four years. Of these nine priorities, three relate to prevention work, two to fire protection, and two to operational response. All nine priorities clearly state the main improvement actions and how the brigade intends to carry these out. This means the public can see what their brigade aims to achieve and can hold them to account for the duration of the CRMP.

The brigade gathers, maintains and shares a good range of risk information

The brigade routinely collects and updates the information it has about the people, places and threats it has identified as being at greatest risk. This includes details of premises that present the greatest risk to the community and to firefighters at these sites. But it also includes temporary risks, such as major events held at the Riverside Stadium in Middlesbrough, and short-term changes to existing risks, such as sprinkler systems being unavailable at high-risk sites.

This information is readily available for the brigade's prevention, protection, and response staff, which helps it to identify, reduce and mitigate risk effectively. For example, we saw how information was passed between operational crews and the fire protection unit when fire safety concerns were identified, and between prevention staff and crews when high-risk residents were identified.

Where appropriate, risk information is passed on to other organisations. Examples include sharing information on risks in licensed premises with the local licensing authority. Information is also shared between the local authority building control and the brigade. This makes sure everyone is aware of any buildings or businesses that have increased levels of risk or non-compliance with regulations.

The brigade uses operational activity to help build its understanding of risk

The brigade records and communicates risk information effectively. It also routinely updates risk assessments and uses feedback from local and national operational activity to inform its planning assumptions. For example, we saw how risk information was updated after the discovery of hazardous materials at a disused site following a fire. This information was shared through the formal debriefing process to make all staff aware of this type of risk.

The brigade has developed risk information for high-rise sites following the fire at Grenfell Tower

During this round of inspections, we sampled how each fire and rescue service has responded to the recommendations and learning from Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Cleveland Fire Brigade has responded positively and proactively to learning from this tragedy. The brigade assessed the risk of each high-rise building in its area before the end of 2021.

It has carried out a fire safety audit and collected and passed relevant risk information to its prevention, protection and response teams about buildings identified as high risk and all high-rise buildings that have cladding similar to that installed on Grenfell Tower. The brigade now holds more detailed information on high-rise premises in its area. It also has action plans for crews attending incidents at these sites.

Preventing fires and other risks



Good (2019: Good)

Cleveland Fire Brigade 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, and with the police and ambulance services. They should provide [intelligence](#) and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

Area for improvement

The brigade should continue to improve quality assurance of its prevention work.

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

The brigade's prevention strategy is integrated with its CRMP

The brigade's prevention strategy is clearly linked to the risks identified in its community risk profile. The prevention strategy is integrated within the CRMP, showing clearly how prevention work is linked to local risks. Every type of risk contains details of how the prevention strategy aims to reduce or prevent the risk from happening.

The brigade's teams work well together and with other relevant organisations on prevention, and it shares relevant information when needed. Information is used to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between the brigade's prevention, protection and response functions. For example, the brigade works with health and local authorities. These refer [vulnerable](#) residents to the brigade so that they can receive safer home visits (which are similar to a [home fire safety check](#)). The brigade also works with the Road Safety GB North East to help reduce road deaths and injuries in the local area.

The brigade adapted its prevention activities well during the pandemic

We considered how the brigade had adapted its prevention work during our COVID-19 specific inspection in November 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its public prevention work appropriately. Since then, we are encouraged to find that the brigade has continued with improvements to its safer home visits. Staff can now carry out safer homes assessments virtually or by telephone, as well as face to face. Members of the public can also use an online self-assessment tool to assess risks for themselves.

During the pandemic, the brigade supported the community, with staff taking on a range of roles and responsibilities, including:

- driving ambulances;
- delivering personal protective equipment;
- carrying out vaccinations;
- providing training for care home staff; and
- supporting test and trace.

The brigade has made good improvements with its targeting of prevention activities

Prevention activity is clearly prioritised using a risk-based approach towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. For example, the brigade now prioritises residents who are classed as very high or high risk by using a new targeting methodology. This has improved targeting and means it can respond more quickly to urgent referrals.

The brigade takes account of a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable individuals and groups. This includes data from the Office for National Statistics, as well as relevant health data and statistics for fire deaths and injuries.

It provides a range of interventions that it adapts to the level of risk in its communities. These include:

- [safe and well visits](#);
- school education work;
- prevention work following incidents in local areas;
- 'prevention of deliberate fire setting' programmes;
- working with young people and running diversionary schemes;
- health screening and home health work; and
- road safety initiatives.

Staff are confident and competent at carrying out safe and well visits

Staff in [wholetime](#) and [on-call](#) roles told us they have the right skills and confidence to make safe and well visits. These checks cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put [vulnerable people](#) at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. Staff all told us they were trained and confident with carrying out safe and well visits. Dedicated prevention staff also carry out safe and well visits as part of their role. We found that the brigade has made improvements to the quality assurance of its safe and well visits. It has done this by using digital platforms to direct staff through the process and better record the results of the visits.

Brigade staff are well trained and practised at handling safeguarding concerns

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified safeguarding problems. They told us they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. We found staff had appropriate training. In most cases they were also experienced at identifying vulnerable members of the community and knew how to use recognised safeguarding channels. We also heard how specialist staff in the four community hubs give good support to operational crews helping vulnerable people in the community.

Collaborations are focused and targeted

The brigade works with a wide range of other organisations such as Cleveland Police, local authorities, and the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board to prevent fires and other emergencies.

We found good evidence that it routinely refers people at greatest risk to other organisations which may be better able to meet their needs. These organisations include local authorities and health authorities, who also make referrals to the brigade. The brigade acts appropriately on the referrals it receives. For example, it carries out an assessment to prioritise referrals. This assessment uses five levels of risk, from very low through to very high risk.

The brigade routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses the information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention activity. For example, the brigade is a partner on the Cleveland Strategic Road Safety Partnership. The brigade works at a strategic and operational level to agree actions and help carry out awareness and education campaigns throughout Cleveland. A recent example is its involvement in Project EDWARD (Every Day Without a Road Death), a Europe-wide road safety campaign.

Tackling fire-setting behaviour is a priority for the brigade

The brigade recognises it has a serious problem with deliberate fires in the local area. It treats this as a priority issue.

The brigade has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people of different ages who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. For example, the brigade works closely with Hartlepool Borough Council to identify and tackle [anti-social behaviour](#) and reduce crime in the Hartlepool area. This work is co-ordinated from a single office where staff from Cleveland Fire Brigade, Cleveland Police and Hartlepool Borough Council work together.

The brigade also supports arson reduction. Crews are involved in litter-picking days, which reduce opportunities for deliberate fire setting. They also carry out school talks and run diversionary schemes for young people, such as Shout Out and Kick About which encourages them to play football and take part in other activities, rather than set fires.

When appropriate, it routinely shares information with other relevant organisations, such as Cleveland Police and social services, to support the prosecution of arsonists. The brigade seconded an officer to Cleveland Police to support changes in national standards for fire investigation practice.

The brigade has supported the police to convict several arsonists since our last inspection. The offenders received custodial sentences.

The brigade needs to keep improving how it evaluates and quality assures its prevention activities

The brigade has good evaluation tools in place. But at the time of this inspection, the framework for quality assurance had only evaluated the safer home visits, not the brigade's full range of prevention activities.

We were told the framework is a four-year programme of compliance audits, designed to evaluate every area of prevention. We look forward to seeing how this work continues to improve prevention activities.

Prevention activities do take account of feedback from the public, other organisations, and other parts of the brigade. The brigade received a good rating from the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board. This was through an external, quality assurance audit that identified the brigade as an example of a good way of working for other organisations in the partnership.

Feedback is used by the brigade to inform its planning assumptions and amend future activity, so it is focused on what the community needs and what works.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Good (2019: Good)

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

Fire protection strategy is integrated well with the CRMP

The brigade's protection strategy is clearly linked to the risk it has identified in its CRMP.

Staff across the brigade are involved in this activity, with information effectively exchanged as needed. For example, operational staff routinely carry out audits of lower-risk premises, allowing them to identify dangerous situations. This information is passed on to dedicated fire protection staff who take appropriate action, as needed. Frontline staff have Level 3 and Level 4 fire safety qualifications, which means premises can be inspected by staff with suitable skills for the level of risk.

The brigade adapted its protection work well to support businesses during the pandemic

We considered how the brigade had adapted its protection activity during our COVID-19 specific inspection in November 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its protection work well. Since then, we are encouraged to find that the brigade has continued to offer businesses improved access to support and information via its website. It has returned to on-site inspections of premises.

The brigade has made improvements to prioritise the highest risks in its RBIP

In our last inspection, we said that the brigade's RBIP needed to prioritise the highest risk premises. The RBIP is now aligned to guidance provided by the [National Fire Chiefs' Council \(NFCC\)](#) and prioritises risks appropriately. The brigade uses relative-risk scores and applies locally determined risk factors to make the RBIP targeted and relevant.

The brigade has seen an increase in unsatisfactory audits, from 12 percent in 2019/20 to 21 percent in 2020/21. This suggests better targeting of non-compliant premises, consistent with the [Regulators' Code](#).

Timescales set by the brigade for the auditing of premises are based on risk. Very-high-risk premises will be audited every six months; high-risk premises every year; and medium-risk premises every four years. This gives the brigade an ambitious target of around 2,000 audits every year. We look forward to seeing how well it achieves this aim.

The brigade has carried out audits of high-risk, high-rise buildings

Audits have been carried out at all high-rise buildings the brigade has 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 brigade carried out this work before the deadline of November 2021. It is now working with housing providers and local authority building control to make sure all remedial improvements are carried out.

The brigade is good at quality assuring its protection work and fire safety audits

Quality assurance of protection activity takes place in a proportionate way. The brigade has now aligned its quality assurance with guidance provided by the NFCC. This means that a minimum of one audit type from each auditor is quality assured every year. There is also a process to check and quality assure all formal notices before they are served.

The brigade has good evaluation tools in place to measure the effectiveness of its activity and to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to the protection services that meet their needs.

We reviewed a range of audits of different premises across the brigade. This included audits as part of the brigade's RBIP, after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies, 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 brigade's policies. Relevant information from the audits is made available to operational teams and [control room](#) operators.

The brigade's use of enforcement powers is increasing because of staff's enhanced skills and knowledge

The brigade is increasing its use of enforcement powers. The brigade didn't carry out any prosecutions in the 5 years up to the end of March 2021. But we were told that in 2021/22, they carried out a prosecution, as well as issued 2 formal cautions.

The brigade told us it is also processing seven cases that are being considered for prosecution. We were told the increased enforcement activity is a direct result of the brigade's RBIP and staff's improved skills and knowledge.

In the year to 31 March 2021, the brigade issued:

- 0 alteration notices;
- 79 informal notifications;
- 9 enforcement notices; and
- 22 prohibition notices.

Recruitment and retention problems are being addressed

The brigade doesn't have enough qualified protection staff to fully support its audit and enforcement activity. This makes it difficult for it to carry out its full range of planned protection activities.

But the brigade is training more staff at junior levels to improve the recruitment situation for the future, including 55 firefighters, 28 crew managers and 31 [watch](#) managers. Staff working in protection are supported with appropriate training and have funded access to accreditation with professional bodies.

At the time of inspection, 2 members of the fire engineering team were awaiting confirmation of their Level 4 [Diploma in Fire Safety](#) and 4 team members were awaiting confirmation of their Level 3 Certificate in Fire Safety, before they begin working towards their Level 4 Diploma.

Once these qualifications are confirmed the fire protection team will have enough resources, and a greater pool of qualified people for future need.

The brigade is good at working with other agencies to protect the public

The brigade works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and routinely exchanges risk information with them. We saw evidence of how the brigade collaborates with these agencies to share information and intelligence, and co-ordinates inspection activities to reduce the burden of regulation on local businesses. Examples given to us included joint inspections of licensed premises and general stores selling fireworks for bonfire night and religious festivals.

The brigade responds to statutory consultations for building regulations and licensing on time

The brigade responds to building consultations on time, so consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. In 2020/21, the brigade responded to 95.7 percent of 327 building regulations consultations within the required timescale, and to 99.6 percent of 229 licensing consultations within the required timescale.

The brigade has improved how it shares information about fire safety regulations with local businesses

In our last inspection, we noted the brigade needed to improve how it shares details of fire regulations with small businesses. The brigade has made improvements to the information available on its website. It has also increased its use of social media to promote local and national fire safety campaigns.

The brigade also offers business safety advice by interacting with local businesses through small business groups and The Federation of Small Businesses, as well as running articles in Tees Business magazine.

The brigade has a proactive policy for reducing unwanted fire signals

The brigade has an effective risk-based approach in place to manage the number of unwanted fire signals. In October 2021, the brigade introduced a new policy for managing unwanted fire signals, which now includes the option of cost recovery for nuisance premises. At the time of this inspection, the brigade was considering charges for three premises.

The brigade does get fewer calls because of the work it has taken to reduce unwanted fire signals. The number of fire false alarms attended has fallen from 3,194 in 2016/17 to 2,775 in 2020/21. From 2017/18 to 2020/21, the brigade increased the number of automatic fire alarms it didn't attend from 21 percent to 31 percent.

Fewer unwanted calls means 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 if fewer fire engines travel at high speed on the roads.

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Good (2019: Good)

Cleveland Fire Brigade 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 in their area.

Area for improvement

The brigade should improve how it plans and carries out familiarisation visits by operational crews at high-risk premises.

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

The brigade has a clear and flexible response strategy

The brigade's response strategy is linked to the risks identified in its CRMP. Its fire engines and response staff, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to help the brigade to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources. For example, the brigade has a combination of [wholetime fire stations](#), with firefighters who are immediately available, and on-call fire stations staffed by firefighters who live and work locally and respond within five minutes of a call to areas of lower risk.

The brigade has 21 fire engines, but has adopted a flexible approach to availability. This means it aims to keep 14 to 18 fire engines immediately available at any time, depending on risk and demand.

Response standards are clear and consistently achieved

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the brigade has set out its own response standards in its CRMP. The brigade aims to have the following resources in attendance within the stated times:

- First fire engine at all property fires within an average of seven minutes.
- Second fire engine (where needed) at all property fires within an average of ten minutes.
- First fire engine at all road traffic collisions with an identified risk to life within an average of eight minutes.
- All resources for a 'reasonably worst-case scenario' for high-risk sites within an average of 20 minutes.

The brigade consistently meets its standards. Home Office data shows that in the year to 31 December 2021, the brigade's response time to [primary fires](#) was 6 minutes and 35 seconds. This is 55 seconds faster than the average of 7 minutes and 30 seconds for predominantly urban services.

Availability is flexible and consistently achieved

To support its response strategy, the brigade aims to have an optimum of 14 to 18 fire engines available, from a fleet of 21 fire engines. This gives an optimum availability of between 66.7 and 85.7 percent. The overall average availability of all appliances for the year ending March 2021 was 86.2 percent. The average availability of wholetime fire engines was 98.8 percent, and the average availability of on-call fire engines was 65.7 percent. The brigade knows that it needs to improve the availability of its on-call fire engines.

Incident commanders are trained and assessed to national standards

The brigade has trained incident commanders who are assessed regularly and properly. Incident commanders are either trained in-house, through externally accredited trainers and assessors, or they are trained and accredited using a third-party provider. All incident commanders complete two separate days of professional development every year at the brigade development centre. These days include an individual assessment of incident command skills. They are the minimum requirement for maintaining competence.

This maintenance of competence helps the brigade to safely, assertively, 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 brigade. The incident commanders 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 \(JESIP\)](#).

Integration of control staff is good

We are pleased to see the brigade's control staff integrated into the brigade's command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity.

We saw evidence that control staff are routinely involved in the planning of exercises, as well as being involved in the provision of training and exercise. This was especially evident in recent training on new procedures for implementing the recommendations from Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Staff also told us they are invited to attend structured debriefs and are encouraged to make submissions for the full range of operational incidents, as well as receiving operational bulletins containing learning from the debrief process.

The brigade has implemented the national recommendations for handling multiple fire survival guidance calls well

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.

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. Maintaining good situational awareness helps the brigade to communicate effectively with the public, providing them with accurate and tailored advice.

These systems have been developed in-house by Cleveland Fire Brigade and make use of bespoke technology and existing facilities. We look forward to seeing how it continues to be developed and tested for real-life situations.

More training is needed for staff on how to handle calls from people who don't easily understand English

Our inspection found that staff in the control room weren't well trained or practised in handling calls from people who don't easily understand English. The brigade has access to a service to help with this, but it wasn't well understood by staff, and training on using the service was limited.

The brigade must make sure that all staff are aware of the tools available for speaking with members of the public for whom English isn't their first language.

Reassuringly, staff in control did have a good awareness of how to use tools to communicate with people with speech and/or hearing difficulties.

Risk information is current and accessible

We sampled a range of risk information, including what is in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings and what information is held by fire control.

The approach taken by the brigade to gather, risk-rate and categorise risk information is consistent with the general approach supported by the national provision of risk information methodology.

The risk information we reviewed was up to date and detailed. It could be easily accessed and understood by staff. Encouragingly, it had been completed with input from the brigade's prevention, protection, and response functions when appropriate.

In 2020/21 the brigade had 808 sites eligible for familiarisation visits, and the brigade has a target of 144 visits for the year. It completed a total of 176 visits for that period.

The brigade is good at evaluating operational performance and implementing national operational guidance

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included a protracted fire involving unidentified hazardous waste at a site of scientific interest, and two multi-agency exercises to test procedures for high-rise incidents and terrorist-related incidents.

We are pleased to see the brigade routinely follows its policies to assure itself that staff command incidents in line with operational guidance. Internal risk information is updated with the information received. This information is exchanged with other interested partners such as neighbouring fire and rescue services, local authorities and Cleveland Police.

The brigade has responded to learning from incidents and exercises to improve its service for the public. For example, it identified a gap in knowledge around removing personal devices, such as smart watches, before entering potentially explosive atmospheres.

We are encouraged to see the brigade is contributing towards, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services or operational learning gathered from other emergency service partners. This includes examples of risks associated with the use of hand sanitiser, and risks from the accidental ignition of unventilated gases in voids and ducts.

The brigade has improved at keeping the public informed during and after incidents

The brigade has improved at keeping the public informed to help keep them safe during and after incidents. Changes include updating its website to have a dedicated page for incidents; a new policy that promotes greater use of social media; and improved staff training for media interviews.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents



Good (2019: Good)

Cleveland Fire Brigade 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 brigade has good preparations for major and multi-agency incidents

The brigade has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. These risks are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its CRMP. For example, the community risk register includes plans and preparations for a range of incident types and emergency scenarios, such as flooding, industrial accidents, environmental effects and terrorist-related incidents.

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 high-rise incidents and possible terrorist attacks. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. This information is shared through a portal called [Resilience Direct](#), which is a secure platform that all emergency services have access to. Any updates submitted through Resilience Direct are uploaded to fire engines in Cleveland within 24 hours.

The brigade has improved how it prepares staff for responding to major and multi-agency incidents

We reviewed the arrangements the brigade has in place to respond to different major incidents. Our inspection included reviewing the brigade's arrangements for incidents involving high-rise buildings and terrorist-related incidents. These are areas we identified for improvement in our last full inspection.

This inspection showed good improvements with arrangements and plans for these types of incidents, which are well understood by staff. For example, the brigade has exercised its arrangements for dealing with fires in high-rise buildings, and carried out training for all staff to respond to terrorist-related incidents. The brigade still has detailed plans for dealing with incidents at industrial sites covered by the [Control of Major Accident Hazards \(COMAH\)](#) regulations.

The brigade is well practised at working with other fire services

The brigade supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. For example, it has legal agreements in place to work cross-border with both County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Services, as well as North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. It is intraoperable with these services on a regular basis and can form part of a multi-agency response.

The brigade has used national assets, including high-volume pumps to support a complicated incident in 2019 which lasted for several days and needed large volumes of water.

The brigade has also identified four sites within Cleveland that can be used to host national assets. The major events management team has arrangements in place to support the logistics of a major incident or event.

Plans for cross-border exercising are comprehensive but need to be implemented

The brigade has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services so that they can work together effectively to keep the public safe. The plan includes the risks of major events at which the brigade could foreseeably provide support or request assistance from neighbouring services. We were encouraged to see that feedback from exercises that have taken place is used to inform risk information and brigade plans.

But plans for more regular cross-border exercises need to be carried out now that COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

JESIP training and exercising is integrated with incident command skills

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with JESIP.

The brigade provided strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. This includes the application of JESIP in all command training and assessments, as well as in multi-agency exercises and incidents.

Cleveland Fire Brigade is also the lead agency for the regional JESIP strategic co-ordinating group for exercising and debriefing in the North East.

There are good working arrangements with other partners

The brigade has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with other partners that make up the Cleveland Local Resilience Forum. These arrangements include planning and preparations for major incidents under statutory regulations for COMAH sites, and plans to mitigate risks identified in the community risk register.

The brigade is a valued partner and member of the LRF. The brigade sat on the strategic co-ordinating group during the pandemic and chaired the tactical co-ordinating group. The brigade is represented on several working groups within the LRF. These include the blue-light group, the business continuity group, the excess deaths management group, the Resilience Direct group, the risk assessment group and the training and exercising group.

The brigade takes part in regular training events with other members of the LRF and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents. During the pandemic, we were told by external partners how the brigade supported the LRF by maintaining the statutory testing of off-site COMAH plans. This was achieved by adapting the plans so they could be tested in a virtual environment. This resulted in 20 plans being tested, preventing a challenging backlog after the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted.

The brigade actively shares and receives joint and national learning

The brigade keeps itself up to date with [national operational learning](#) updates from other fire services and joint operational learning from other organisations, such as the police service and ambulance trusts. This learning is used to inform planning assumptions that have been made with other partners.

During this inspection we saw evidence of how the brigade made submissions through the [joint organisation learning](#) process to share learning with other services and organisations. This included learning on how to adapt the testing of COMAH plans, and learning about the risk of wearing personal devices in potentially explosive atmospheres.

We also saw evidence of how the brigade received learning from other services and shared this internally. Examples included sharing risks associated with the poor ventilation of explosive gases, the risks associated with static electricity, and the use of hand sanitiser in high-risk environments.

Efficiency



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



Good

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 \(IRMP\)](#). 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 results for the public. Plans should be based on robust and realistic assumptions about income and costs. Cleveland Fire Brigade's overall efficiency is good.

Cleveland Fire Brigade continues to be good at managing resources now and for the future.

The brigade has made good improvements to its plans for business continuity testing, and towards prioritising updating and introducing new technology for the future. But plans to improve how it evaluates collaboration need to be implemented, so that it can understand the benefits and results.

The brigade's financial plans are modest but realistic. They reflect the national challenges and uncertainty about fire service budgets and spending plans.

The brigade's community interest company (CIC), CFB Risk Management, had a drop in turnover during the pandemic, but a modest, long-term recovery is underway, providing additional support for community safety schemes.

Making best use of resources



Good (2019: Good)

Cleveland Fire Brigade is good at making best use of its resources.

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

The brigade's budget for 2022/23 is £27.1m. This is a 3.2 percent increase from the previous financial year.

Area for improvement

The brigade should ensure it effectively monitors, reviews, and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration.

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

The brigade's CRMP is designed to support its objectives

We are encouraged to see the improvements the brigade has made since the last inspection. The brigade's financial and workforce plans, including allocating staff to prevention, protection, and response, reflect and are consistent with the risks and priorities identified in the CRMP. The brigade has produced two detailed plans to support the lifespan of the CRMP from 2022 to 2026: the people plan and the resource plan. The resource plan covers seven areas:

- human resources;
- medium-term financial strategy;
- assets (estates, fleet, and equipment);
- updating and bringing in new technologies;
- procurement;
- collaborations and partnerships; and
- climate change.

It lays out funding and spending for each area in detail.

The brigade's plans are built on sound scenarios. They help make sure the brigade is sustainable and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. Forecasts are based on three scenarios, ranging from a starting point to reasonable worst-case scenario. Plans are in place for possible outcomes, including the use of the budget support fund to adapt to reduced income and/or increased costs. Governance arrangements include internal and external auditing, for which no issues have been identified for the management of financial controls.

Productivity has improved through good understanding of capacity

We are encouraged to see the improvements the brigade has made since the last inspection. We are pleased to see that the brigade's arrangements for managing performance clearly link resource use to the CRMP and the brigade's strategic priorities. The brigade has set a challenging target of 20,000 safer home visits per year, to align station-based activity. The brigade has also identified a problem with deliberate fire setting in the local area and has allocated resources accordingly to help tackle this problem.

The service has identified the contribution it will make towards the national productivity target (using an extra 3 percent of national [wholetime firefighter](#) capacity to carry out additional prevention and protection work). It has calculated its contribution based on its own understanding of the opportunities to better use wholetime firefighter capacity. It also considers its RBIP and the people most at risk from fire in its contribution.

The brigade has already achieved an 8 percent increase in time dedicated to prevention work and a 1 percent increase in fire protection work through carrying out a thorough analysis of wholetime firefighter productivity and capacity. It will continue to use this analysis to make improvements.

The brigade has also implemented new ways of working. For example, the brigade has introduced tablets for conducting safer home visits, and has moved to a web-based system to avoid duplication of recording protection work. It also has a new business platform, called the Bridge, which is designed to improve the sharing of business information throughout the brigade.

The brigade had to adapt its working practices because of the pandemic, and these are still part of its day-to-day activity. These changes include carrying out virtual assessments, using online self-assessment tools for prevention work, and using video conferencing software to carry out remote fire safety audits, where appropriate.

Collaboration is focused and targeted, but the improvements to the evaluation process need to become established

We are encouraged to see Cleveland Fire Brigade begin to make improvements to how it evaluates collaborations and partnerships. But these improvements are yet to become established.

We are pleased to see the brigade meets its statutory duty to collaborate, and routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. For example, during the pandemic, the brigade collaborated with the NHS and clinical commissioning groups to provide vaccinators and marshals to support the rollout of the vaccine for COVID-19.

Collaborative work is aligned to the priorities in the brigade's CRMP. For example, the brigade is part of a collaborative effort in the North East to fund academic research into the high levels of arson in the area. The brigade has also seconded an officer to Cleveland Police to help with the investigation of deliberate fires, as this is a priority in the CRMP.

Occupational health services are provided in collaboration with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, to reduce costs and help achieve value for money.

During our last inspection, we identified that the brigade needed to improve how it monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. Since our last inspection, the brigade has worked towards the development of a collaboration and partnership framework called Better Together.

At the time of inspection, the brigade was recruiting a partnership and evaluation manager. We look forward to seeing this role established by the time of our next inspection.

The brigade has improved its business continuity arrangements

We are encouraged to see the improvements the brigade has made since our last inspection. The brigade has good continuity arrangements in place for areas where threats and risks are considered high. These threats and risks are regularly reviewed and tested so that staff are aware of the arrangements and their associated responsibilities.

The brigade has developed a new business continuity system, which is aligned to the international standard ISO 22301. It also has a new framework and policy for business continuity that details how to deal with a range of threats and risks, as well as auditing, testing and reviewing.

Encouragingly, we saw evidence of how lessons learned from the pandemic had informed the new business continuity arrangements, and how the plans have been tested. The plans also include a range of scenarios for managing industrial action.

The brigade has sound financial management arrangements in place

There are regular reviews to consider all the brigade's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. And this scrutiny makes sure the brigade gets value for money. External auditors give assurance that the brigade is providing value for money. The external report for 2020/21 highlights areas of sound financial and risk management, and recognises the governance arrangements in place for financial management and planning.

The brigade has a proven record of making savings and efficiencies, which have caused minimal disruption to the public. Between 2018/19 to 2021/22, the brigade has made total savings of £1.6m. Savings in the main have come from a senior management re-structure, reductions in the [control room](#), alternative staffing of special appliances and by crewing fire engines with four firefighters.

The brigade 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 brigade compares prices when procuring for the fleet, to make sure best value is achieved and comparable to other fire and rescue services. Procurement thresholds have recently been reviewed and new measures for key performance indicators and return on investment have been introduced. All budget holders have also received training on procurement and contract management to help comply with the relevant regulations.

The brigade also runs a procurement clinic. This provides support to managers on handling budgetary responsibilities, and on purchasing and procuring goods and services.

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



Good (2019: Good)

Cleveland Fire Brigade is good at making the service 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 they should invest in better services for the public.

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

Good financial planning is supporting value for money

The brigade has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its main or significant financial risks. For example, the brigade has flexibility within its budget support fund to support the asset management plan. It can allocate up to £2.8m from the budget support fund of £5.7m. Or it can use the full amount to absorb any financial shocks that are greater than forecast, such as high inflation or higher pay awards.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic, and prudent, and take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. The medium-term financial strategy for 2022/23 to 2025/26 takes full account of the current financial position, as well as national uncertainty about pay settlements, inflationary pressures and funding formulas.

The brigade has a good record of making savings, and the CRMP allows for further savings to be realised, if needed, based on strategic priorities. The budget support fund can be used to support the introduction of longer-term savings if future funding proves not to be enough to cover increased costs. These options are considered in the resource plan, and are consistent with the priorities in the CRMP.

Plans for use of reserves are detailed and proportionate

The brigade has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves. The plan for the use of ear-marked reserves falls into three categories:

- Funding for planned expenditure on projects and programmes over the period of the medium-term financial strategy, for which £6.9m is allocated. This allocation includes £2.9m for a budget support fund, to cover shortfalls in the revenue budget and manage financial risks and uncertainties.
- Funding for specific projects and programmes beyond the current planning period, for which £1.4m is allocated.
- General contingency funds for payments that fall within the [fire authority's](#) insurance policy excesses, for which £620,000 is allocated.

Plans for fleet and estates are linked to and supported by the CRMP

The brigade's estate and fleet strategies have clear links to the CRMP. The strategies are listed in the resource plan for 2022 to 2026 and are fully aligned to the CRMP for the same period. Both strategies exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The brigade has a fleet replacement programme that has seen seven new appliances on the road in 2022. These new vehicles are cleaner and greener and therefore cheaper to run than older vehicles.

There have been improvements to the estate, including four fire stations being demolished and re-built on the same piece of land and eight fire stations being re-modelled. Three more refurbishments are underway, including two on-call stations.

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

The brigade is improving its use of technology

Making the best use of technology was an area we identified for improvement in our last inspection, and we are encouraged to see the improvements the brigade has made since then. The brigade has delivered its previous strategy for information technology and has actively changed its plans and priorities for investing in technology for the future. It has made updating and bringing in new technologies a priority within the resource plan.

It also seeks to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology. The brigade is making use of data analysis tools to measure capacity more effectively and improve productivity even further. The use of video conferencing software has also improved efficiency by reducing travel times and costs for meetings.

The brigade has put in place the capacity and capability needed to achieve sustainable transformation, and it routinely seeks opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency and provide better services in the future. The brigade is working with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service on joint procurement to upgrade their respective control rooms for the introduction of the [Emergency Services Network's critical communications system](#).

The brigade has good arrangements to generate income to fund community activities

The brigade actively considers and exploits opportunities for generating extra income, with two main areas for supporting prevention activities and social causes.

One route is through commissioned services, where the brigade receives up to £300,000 each year to provide services on behalf of partners. This work focuses on working with young people and providing a befriending service to lonely and elderly residents who may be vulnerable.

The other area for income generation is through a separate CIC called CFB Risk Management.

The CFB Risk Management CIC was significantly impacted by the pandemic in 2020/21 which affected sales and profitability, with turnover and gross profit before tax decreasing. But it is recovering with turnover and gross profit before tax now increasing. The CIC's forecast sales revenue for 2022/23 is anticipated to be around £2.7m. Governance arrangements for the CIC are sound. The board of directors comprises three internal members of staff and five external members, which provides a good level of internal and external scrutiny. The fire authority's financial liability is limited to £1, and legal monitoring makes sure that any conflicts of interest are declared, and that it complies with state aid rules.

A minimum of 65 percent of the CIC's profits must go to social causes to benefit the community. This is achieved through an arm's-length charity which receives the profits and provides the benefits. For example, it established a team of around 100 volunteers to carry out prevention work, mainly through leafleting and fully funded youth employment schemes. Any residual funding is directed towards charities for homeless children.

People



How well does the service look after its people?



Good

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 (EDI) are part of everything the service does and its staff understand their role in promoting it. Overall, Cleveland Fire Brigade is good at looking after its people.

Overall, the brigade has made good improvements to how it looks after its people, and we are positive about its future efforts.

The brigade has continued to establish its already recognised values and to improve the culture of the organisation. This has been partly achieved through changes to the way it identifies and develops high-potential staff, including recruiting people from outside Cleveland Fire Brigade.

We also recognise and are encouraged by the effort the brigade has made in the areas for improvement from our last inspection, including tackling barriers to equality to make its workforce more representative of the communities it serves. But we also note that work to attract members of ethnic minority groups has yet to show real results.

The brigade has also made improvements to how it records its staff's skills and training. But in this area, too, more work is needed to give staff and managers full confidence in the tools used for recording and reporting on training and competence. We look forward to seeing this achieved in our next inspection.

Promoting the right values and culture



Good (2019: Good)

Cleveland Fire Brigade 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 promoted effectively, and staff should have access to a range of well-being support that can be tailored to their individual needs.

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

Brigade values are established, and its culture continues to improve

The brigade continues to have well-defined values that are understood by staff. Behaviours that reflect brigade values are shown at all levels of the brigade. According to our staff survey, 92 percent of respondents (149 of 162) agreed that line managers consistently demonstrated the brigade's values and 93 percent (150 of 162) agreed that colleagues demonstrated values. We are encouraged by the cultural improvements the brigade continues to make. The brigade has carried out an analysis of its values to implement the new national Core Code of Ethics. This work is complete, and the brigade values are now aligned to the national code.

Senior leaders act as role models. For example, in our staff survey 79 percent of respondents (128 of 162) agreed that senior leaders consistently modelled the brigade's values. This view was supported by staff we spoke with, who reported improved visibility of senior leaders since our last inspection, and a greater willingness by them to listen to staff problems.

There is a positive working culture throughout the brigade, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they encounter them. Staff told us during inspection that they felt able to challenge and would be listened to, without detriment to themselves. This was reflected in our staff survey where 64 percent of respondents (105 of 164) agreed they could challenge ideas without fear of detriment. While these numbers are encouraging, the brigade still has work to do to continue building staff trust and confidence.

There is good provision of and access to support for workforce well-being

The brigade continues to have well understood and effective well-being policies in place that are available to staff. A significant range of well-being support is available to support both physical and mental health. For example, the brigade provides access to the following facilities for staff:

- occupational health;
- specialist counselling;
- peer support;
- physiotherapy;
- a 24/7 employee assistance provider;
- [trauma risk management](#) advisors; and
- a staff-well-being app, which offers advice and signposting and was developed in-house.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff well-being. These include fitness advisors, line manager well-being conversations, and access to guidance for menopause, neurodiversity and transgender matters.

Most staff understand and have confidence in the support available for their mental and physical well-being. From our staff survey, 93 percent of respondents (153 of 164) reported they can access services to support their mental well-being and 95 percent of respondents (156 of 164) are confident that well-being services would be offered following a traumatic incident.

While these numbers are encouraging, some staff and managers told us they were frustrated by how difficult it is to access some occupational health services. The brigade is aware of these issues, and we expect it to continue working to resolve these matters with its external provider.

The brigade has a strong health and safety culture, but staff confidence needs rebuilding

The brigade has effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. In our staff survey, 98 percent of respondents (160 of 164) agreed they understood the policies and procedures to work safely. These policies and procedures are readily available and effectively promoted to all staff. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents (155 of 164) agreed they had access to the right equipment to do their job safely.

But staff representative bodies have mixed levels of confidence in the health and safety approach taken by the brigade. The union that represents staff in support roles agreed that the brigade manages health and safety well, but another trade union didn't.

At the time of inspection, the brigade was under notice of prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive for a serious incident during the preparation phase of a training exercise in 2020. We saw how the brigade has responded to this accident, changing how it carries out live training exercises. But confidence in risk assessments and procedures needs to be rebuilt following this incident.

Plans to improve the safe cleaning of fire kit need to be progressed

During this inspection we found kit worn by firefighters for operational activity (known as fire kit) is mostly laundered at fire stations by staff. The brigade is piloting a managed system at several on-call stations, with plans to change to a fully managed system in the future. The safe and effective laundering of fire kit is a national area of discussion, and the brigade needs to make sure its arrangements are safe and effective.

The brigade has relatively low numbers of staff on secondary and dual contracts

The brigade monitors staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts to make sure they comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours. At the end of March 2021, 8.8 percent of the brigade's wholetime firefighters (28 of 319) had dual contracts within the brigade. This is one of the lowest rates within England.

External secondary employment was also among the lowest rates in England, at 6.6 percent of wholetime firefighters (21 of 319). Staff who have secondary employment contracts have these reviewed every year during their annual staff appraisal, and consent by the brigade can be withdrawn if required.

Good application of absence management procedures

As part of our inspection, we reviewed some case files to consider how the brigade manages and supports staff through absence including sickness, parental leave and special leave.

We found there are clear processes in place to manage absences for all staff. There is also guidance for managers, who are confident in the process. Absences are generally managed well and in accordance with policy. Managers receive training in managing staff absence, and this was evident from our review of case of files.

Overall, the brigade has seen an increase in staff absences over the last financial year (2021/22). They rose from an average of 7.9 days absence per member of staff to 11.9 days according to data given to us by the brigade.

But when adjusted for staff absence due to COVID-19, the average number of days of sickness absence in 2021/22 was 9.78 according to data given to us by the brigade during inspection.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Good (2019: Good)

Cleveland Fire Brigade is good at getting the right people with the right skills.

Fire and rescue services should have a workforce plan in place that is linked to their [integrated risk management plans \(IRMPs\)](#), sets out their current and future skills requirements and addresses capability gaps. They should supplement this with a culture of continuous improvement that includes appropriate learning and development throughout the service.

Area for improvement

The brigade should make sure the system to record and monitor operational staff competence is aligned to its policy for maintaining skills and knowledge.

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

The brigade has strong workforce plans in place for skills and capabilities

The brigade has good workforce planning in place. This makes sure skills and capabilities align with what is needed to effectively deliver the CRMP. The brigade has a detailed workforce plan for 2022 to 2026 called the people plan. This has full details of workforce planning for the duration of the CRMP, and is aligned to the CRMP's priorities for the next four years.

Workforce and succession planning is subject to consistent scrutiny in the form of monthly and quarterly meetings with the executive leadership team, where progress is monitored and any challenges to the plan are identified.

Most staff told us that they could access the training they need to be effective in their role. The brigade's training plans make sure they can maintain competence and capability effectively. Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents (129 of 164) agreed they had received sufficient training to do their job effectively, while 68 percent of respondents (112 of 164) agreed they are satisfied with the level of learning and development available to them.

The brigade's recording and monitoring of operational competence needs more improvement

The recording and monitoring of operational competence were identified as areas for improvement in our last full inspection. Although we found how the brigade records and monitors operational competence has since improved, more is needed.

The brigade monitors staff competence through its training database. The database highlights the maintenance of competence through a traffic-light system of red, amber and green (the RAG rating). We found inconsistencies between the RAG rating system and the brigade's policies for maintenance of competence. We also found inconsistencies between the way the RAG rating applies to firefighting roles when compared to supervisory roles. This also didn't align to brigade policy.

We also found staff in development weren't routinely recorded on the database, instead relying on a paper-based system to record their development. These are areas where the brigade needs to continue to improve, to provide a reliable recording system to monitor training and competence effectively.

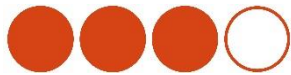
The brigade has a positive culture for learning and improvement

A culture of continuous improvements is promoted throughout the brigade and staff are encouraged to learn and develop. For example, the brigade has introduced ambitious plans to qualify all new firefighters up to Level 3 skills and knowledge in fire safety. All managers are expected to achieve an accredited qualification aligned to the NFCC framework for leadership and management.

The brigade is externally verified for its firefighter development programme and received a positive report from the assessor in May 2022.

In our staff survey, 89 percent of respondents (146 of 164) stated they had a conversation with their manager about their learning and development at least once a year, and 82 percent of respondents (130 of 158) agreed this conversation was useful.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

Cleveland Fire Brigade is good 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 EDI is firmly understood and demonstrated throughout the organisation. This includes successfully taking steps to remove inequality and making progress to improve fairness, diversity and inclusion at all levels of the service. It should proactively seek and respond to feedback from staff and make sure any action taken is meaningful.

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

The brigade is good at staff engagement but needs to continue with improvements

The brigade has developed several ways to engage with staff on issues and decisions that affect them. This includes methods to build all-staff awareness of fairness and diversity, as well as targeted engagement to identify matters that affect different staff groups. For example, the brigade has four staff network groups. These are:

- the cultural diversity group, which represents staff from Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority groups;
- the women's network group;
- the disability group; and
- the LGBTQ+ group.

We saw how these groups have supported the brigade in its efforts to promote itself as a diverse employer through a range of ways including:

- [positive action](#) days;
- information and messaging on the brigade website;
- attending community and cultural events, such as the Pride event; and
- attending schools, colleges, and fetes.

Representative bodies and staff associations reported that the brigade engages with them on a regular basis. But the representative body for operational staff reported a less positive experience than the representative body for staff in non-operational roles.

We also heard from on-call staff who described limited engagement over recent changes to on-call contracts.

The brigade needs to continue to work with all staff groups and representative bodies to make sure they feel equally listened to and engaged with.

Allegations of bullying, harassment and discrimination need to be tackled

Staff have a good understanding of what bullying, harassment and discrimination are, and the negative effect these have on colleagues and the organisation.

In this inspection, 10 percent of staff (16 of 164) who responded to our survey said they had been subject to bullying or harassment and 12 percent (20 of 164) said they had been subject to discrimination over the past 12 months. Of these respondents, only seven people had reported bullying or harassment and only nine had reported the discrimination.

Staff told us they are trained and clear about what to do if they encounter inappropriate behaviour. But our survey suggests the brigade needs to do more to manage reports of bullying, harassment and discrimination, and to build trust so staff feel safe making reports.

The brigade has made good improvements to promote positive action, but still needs to do more to attract staff from underrepresented groups

There is an open, fair, and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for Cleveland Fire Brigade. The brigade has an effective system to understand and remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. For example, it invested in a new HR information system to help with the analysis of data, including information on [protected characteristics](#).

The brigade has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment processes so that they are fair and understood by potential applicants. It has developed its approach to positive action, which is now underpinned with four new objectives. These are:

- to identify and remove barriers;
- to enhance the brand of Cleveland Fire Brigade;
- to provide meaningful development opportunities; and
- to monitor workforce trends.

The brigade has also invested in an HR advisor for EDI. It has a positive action recruitment team that makes use of recruitment ambassadors from throughout the workforce, including recently retired staff.

Its recruitment policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. Recruitment opportunities are advertised both internally and externally, including opportunities for middle and senior management roles. The brigade has revised its policy for residency requirements to allow more flexibility and a wider range of applicants for operational roles. This has already been recognised by staff at all levels as having helped to improve the culture of the brigade.

The brigade has made some improvements in increasing staff diversity with women, but not with staff from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The number of staff who self-declared as being from an ethnic minority background fell from 11 members of staff in 2016/17 to 5 in 2020/21.

During the same period, the number of women in the whole workforce rose from 108 (18.4 percent of the workforce) to 116 (20.5 of the workforce). The number of women in firefighting roles has increased from 19 (4.3 percent of firefighters) in 2016/17, to 28 (6.7 percent of firefighters) in 2020/21.

For firefighting roles, the number of staff from an ethnic minority background has fallen from 7 to 3 staff between 2017 and 2021.

The brigade has improved how it promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion, but on-call staff don't have equal access to roles they are qualified for

The brigade has improved its approach to EDI and is making sure it can offer the right services to its communities and support staff with protected characteristics. For example, the brigade has four community hubs that support the brigade's work with specific communities, such as Asian communities and LGBTQ+ communities, in schools and colleges.

Cleveland Fire Brigade have developed a new brand to promote recruitment through positive action. The brand is called 'In' with examples such as 'Join In' and 'In Shape', and is intended to attract people from underrepresented groups into the brigade and support them through the selection process. The brigade's staff network groups also support its recruitment campaigns and selection processes.

It has an effective process in place to assess equality impact. Our inspection found a comprehensive approach to equality impact assessments and people impact assessments, with all published policies and procedures having assessments in date and completed.

We saw the brigade supports the direct transfer of on-call firefighters, crew and watch managers to the wholetime duty system, in accordance with its recruitment and selection policy. However, this policy only helps promotion within the same duty systems. This approach is inefficient as it means trained, on-call crew and watch managers must re-join the brigade as wholetime firefighters. The brigade should consider this to improve consistency, fairness and efficiency.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Good (2019: Good)

Cleveland Fire Brigade is good 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 staff and improving diversity into leadership roles.

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

Performance management systems are active and valued by staff

There is a good performance management system in place which allows the brigade to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff. For example, staff have an annual appraisal with their line manager where performance is discussed, as well as their ambitions for development within role or beyond. This discussion is in addition to the well-being conversation that is offered on an annual basis. The well-being conversation isn't compulsory.

In our staff survey, 80 percent of respondents (132 of 164) reported they had had a personal development review in the past 12 months, but data from the brigade shows that how consistently staff appraisals are completed varies depending on which part of the workforce staff belong to. While 91 percent of wholetime firefighters had had an annual appraisal completed as of 31 March 2022, this fell to 62 percent for on-call staff.

Our staff survey suggests most respondents find that when appraisals do take place, they are useful for their performance and development, with 81 percent of respondents (107 of 132) who had had one in the previous 12 months agreeing the discussion was useful to them.

Processes for promotion and progression are fair and comprehensive

The brigade has put considerable effort into developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair and understood by staff. The process is reviewed on an annual basis when staff from Cleveland Fire Brigade and external candidates are invited to apply for an assessment process. The process uses a combination of industry standard, psychometric and competence assessments, as well as assessing incident command skills for operational roles.

The promotion and progression policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. The brigade has effective succession planning processes in place that allow it to effectively manage the career pathways of its staff, including roles requiring specialist skills.

Selection processes are managed consistently, with staff from human resources having oversight of all processes for consistency. Temporary promotions are used appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps, as well as supporting staff development.

The brigade has improved at identifying, developing, and supporting talent and leadership skills at all levels

Identifying, developing, and supporting high-talent and aspiring leaders was an area for improvement we identified in Cleveland in our last full inspection.

The brigade has now developed an integrated talent management framework, which applies to every member of staff. This framework is one of four main areas within the brigade's people plan aimed at supporting the development of talent from recruitment through to retention and transition into other roles. The framework is fully aligned to the CRMP.

Specific schemes and support for staff include aligning leadership and management roles with the NFCC leadership framework and with the NFCC's core learning pathways for development.

The brigade funds two temporary posts at station-manager level to help staff develop from supervisory to middle manager roles.

The brigade advertises all talent and leadership opportunities both internally and externally. It has revised its policy on local residence to attract a wider pool of talent, so staff no longer must live in Cleveland when on duty.

January 2023 | © HMICFRS 2023

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs