

Fire & Rescue Service

Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19

An inspection of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service



Contents

About this inspection	1
Service in numbers	2
Overview	4
Effectiveness	7
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	14
Responding to fires and other emergencies	17
Responding to national risks	21
Efficiency	23
How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure?	24
Summary	24
Making best use of resources	25
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	28
People	30
How well does the service look after its people?	31
Summary	31
Promoting the right values and culture	32
Getting the right people with the right skills	34
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	36
Managing performance and developing leaders	37
Annex A – About the data	39
Annex B – Fire and rescue authority governance	45

About this inspection

This is the first time that HMICFRS has inspected fire and rescue services across England. Our focus is on the service they provide to the public, and the way they use the resources available. The inspection assesses how effectively and efficiently Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service prevents, protects the public against and responds to fires and other emergencies. We also assess how well it looks after the people who work for the service.

In carrying out our inspections of all 45 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. After taking all the evidence into account, we apply a graded judgment for each of the three questions.

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**.

Service in numbers



Public perceptions

Devon and Somerset England

Perceived effectiveness of service Public perceptions survey (June/July 2018)	87%	86%
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Response

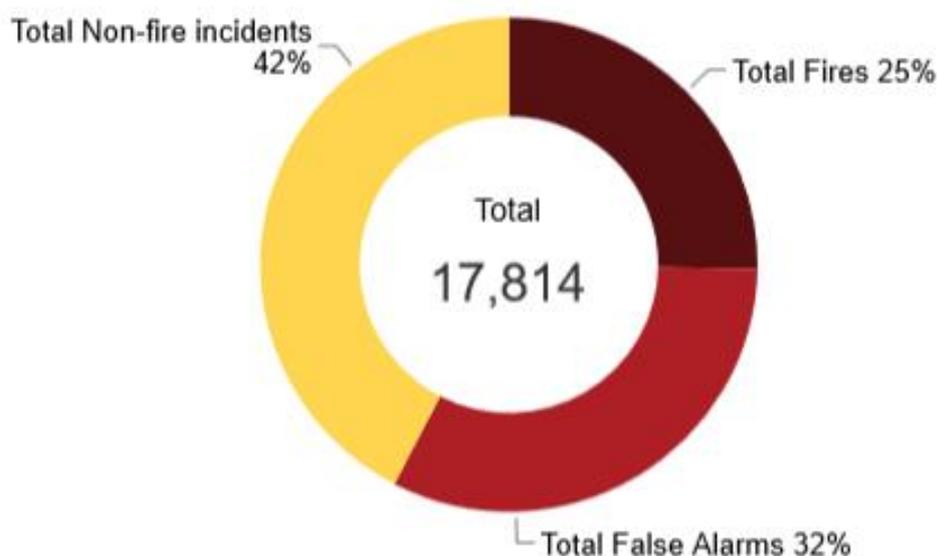
Devon and Somerset England

Incidents attended per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 December 2018	10.2	10.4
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Home fire risk checks carried out by FRS per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2018	6.2	10.4
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Fire safety audits per 100 known premises 12 months to 31 March 2018	0.7	3.0
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Incidents attended in the 12 months to 31 December 2018





Cost

Devon and Somerset

England

Firefighter cost per person per year
12 months to 31 March 2018

£23.89

£22.38



Workforce

Devon and Somerset

England

Number of firefighters per 1,000 population
As at 31 March 2018

0.9

0.6

Five-year change in workforce
As at 31 March 2013 compared with 31 March 2018

-14%

-14%

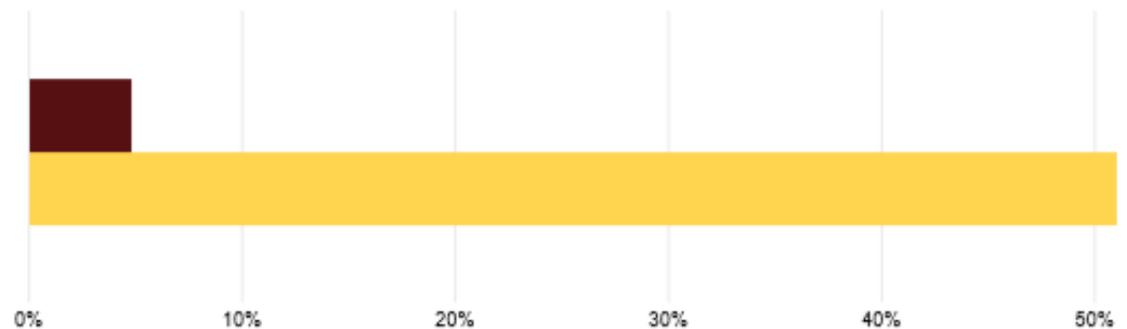
Percentage of wholetime firefighters
As at 31 March 2018

37%

70%

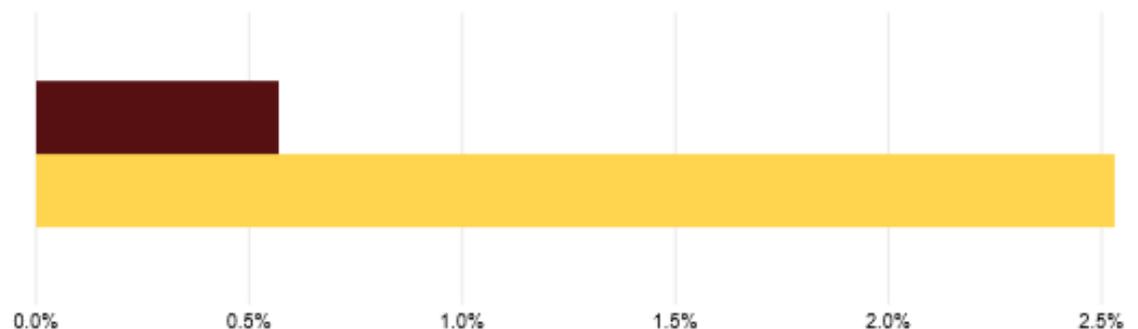
Percentage of female firefighters as at 31 March 2018

● Female firefighters ● Female residential population



Percentage of black, Asian and minority ethnic firefighters as at 31 March 2018

● BAME Firefighters ● BAME residential population



Please refer to annex A for full details on data used.

Overview

 Effectiveness	 Good
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	 Good
Preventing fires and other risks	 Good
Protecting the public through fire regulation	 Good
Responding to fires and other emergencies	 Requires improvement
Responding to national risks	 Good
 Efficiency	 Requires improvement
Making best use of resources	 Requires improvement
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	 Good



People



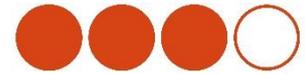
Requires improvement

Promoting the right values and culture



Requires improvement

Getting the right people with the right skills



Good

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement

Managing performance and developing leaders



Requires improvement

Overall summary of inspection findings

We are satisfied with some aspects of the performance of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (FRS). But there are several areas where it needs to make improvements.

Devon & Somerset FRS is good at providing an effective service to the public. It is good at:

- understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies;
- preventing fires and other risks;
- protecting the public through fire regulation; and
- responding to national risks.

It does, however, require improvement in how it responds to fires and other emergencies.

The service's efficiency requires improvement. We judged the way it uses its resources to require improvement. But the FRS is good at making its services affordable now and in future.

The way that Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service looks after its people requires improvement. In particular it requires improvement at:

- promoting the right values and culture;
- ensuring fairness and promoting diversity; and
- managing performance and developing leaders.

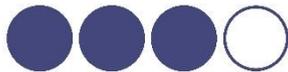
But it is good at getting the right people with the right skills.

Overall, we would like to see improvements in the year ahead.

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 will target its fire prevention and protection activities to those who are at greatest risk from fire. It will make sure businesses comply with fire safety legislation. When the public calls for help, the fire and rescue service should respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service's overall effectiveness is good.

The service has a good understanding of local risk. It uses a wide range of information to determine risk, including population data and incident data. It uses the [fire service emergency cover \(FSEC\) toolkit](#) to identify highest risk areas and to predict the likely demand on the service. The service uses its operational risk information system (ORIS) to manage site-specific risk information. The management and oversight of the system is good, and most risk information is within its review date.

The service has an effective approach to prevention. Both its community safety strategy and delivery plan are clear about where the greatest risks are and the priority the service should give each risk. Community safety technicians carry out prevention activity in people's homes. The technicians complete comprehensive [safe and well visits](#) and are trained to deal with a range of problems. But we found little evidence of any quality assurance to understand whether visits are consistent and done in line with staff training.

The service protects the public effectively through fire regulation. Specialist staff and trained operational crews carry out fire safety audits. Some operational staff, however, were unclear about their role. The service should also improve its arrangements for providing specialist protection advice out of hours. It is on target to inspect its identified high-risk premises within three years.

How the service responds to emergencies should be improved. Crews and incident commanders are well trained and the service has effective systems in place to review and manage fire engine availability. But, despite these systems, matching staff availability to resource requirements remains a challenge and [on-call](#) engine availability is a problem. Nor is the service meeting its response standard.

More positively, the service has a joint [mobilising](#) function with Hampshire and Dorset & Wiltshire fire and rescue services. This makes sure there is an effective and efficient cross-border response as the quickest resource will be mobilised. Control room operators all follow the same training programme and operational procedures across the services have been aligned.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Good

All fire and rescue services should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks. They should also prevent and mitigate these risks.

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

Understanding local and community risk

The service has a good understanding of local risk. It has consulted with the public to create an [integrated risk management plan](#) (IRMP). The service held engagement events in its four local council areas to understand how the public sees the service. It is developing an engagement framework to consult and engage with the public as part of its Safer Together programme.

The service recognises some groups of people may be hard to reach. However, it has started to build relationships with partners, like mental health agencies, that represent [vulnerable](#) groups.

The service uses a wide range of information to inform its IRMP. This includes population data, incident data and data from credit reporting company Experian.

There are many houses with thatched roofs in the area, so the service works with Heritage England to manage this risk. All this information is reviewed and refreshed every year to ensure the service has an accurate picture of current risks and emerging themes.

The service uses modelling to better understand risk. It uses the FSEC toolkit to identify areas most at risk and the times that incidents are likely to increase.

Having an effective risk management plan

The IRMP meets the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)'s requirements. It covers the service's assessment of risk and risks from both local and national registers. The service uses its IRMP to explain the area's key risks to the public. Risks and categories that the service has defined are:

- fires and injury – accidental dwelling fires, ageing population, serious fire in commercial premises, deliberate fire, [heritage property](#) fires;
- road traffic collisions – road collisions causing death or serious injury;
- health and wellbeing factors – people who have two or more of the seven identified risk factors are more likely to be at risk from fire, increasing demand for the service;
- environment – flooding, hazardous materials site and incidents;
- rescues – height, confined space and entrapments, drowning and open water safety; and
- resources – unavailability of on-call appliances, distribution of service delivery resources, attending too many false alarms.

For each risk, the service records what it is doing to mitigate it. It also explains what it will do to reduce it further through either prevention, protection or response activities. It then describes the expected results of these activities.

Maintaining risk information

Firefighters need up-to-date information about complex buildings with hazards such as chemicals. This helps them respond effectively with the right people and equipment if there is an incident. Firefighters get this information from [mobile data terminals](#) (MDTs) mounted in fire engines.

The service uses its ORIS to manage site-specific risk information. As at 31 December 2018, the service had 767 risk sites. The service's recommended review period for risk sites varies depending on several factors. For example, the level of risk information (from a low-risk site to somewhere that needs a multi-agency plan) and any vulnerable people there. In the nine months to 31 December 2018, the service had completed 592 risk site visits.

The majority of risk information held was within its review date. If sites weren't reviewed, the service recorded why. The service manages and oversees the system well.

Operational staff at [wholetime stations](#) are responsible for visiting sites and gathering or reviewing site-specific risk information. On-call staff don't do the same range of site visits.

However, the service has trained some staff to carry out risk visits. These risk inspectors have risk visits given to them by the central ORIS administration team. Inspectors were given examples of on-call staff visiting sites to familiarise themselves and ensure crews were aware of risks.

The service has systems to communicate risk information. We saw risk information passed on using a variety of methods. These included face-to-face handovers between [watches](#), briefings at the start of shifts and drill sessions, and notice boards.

If prevention or protection staff see any risks during a visit they can tell [fire control](#) who will update the mobilising system. For example, if a resident is hoarding belongings.

This information will then be available to crews if they go to an incident there.

Preventing fires and other risks



Good

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service is good at preventing fires and other risks. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself that the home fire safety checks that are conducted by staff are consistent.
- The service should evaluate whether prevention campaigns can be better supported by operational crews.

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

Prevention strategy

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service has an effective prevention strategy. The Community Safety Strategy and Delivery Plan is clear about where the greatest risks are and the priority the service should give each risk. The strategy explains how the service will allocate resources to prevention activities. The service has created service maps describing the four levels of service the community can expect. These are:

- universal/preventative services – aimed at people, communities and businesses that actively address their risk and support others to manage theirs;
- early support services – aimed at people, communities and businesses that are not proactively addressing their risk and need some guidance and education to help them;
- target services – aimed at people, communities and businesses that need support to start addressing and reducing risks; and
- specialist services – aimed at people, communities and businesses that need direct intervention from the service to reduce risk.

The service uses defined risk factors to ensure it concentrates its work on members of the community who may be most vulnerable to fire. These risks factors are: living alone, alcohol, prescription or illegal drugs, limited mobility, poor housekeeping, smoking and mental health.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service did 10,864 safe and well checks (known in the service as [home fire safety checks](#)). That is 6.2 checks per 1,000 people – below the England rate of 10.4. These checks include fire safety activities like identifying and reducing fire risks and fitting fire alarms. Checks also include welfare-related activities such as advice on health prevention, social welfare and how to avoid trips and falls. The service targets checks at people it has identified as at higher risk, such as the elderly (65+). This was reflected in the data. In the year to 31 March 2018, 65.4 percent of checks were targeted at households occupied by an elderly person, above the England rate of 54.1 percent. The service targeted 20.4 percent of checks at households occupied by a person declaring a disability, slightly below the England rate of 24.7 percent.

The service runs a contact centre where members of the community and partner organisations can request a home fire safety check. During the call, requests are risk assessed to find out if they meet the service's defined risk factors.

We found that all referrals made to the service had been assessed against the criteria. The service then targets interventions using the most appropriate resources. They range from sending standard letters to sending trained technicians to do a home fire safety check.

Community safety technicians carry out prevention activity in people's homes. The technicians do comprehensive safe and well visits and are trained to deal with a range of issues. If a resident has more complex needs, technicians can refer them to a specialist agency. A central team is responsible for allocating the visits.

We found little evidence of any quality assurance to understand whether home fire safety checks were consistent and done in line with staff training. The service has evaluated some of its prevention activity using an external agency. They conducted a literature and data review. Following this, the service changed the scope of one of its road safety education programmes.

Promoting community safety

Community safety information and campaigns are centrally planned and co-ordinated by the community safety team. The service follows the [National Fire Chiefs Council's](#) calendar to plan its prevention campaign activity, like road safety. The campaigns are carried out by home fire safety technicians and community safety advocates.

Staff based at fire stations don't often get involved with working with the community on prevention. Inspectors found limited local examples of operational crews hosting station events or attending schools to give fire safety information.

The service works with partner agencies to prevent fires and keep people safe. It has a range of partners, whose staff can make referrals to the service if they think someone is at risk from fire. The service gives training allowing partners to identify whether a referral for a home fire safety check is appropriate. The service could think about whether partners could do home fire safety checks on the service's behalf.

The service also works in partnership with other organisations to give safety messages. For example, water safety with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. This activity is limited. But we recognise the service has no legal responsibility to do this wider safety work.

Operational staff and community safety technicians have all had [safeguarding](#) training. Staff had a good understanding of how to identify vulnerable people and make a safeguarding referral when they needed to. The service has a dedicated safeguarding team who manage referrals and share information. Members of this team sit on local safeguarding boards. Inspectors were given examples where crews had made referrals and been given feedback on what happened next. Staff were positive about this.

The service has a fire-setter intervention programme aimed at people who show a fascination with fire. The programme gets referrals in several ways. This includes after an incident, through their website, from the police, from youth offending teams and schools. The service gives an immediate response and sends someone trained to deal with fire-setting behaviour. The person will then be put on the next fire-setter's intervention programme, if appropriate. Since January 2019, the service has referred 54 cases.

Road safety

The service is an active partner in the South West Accident Reduction Group. The group used road accident and injury data to discover that young people and motorcyclists are most at risk on the roads in Devon and Somerset. As a result, the group developed targeted campaigns. For example, the service's [Biker Down](#) campaign run with the local authorities and police.

Partners in the south west also developed the Survive to Drive campaign after an increase in incidents involving the military. The service's role in this was recognised by a national award from the Ministry of Defence.

The service is involved in partnerships to promote road safety and reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the road. However, the number of staff in fire stations actively involved in road safety prevention activity was inconsistent.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Good

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service is good at protecting the public through fire regulation. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure that operational crews are aware of their requirement to conduct fire safety checks.
- The service should ensure it has effective arrangements for providing specialist protection advice out of hours.
- The service should ensure that business engagement is conducted consistently across the service.

All fire and rescue services should assess fire risks in 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.

Risk-based approach

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service's risk-based inspection programme is informed by local risk. It meets the service's statutory requirements.

The service uses [Experian data](#) and the Fire Risk Event Database to work out which premises it will inspect in its risk-based inspection programme. This data gets refreshed every 14–16 weeks. The service assesses the data and then selects the high-risk premises that need inspecting, for risks like sleeping risks (in places such as hotels and bed and breakfasts, for example).

As at 31 December 2018, the service had identified 4,000 high-risk premises that would require a fire safety check.

The service does fire safety checks using specialist staff and [wholetime](#) operational crews. Both specialist staff and operational crews are trained to the right national standard for the premises they are likely to audit. Specialist fire safety staff will do fire safety audits at more complex premises and at premises where a fire safety check has identified there are compliance issues. The service is currently on target to inspect those premises it has identified within a three-year period.

However, those premises that require a full fire safety audit are taking longer to complete than the 28-day target the service sets. Staff told us that reduced staffing levels are part of the reason the audits aren't being done in time. As at 31 December 2018, the service reported having 31 dedicated protection staff. However, more recent data shows that as at 31 March 2019, the number had fallen to 26. This is as a result of retirements and secondments ending.

We also found some inconsistencies where wholetime staff were unsure of whether they were required to complete fire safety checks. The service will address this in its Safer Together programme.

The service can respond to fire safety complaints. However, the service can't offer an effective response to out-of-hours complaints. This is due to limited staff availability, contractual arrangements and that not all staff have the right training to respond out of hours. As a result, it has to rely on recalling officers back to duty or pay overtime to provide this cover. This can cause a delay if the service needs to restrict premises' use outside normal business hours due to the time taken to complete necessary documents. The service is currently reviewing plans to address this.

The service uses the National Fire Chiefs Council's audit form to make sure audits by specialist inspectors are consistent and robust. The service records audit information on the Community Fire Risk Management Information System database. Inspectors reviewed this database and found examples where information from audits had not been fully completed. There were also audits that had passed their due date.

The service does quality assure some of its activities. However, we found limited quality assurance of the fire safety audits that staff are completing. This means the service can't be sure audits are consistent and robust. We did see quality assurance of building control consultations and enforcement notices.

The service received 1,113 building regulation consultations between 1 April and 31 December 2018. Of these, 93.3 percent were completed within the required time. This level has remained broadly stable over the last three years.

Enforcement

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service takes a robust approach to compliance with fire safety legislation. In the year to 31 March 2018, of the 502 unsatisfactory audits (73.5 percent of all audits), the service issued:

- 428 informal notices;
- 44 [prohibition notices](#) (under Article 31);
- 45 enforcement notices (under Article 30 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RR(FS)O)); and
- 6 prosecutions for offences.

Where the service requires remedial action in premises, it works closely with building managers to make sure they take action to deal with any breaches to fire safety regulations. If the premises don't take remedial action, the service will consider [enforcement action](#).

When the service believes it is necessary to prosecute, it will hold a case conference to ensure consistency and take legal advice. One officer in the protection team will oversee any prosecutions. They will also give support to the protection officer dealing with the prosecution. The service has brought a number of prosecutions in recent years.

The service works with other enforcement agencies to share information on risk and take joint enforcement action where necessary. Members of the protection team collaborate with other services, for example, private sector housing and local authority housing where there is a memorandum of understanding in place.

Working with others

The service has a 'challenge and non-attendance' policy on incidents involving automatic fire alarms. This means it challenges callers to work out whether the alarm has been caused by a fire, or something else.

If it can't confirm a fire, depending on the time of day and type of premises, it will decide whether to send fire engines, and if so, how many. This keeps resources available for prevention and response.

The service will send a full response if a fire is confirmed. In the six months to 31 December 2018, the service received 4,448 requests for assistance to automatic fire alarms. Of these, it didn't attend 2,412 (54.2 percent).

A dedicated member of staff will contact premises that have had an automatic fire alarm call. They will discuss reasons the alarm activated and whether an informal visit is needed, or a full fire safety audit. The service operates a cost recovery scheme. They will charge an organisation when they have met a certain number of activations.

The extent the service engages with local business and large organisations is inconsistent. Locally, operational crews engage with low-risk premises as part of fire safety checks. However, wider business engagement to share compliance information and expectations isn't consistent.

The service gave examples of its business engagement events. However, when we visited, some staff said they no longer do them (while others did). The service is planning to provide business engagement centrally as part of a recent restructure.

The service runs [primary authority schemes](#) with various businesses based in the south west, including holiday and leisure organisations. Through these partnerships, fire and rescue services advise businesses on meeting environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations through one point of contact. A primary authority officer manages them centrally. The service operates these schemes based on a cost recovery model.

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should improve the availability of its on-call fire engines.
- The service should improve performance against its response standards.
- The service should assure itself that the learning from lower-level incidents is routinely being captured.

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

Managing assets and resources

The service takes a risk-based approach to responding to incidents. It has set pre-determined attendances for each of the national incident types. Its networked fire control arrangements with Hampshire and Dorset & Wiltshire fire and rescue services allow it to manage resources effectively and deploy them over the border when needed.

The service has sufficient equipment to respond to incidents that present a risk to personnel, property and the environment. As well as conventional fire engines, it has a range of vehicles that can provide specialist responses. This includes water rescue, wide area flooding and working at height.

All operational staff follow the same programme to maintain the skills they need to do their job safely. The recently introduced Training for Competence system provides staff with a programme of activities they must complete to maintain their operational competence. On-call and wholetime staff who were interviewed praised the training.

The service uses software to manage fire engine availability. This is directly linked to the control room mobilising system. For example, if on-call firefighters amend their availability, the mobilising system will automatically update. The service has also created an Operational Resource Centre (ORC) to manage crewing and appliance availability every day.

The ORC reviews appliance availability across the service. Where there is a gap in fire cover, they will arrange for staff to relocate and crew the appliance. We found this system to be effective.

Despite these systems to manage and relocate resources, matching staff availability to resource requirements remains a challenge. On-call appliance availability is an issue. Between 1 April and 31 December 2018, on-call monthly engine availability ranged from 77.2 percent to 84.2 percent against a service target of 100 percent. On occasions, there would be fire engines that would drop below 20 percent availability for a month.

The service recognises the need for improvement and has made proposals to change its current operating model.

The service has determined how many engines and staff are needed and where they should be deployed if engine availability drops beneath a certain level. The plan considers historical data, computer and data modelling.

Response

The service has done a gap analysis against their own operational procedures and [national operational guidance](#). It has identified in which areas they are 'compliant', 'partially compliant' or 'non-compliant'. The service has an action plan to implement national operational guidance. But there are no deadlines for this.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on response times by measuring the time between the call being made and the first fire engine arriving at the scene. This provides consistent data across all 45 services. However, services measure their own response times in different ways.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service's average response time to [primary fires](#) was 10 minutes and eight seconds. In the previous year it was 10 minutes 22 seconds. This improvement has been achieved by reducing average call handling and crew turnout time. The service's average response time is quicker than the average for other predominantly rural services (10 minutes 32 seconds in year to 31 March 2018).

The service has two response standards: one for residential premises and one for attending road traffic collisions. This response time includes call handling, mobilisation and travel to the incident.

The service's standard is that an engine should arrive at a fire at a residential premises within 10 minutes, and within 15 minutes for road traffic collisions. The service has not set a target percentage.

Between 1 April and 31 December 2018, the service only achieved these times in 72.4 percent of fires at residential premises, and 75.4 percent of road traffic collisions. So it didn't always meet the response times it set itself.

In the year to 31 December 2018, the service attended 10.2 incidents per 1,000 population. This compares to the England rate of 10.4 over the same period.

Devon & Somerset FRS has formed a partnership with Hampshire and Dorset & Wiltshire fire and rescue services: The Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP).

This partnership aims to provide effective joint working across the services. As part of NFSP arrangements, the three services can receive and manage emergency calls in any of their areas. This ensures that fire control staff handle emergency calls in the shortest time possible. Plus, the partnership allows the quickest appliance from any service to be mobilised to incidents. All three services can provide immediate support in a major incident or when call numbers rise due to exceptional weather (like flooding).

The service has a mixed fleet of fire engines. It operates the conventional size engine and a mix of rapid intervention and light rescue vehicles. These vehicles are different sizes and can respond more effectively in the more rural parts of the service. It also has some vehicles with a specialist capability, for example, aerial ladder platforms that support safer working at height. The service responds to certain categories of medical calls on behalf of South West Ambulance Service Trust and has dedicated vehicles for this.

Frontline fire engines have MDTs installed. These are mobile computers holding information that firefighters can use while responding to an incident. The MDT allows crews to get site-specific risk information, hydrant location, operational procedures and vehicle construction information en route or at an incident. Staff can competently access this information. To support staff, the service has developed an app, accessible on desktop computers, allowing them to practise using the MDT.

Command

Managers are assertive, confident and knowledgeable. They can command fire service assets effectively and safely at incidents and have a good understanding of incident command.

This was supported by results of our staff survey (see Annex A for more details). Of the 213 firefighters who responded, 85.9 percent agreed that the last incident they attended (where they were not the incident commander) was commanded assertively, effectively and safely.

Incident command is part of the service's 'Training for Competence' system. The service's training system shows when an incident commander needs to attend an incident command refresher so that the service can take action to ensure the individual remains competent to perform their role. A sample of service training records found that commanders had been assessed within the required two-year period.

Control room staff have a key role in managing an incident. For example, mobilising supporting resources and recording [critical incident](#) information. Control room staff are confident using their discretion to vary resources they send depending on information from the caller.

Keeping the public informed

The service uses its website to tell the public about incidents. Fire control staff are trained to update the website and social media channels. Staff that command incidents have some form of media training.

The communications team does out-of-hours media coverage. The team will be used depending on the size and type of incident. Social media use varies across the service. Some stations are more proactive than others on giving incident information and recruiting on social media. Others feel uncomfortable using it, so don't.

Control room staff showed good awareness of the service's safeguarding protocol. We were given examples where staff had made referrals. However, we found inconsistencies in how and when staff had been trained to deal with safeguarding. Some staff told us they had received training over three years ago. Others had reviewed an eLearning package recently.

We found that control staff are confident getting fire survival guidance. The fire control mobilising system gives the operator information about fire survival so they can give the right advice to callers trapped by fire.

Evaluating operational performance

The service has a system to evaluate operational performance. It also has an operational assurance process in place. This lets staff give feedback and share learning from incidents they have attended. All staff can get information to see what action the service has taken. The operational assurance team oversees the process and monitors the information submitted.

Any learning from operational debriefs is shared across the service. The operational assurance team publishes learning from debriefs in different formats. We saw examples of operational bulletins and posters showing safety information.

Staff described incidents with local [hot debriefs](#) (debriefs shortly after the incident). However, this learning wasn't routinely recorded by staff on the operational assurance system.

Operational assurance officers actively monitor incidents. The service has an established process where officers attend an incident and assess whether they will assume command or carry out operational assurance.

If an officer conducts operational assurance, they are expected to record the outcome on the operational assurance system and provide feedback to the incident commander. Staff told us that they did not always receive feedback from the attending officer.

There is evidence the service has made information available through the national joint operational learning platforms. Staff can also access any joint or national learning published through the operational assurance system.

Responding to national risks



Good

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service is good at responding to national risks. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure that its procedures for responding to terrorist-related incidents are understood by all staff and are well tested.
- The service should make sure it has effective arrangements in place to monitor service-wide and cross-border exercises.

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.

Preparedness

The service has arrangements to draw on extra resources if it needs to. This includes the conventional mutual arrangements with some of its neighbouring fire and rescue services. It can request more specialist assets and resources through the [national co-ordination and advisory framework](#). Inspectors saw examples of this. Staff showed understanding of how to request these resources.

The service can support the response to a regional or national incident. The service has a range of specialist [national resilience assets](#). These are crewed by a dedicated team. They include a high-volume pump and [urban search and rescue](#) capability. This team is also trained to respond to and deal with a marauding terrorist type attack. However, elsewhere operational personnel's understanding and awareness was limited. They couldn't describe the actions they would take if confronted by a marauding terrorist type attack.

Fire and rescue services plan exercises to test response plans, maintain competence and ensure staff are familiar with risks faced when responding to an incident. The service maintains an exercise calendar to monitor and assess the benefits and resources required at exercises. Inspectors found that exercises were not consistently carried out across the service. Some stations did exercises, others didn't.

The service has site-specific response plans for high risk sites including a [control of major accidents hazard site](#).

Working with other services

The service has a joint mobilising function with Hampshire and Dorset & Wiltshire fire and rescue services. The NFSP control rooms have the same hardware and software and can mobilise appliances and officers based on how close they are to the incident.

This ensures an effective and efficient cross-border response as the quickest resource will be mobilised. Control room operators all follow the same training programme. Operational procedures across the services have been aligned.

Risk information from all the fire and rescue services bordering Devon & Somerset is available on the MDTs. Stations train with their neighbouring stations across the border. However, data from the staff survey shows that of the 250 firefighters and support staff that responded, only 18.4 percent said they regularly train or exercise with neighbouring fire and rescue services.

Working with other agencies

The service is an active member of the [local resilience forums](#). A senior fire officer is the vice-chair of the executive group and other officers are involved in some sub groups. The local resilience forum keeps up a training schedule, which the service supports and attends training events where appropriate. The most recent was an exercise to test multi-agency response plans should an incident happen at the Glastonbury festival.

Strategic and tactical incident commanders described what they are required to do and what action they would take if they were told about a major incident. They also explained how they would communicate with other blue-light agencies.

The service is well prepared to be part of a multi-agency response to a community risk. Fire control staff were able to describe what actions are required should they be told of a marauding terrorist attack. This is supported by action notes on the mobilising system ensuring action is taken in line with national guidance. The specialist teams that respond to this type of event are well trained and have completed joint exercises with other emergency services.

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 spend money properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to its risk. It should try to keep costs down without compromising public safety. Future budgets should be based on robust and realistic assumptions. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service's overall efficiency requires improvement.

The service covers both urban and very rural areas. The stations are located based on historic levels of fire cover, despite the changing level of risk. For example, there are stations that attend fewer than two incidents a week. The service has recently launched its Safer Together programme to match resources to risk.

The service recognises it needs more resource for prevention. So, it is recruiting another ten members as home fire safety technicians. This will enable the service to offer more targeted resources. The service has been more flexible in the way it deploys staff to prevention, protection and response activities – such as using advocates. Advocates are staff members trained in prevention and protection.

Capacity at [wholetime stations](#) was not utilised efficiently. Crews must reach set targets in protection activities, but many weren't aware of them. Managers recognised that wholetime fire station staff could be more productive.

The service collaborates with Hampshire and Dorset & Wiltshire fire and rescue services. This means it can [mobilise](#) the quickest responders across county borders, faster responses to emergency calls and greater resilience and business continuity if systems fail.

The service has shown sound financial management and governance of procurement and tendering processes. All spending over £20,000 must go through an approval process. It has achieved savings to avoid budget pressures. Since 2013, it has reduced the number of [wholetime firefighters](#) (FTE) from 670 to 556.

The service has moved to smaller, lighter vehicles, which still hold a significant amount of equipment to ensure an effective response. The service calculates these vehicles hold about 90 percent of the equipment carried in a normal engine. Light response vehicles (LRVs) and rapid intervention vehicles (RIVs) cost approximately half of a standard fire engine and their lifetime running costs are more efficient. The service makes good use of national procurement frameworks to get value for money.

Making best use of resources



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service needs to assure itself that its prevention, protection and response resources are allocated to where they have identified the risk.
- The service needs to establish if operational crews are productive and used efficiently to support prevention, protection and response activities.
- The service should assure itself that it has robust business continuity plans for all aspects and functions of the service.
- The service needs to assure itself that its risk management and control process has a mechanism that allows escalation of risks to the appropriate level in the organisation.

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

How plans support objectives

The service allocates resources to prevention, protection and response. But it acknowledges more resources are given over to response. The service had 121 pumping appliances across 85 stations as at 31 March 2018, in areas that range from urban to very rural. These locations are matched to historic levels of fire cover, despite the level of risk changing. For example, there are stations that attend fewer than two incidents a week. The service has recently launched its Safer Together programme to better match resources to risk.

The budget for 2019/20 is £75m. The service needs to make savings of between £8.4m and £14.5m by 2023/24. The service had a firefighter cost per head of population of £23.89 in the year to 31 March 2018. This is higher than the England rate of £22.38 over the same period.

The service's medium-term financial plan forecasts significant budget pressures over the next five years to 2023/24. To achieve savings, the service has highlighted four main work streams to make efficiencies.

These are: service delivery, people development, fleet and equipment, and digital transformation. The service hasn't assessed what the financial savings will be or any other benefits. However, the service has made progress on these four work streams.

The service recognises it needs more resource for prevention. So, it is recruiting another ten members as home fire safety technicians, increasing the staff total to 30. This will enable the service to offer more targeted resources. The funding for these posts came from removing some middle manager posts when the service restructured.

Productivity and ways of working

The service has made improvements in its capacity and capability to achieve change and operational performance. The service changed its organisational structure to a model reflecting the functions it carries out. Staff said that there is a lack of understanding and awareness of the new structure. The service recognised that it carried out the restructure with little project governance. Since then, the service has invested in programme management and project officers to ensure any future change programmes achieve the right results. The service has used this approach in the Safer Together programme.

The service has been more flexible in the way it deploys staff to prevention, protection and response activities – such as using advocates. Advocates are staff members trained in prevention and protection. They provide [home fire safety visits](#), business fire safety checks and educational visits. The service can use them on a flexible basis.

The service has also set up a crewing pool. This provides a pool of people who have volunteered to travel around the service and work at stations where there may not be enough crew.

The service allocates resources to prevention, protection and response activities. But capacity on wholetime stations was not utilised efficiently. The service uses community safety technicians to provide home fire safety checks. Operational crews are not required to do any. Their focus is to undertake business safety checks and visit risk sites to get site-specific information.

Wholetime crews must reach certain targets in these activities. However, staff weren't fully aware of these targets. Sometimes, staff told us that they thought business safety checks had stopped. Managers recognised that targets for business fire safety checks were inconsistent across the service and that on wholetime fire stations staff could be more productive.

Crewing pool staff allocated to work at a station are meant to carry out specific duties there. We found productivity was mixed. Some staff completed tasks allocated to them. Others didn't. The service monitors this. However, it hasn't taken action to make sure these staff are productive.

Collaboration

The service meets its statutory duty to consider emergency service collaboration and has a system in place to review existing collaborations. It is an active member of the South West Emergency Services Forum. The forum encourages collaboration across blue light responders in the south west.

The service collaborates with Hampshire and Dorset & Wiltshire fire and rescue services. The three services have a networked mobilising system as part of the Networked Fire Control Services Partnership. Benefits include mobilisation of the quickest responders across county borders, faster responses to emergency calls and greater resilience and business continuity if systems fail.

The service provides emergency medical response from 20 on-call stations on behalf of the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Trust (SWAST). The service uses a voluntary model at these stations. SWAST pays the service when it needs to respond in this way. The call volume for co-responding has dropped significantly since SWAST introduced a new triage and response approach. Data provided by the service shows that in the year ending March 2019, it attended 1,223 co-responder incidents. This was a 73 percent drop compared with the previous year (4,458). Because of this, funding for calls has also declined and is now at a point where cost neutrality cannot be guaranteed. There is currently a new draft MOU being negotiated to guarantee cost neutrality.

The service is working with Devon and Cornwall Police to train on-call firefighters as community responders. This involves training the on-call firefighters as special constables to carry out community engagement in on-call station areas while available for fire calls. Funding comes from the Office of the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner.

The service needs to do more to assess whether there are any benefits (like freeing up more staff or reducing costs) it can get from projects. For example, the service responds to incidents where someone has collapsed behind closed doors to get access to premises on behalf of SWAST. This reduces demand on the ambulance service. But costs to the fire service are not currently recovered. The service recognises this. It is hoping to understand what benefits will be released from new projects through better programme management and governance.

Continuity arrangements

The service has robust business continuity arrangements for its control room. If for any reason the control room goes offline, calls are automatically transferred to the two other control rooms in the partnership. This guarantees that engines get to incidents without any interruption.

The service has appointed a business continuity manager. After an internal review, the service saw that current arrangements were not as robust as they should be. The service identified record keeping and training as issues. There are limited plans in place for some functions and locations across the service.

The service uses an innovative risk management approach. It records risks it identifies as an issue on directorate and service plans. This approach is designed to put risks at the right level in the organisation where action can be taken to mitigate them. The service only takes risks to the corporate risk register if they can't be managed or mitigated at the service or directorate level.

Inspectors reviewed some service and directorate plans and found no way to score the risk or any guidance on taking the risk to the corporate risk register. This could lead to significant organisational risks remaining at the department level, with no oversight from the corporate management team or the [fire and rescue authority](#).

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



Good

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

Improving value for money

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority is about to consult the public on significant changes to how it provides services to improve what it offers and meet financial pressures. The service anticipates future budget pressures. These include unfunded pension costs, inflation, increasing pay, a continued freeze in council tax and reductions in government grants.

These factors, plus continued challenges for on-call firefighter availability and a desire to make better use of its wholetime staff, are driving a new service delivery operating model. Proposals include changes to working patterns for both on-call and wholetime stations. The service is forecasting that changes to the operating model and crewing changes could provide between £0.388m and £2.925m of annual revenue savings and £3.325m and £5.725m of one-off capital savings.

The service has shown sound financial management and governance of procurement and tendering processes. All spending over £5,000 is reviewed by the procurement team and spending over £20,000 must go through a procurement process.

The service organises procurement resources to focus on specific areas of spending. This allows managers to focus time and activities on in-depth market analysis so better decisions are made. A recent audit found compliance with standing orders and no significant issues. This provides assurance that adequate controls are in place.

The service has achieved savings to avoid budget pressures. Since 2013, it has reduced the number of wholetime firefighters (FTE) from 670 to 556. Some of these reductions were achieved by changing crewing arrangements in the Plymouth city area. In 2018, the service introduced rapid intervention vehicles. These enabled better access to locations and the ability to operate with smaller crews.

Innovation

The service wanted to move to smaller, lighter vehicles, which still hold a significant amount of equipment, to ensure an effective response. As a result, the service introduced RIVs and LRVs. The service calculates these vehicles hold about 90 percent of the equipment carried in a normal engine. LRPs and RIVs cost approximately half of a standard fire engine and their lifetime running costs are more efficient. The service is the national lead for the response vehicle procurement programme. It makes good use of national procurement frameworks to get value for money.

One of the service's six strategic themes is digital transformation. In 2014, the service did an internal review. It found its information technology strategy lacked vision, with no cost visibility and no formal approach to managing data and information. It also found operational crews thought the service information computer technology (ICT) was disjointed and hard to use.

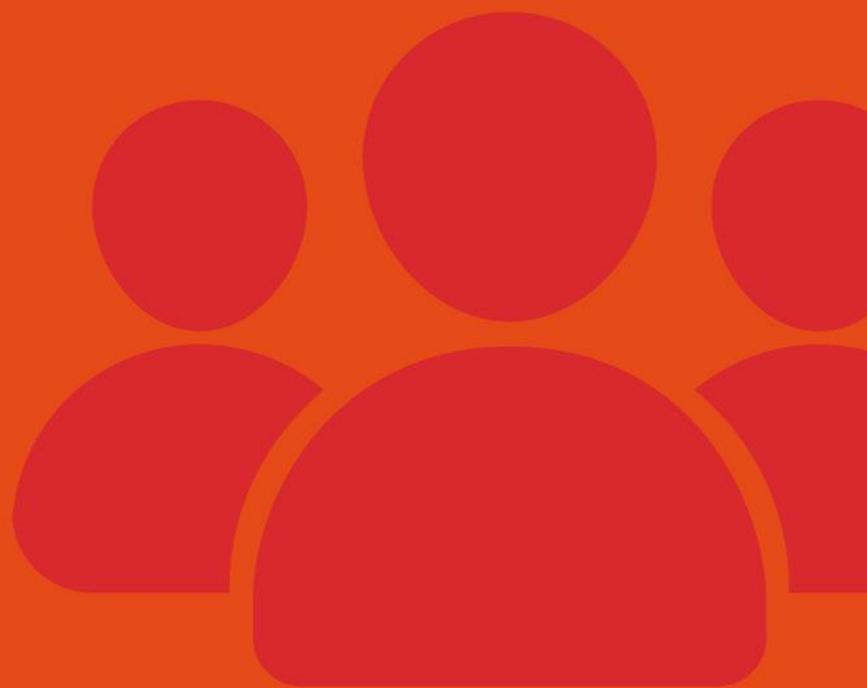
Since then, the service has re-structured the ICT department. Its focus is now on how the end user will use the software. The service has now developed its own products – including an app that manages premises risk information. The home fire safety check process has been fully digitised. The service has identified other areas where it can streamline business processes and be more efficient through digital applications.

Future investment and working with others

The service has a published [reserves](#) strategy. In the year to 31 March 2018, the service had balances of earmarked and general reserves of £29.8m, as well as provisions. This is 47 percent of its net expenditure budget as at 31 March 2018. Most of the reserves are earmarked for future spending on capital and to fund 'invest to save' proposals. A general fund balance of £5.3m, around 8 percent of the net budget, is held to cover unanticipated events. The level of reserves is planned to reduce to £17m by the end 31 March 2022. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority has set up a trading company. It is overseen by members of the fire authority, senior staff from the service and independent people who together make up the board of directors.

The company provides services to other fire and rescue services, the public and the commercial sector. Services include access and rescue, maritime, fire safety, first aid and driver training. Also, it offers subcontracting, stand-by rescue and consultancy services. Some staff from the service work with the company and the service provides the company with premises and equipment. The service recovers the full costs of the staff and other support. This amounts to about £300,000 a year. At the time of our inspection, the company owed the authority £555,000 and was finalising a business plan to address this liability.

People



How well does the service look after its people?



Requires improvement

Summary

A fire and rescue service that looks after its people should be able to provide an effective service to its community. It should offer a range of services to make its communities safer. This will include developing and maintaining a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse. The service's leaders should be positive role models, and this should be reflected in the behaviour of the workforce. Overall, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service requires improvement at looking after its people.

The service has schemes to support staff health and wellbeing. These include an incident diffusing process to support staff after traumatic incidents held soon after they happen. Staff were positive about this process.

The service's health and safety policy outlines its commitment to staff. However, the service can't assure itself that staff are working to policies and procedures. For example, some staff work extra hours, sometimes on a casual contract. The service doesn't oversee arrangements to make sure these staff meet working time regulations, or that staff are well rested and safe to work.

Some staff are required to work alone, sometimes in very rural areas. The service has a lone working policy, but staff have a very limited awareness of it. The service currently has no effective process to monitor staff working alone.

The service has not done fitness tests for operational staff for over three years. We are concerned that the service cannot assure itself that all members of operational staff can meet the minimum fitness levels required to perform the role of a firefighter.

Some staff described managers as approachable and supportive, but others as being unwilling to be challenged or given an alternative view. We also heard of occasions when some operational managers would only talk to operational staff rather than corporate staff, and others where they only listened to uniformed staff of a certain rank. Of the 363 respondents to our staff survey, 27.3 percent reported feeling

bullied or harassed. Also, 27 percent felt discriminated against at work in the last 12 months.

Inspectors were given examples where managers had told staff not to submit a grievance as it may impact on their career. This contradicts the service's values.

Promoting the right values and culture



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself that it has the facility to monitor and record working hours for those staff that have more than one contract.
- The service should assure itself that the current arrangements for the management of health and safety in the workplace are effective.
- The service should make sure that its values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated at all levels of the organisation.

Causes of concern

Devon & Somerset FRS cannot assure itself that operational members of staff meet the minimum fitness requirements to perform their role.

Recommendations

- By 28 February 2020, the service should provide an action plan that details how it will address this issue.

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

Workforce wellbeing

The service has a range of schemes to support staff health and wellbeing. These include counselling, occupational health and a staff support network. It also provides a [critical incident](#) diffusing process to support staff after traumatic incidents. The service holds the diffusing session very soon after the incident is over. Staff have to attend the diffusing session, and have the choice to contribute if they feel able.

Staff were positive about the process and described examples of when it had been used.

Health and safety

The service's health and safety policy outlines its commitment to staff, the training it will provide, and managers' responsibilities. Despite this, in some areas the service can't assure itself staff are working to service policies and procedures.

The service publishes information widely. Staff need to read and sign some documents, like health and safety bulletins. We found no process where the service could assure itself that staff had read and understood safety-critical information.

Some staff work extra hours on prevention, protection or response activities. This can be either in their main role, or on a casual contract, working only when needed. The service doesn't oversee arrangements to make sure these staff meet working time regulations, or that staff are well rested and safe to work.

Members of staff are required to work alone, sometimes in very rural areas. The service has a lone working policy. However, we found staff had a very limited awareness of it. The service currently has no effective process to monitor staff working alone.

We found some inconsistencies in how often local health and safety station audits were taking place. Inspectors were told conflicting information about health and safety audits. Some said they had stopped. Others told us they still completed them, although they were unclear whether they needed to.

The service has not done fitness tests for operational staff for over three years. In 2017, the service committed to trial a new national fitness test. The service conducted a diversity impact assessment on the trial and as a result decided not to introduce it. The service recognises the need to reintroduce fitness testing for staff and has plans to do this.

At first, the service couldn't give any data on the number of staff that have had a fitness test. Since then, the service has provided data that shows 47 percent of its workforce have not had a fitness test in the last three years. We are concerned that the service cannot assure itself that all members of operational staff can meet the minimum fitness levels required to perform the role of a firefighter.

Culture and values

The service has a clear set of values:

- we are proud to help
- we are honest
- we are respectful
- we are working together.

We found these were well communicated, displayed around service workplaces and accessible from the service's intranet site.

Some managers were described by staff as approachable and supportive. Others felt they didn't want to be challenged or listen to alternative viewpoints. Staff described times when operational managers would only talk to operational staff and not corporate staff. Or when they only listened to uniformed staff of a certain rank.

Of the 363 respondents to our staff survey, 27.3 percent reported feeling bullied or harassed. Also, 27 percent felt discriminated against at work in the last 12 months. Of those staff that responded, most said they felt bullied or harassed by someone more senior than them.

Inspectors were given examples where managers had told staff not to submit a grievance as it may impact on their career. This contradicts the service's values. It also means some staff aren't confident about the grievance process.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Good

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

Workforce planning

The service has a workforce plan, so understands its current workforce's skills and capabilities. The workforce plan outlines the potential establishment numbers (the number of staff required) for operational staff. It also captures potential retirements, transferees across from the [on-call](#) duty system to the wholetime duty system, and how the service will recruit apprentices.

The service carries out exit interviews to better understand why staff leave. As at 31 March 2018, the service had a large workforce of 1,780 (FTE) staff: 85.4 percent were firefighters (31.2 percent [wholetime](#) and 54.2 percent on call), 1.7 percent [fire control](#) staff and 12.8 percent support staff. Due to the large area it covers, the service has the highest number (965 FTE) of on-call firefighters of all fire and rescue services in England.

Despite its workforce plan, the service has a number of staff in temporary positions. As at 31 December 2018, the service had 41 group and station managers and 113 crew and [watch](#) managers in temporary posts. More recent data available after our inspection shows that as of 31 March 2019, the number of group and station managers on temporary promotion had fallen to 21. But the number of crew and watch managers rose to 119.

The service has recently restructured. It is consulting on changes to how it staffs its fire engines and where they will be located according to the risks in the community. We look forward to seeing how the service will manage these staff members as part of the Safer Together programme.

As at 31 March 2018, Devon & Somerset FRS has 83 fire stations. A significant majority are on-call stations (71). Its problems recruiting and retaining on-call firefighters are like those faced by other fire services. The human resources department has a dedicated staff member who administers on-call recruitment. They tell the local station that there are potential applicants in the area. Other human resources staff work closely with on-call stations and provide support for assessment days.

The service has a system to identify staffing issues that may impact on the availability of fire engines. The ORC is responsible for identifying future staff shortages. It can effectively cover staff shortages at short notice. It will make the necessary arrangements for staff to attend these locations to keep an appliance available so that if needed, the service will be able to respond with a full staff.

Learning and improvement

The service has designed a new electronic competence recording system, Training for Competence. It is used to record and monitor operational competence. All managers and staff have access to the system. They can see at a glance on a skills dashboard levels of competence against the core risk-critical skills the service has identified. These records were up to date.

The service has recently introduced associate trainers to support the training of on-call firefighters and make sure it is consistent. Associate trainers travel to stations and provide input on breathing apparatus and incident command in preparation for an assessment. The incident command assessment is now done in each station. A mobile incident command vehicle equipped with computer simulation software is used to assess the incident commander. On-call staff were very positive about this approach as it was a much more efficient use of their time.

The service gives sufficient priority to risk-critical training. The central training team allocates staff to risk-critical courses in advance to ensure that they remain competent and available to respond. Other training is organised locally by supervisory managers who book crew members on to courses provided at the training centre. Of the 363 respondents to our staff survey, 74.1 percent agreed they had received enough training to enable them to do what is asked of them.

Training for staff working in the mobilising centre is planned with the networked fire services partnership. Control staff follow a two-year training plan and an annual workplace assessment.

Community safety technicians (CSTs) are responsible for conducting [home fire safety checks](#). The CSTs are well trained and able to deal with the most complex cases. They have a quarterly training day where they are provided with any new or updated information.

Corporate staff felt that they were trained well and that the service would support them to attend any course relevant to their role. For example, a corporate staff member attended some training normally only available to operational staff.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself that it has effective grievance procedures.
- The service should review workplaces to ensure that the facilities are accessible and suitable for female staff that may work there.

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

Seeking and acting on staff feedback

Devon & Somerset FRS covers a large area. Most of the workforce are on-call firefighters. We understand this makes it challenging for senior managers to engage with the workforce, especially those in more rural areas. As at 31 March 2018, 63.4 percent of FTE firefighters were on call.

When we spoke to staff about how often they saw senior and middle leaders we were told their visibility around the service was limited. The CFO produces a weekly blog providing information and updating staff on current issues in the service. Staff felt that this was useful.

The Safer Together programme reviews the way the service staffs fire engines and stations based on the risk to the community. It has involved engagement and staff consultation. It has also been supported by the introduction of business change managers (BCMs). BCMs are responsible for travelling around the service and informing and updating staff about the Safer Together programme. This was seen as positive by staff who felt that in the past the service would change without necessarily involving them.

The service conducts staff surveys and results are shared with staff. The results of the survey are recorded in an action plan, which also shows the future plans to address any issues. However, there are no dates or targets for these plans.

A review of the service management structure took place and a new structure was implemented in April 2019. The new structure will bring a number of functions, like prevention and protection, back to headquarters to support a more consistent and efficient approach.

However, staff weren't clear on who was now responsible for what role. Some staff have not been told where they are working or their job description. Staff felt that communications around the restructure were not very clear, with limited opportunity to feed back.

The service's grievance policy has recently been reviewed and updated to harmonise different policies in place before both services were combined. Inspectors reviewed a sample of grievances given by staff. Staff who had registered a grievance were not automatically offered any kind of welfare support according to the record we looked at. We were told this was managed locally.

Diversity

The service's workforce does not fully reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. As at 31 March 2018, 4.8 percent of firefighters were female, an increase from 3.1 percent as at 31 March 2013. The service is aware of this and is working to change it. It has run some engagement days called Have a Go aimed specifically at women. The service encourages and supports female staff to attend national network events.

The service has a number of staff forums. This includes the diversity and inclusion steering group, fire pride forum and menopause awareness forum. Senior managers attend these forums and staff told us they felt managers would address any issues raised in them.

As at 31 March 2018, 0.6 percent of firefighters were from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background. This compares with a BAME residential population of 2.5 percent. The service understands it needs to do more for the workforce to better reflect the community it serves. The service has launched a people strategy providing information on what it intends to do to build a more inclusive workforce.

During our inspection we visited stations across Devon and Somerset. There were times when operational staff used gender-exclusive language, such as a fireman. Inspectors visited a location where access to female facilities was locked to prevent repeated use by male colleagues. Women were required to request a key. We hope management will change this.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure that the selection and promotion process is fair, open and transparent and that feedback is available to staff.
- The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

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

Managing performance

At the time of the inspection, the service was introducing a new personal development process, linked more closely to corporate plans. This was because the previous process was considered ineffective for staff, particularly for on-call staff. It was also seen as a 'tick box' exercise. As a result, some staff have not had an appraisal or a review for over three years. We were given examples where staff have had one-to-one sessions with line managers, but not all staff had. This depends on whether line managers do them.

The service has a 90-second target for [mobilising](#) appliances to incidents. The fire control room produces weekly reports on whether this target has been met. Fire control operators listen to calls that did not meet the target to find out why. They also find out if there is a performance or development problem. This is an effective way to make sure the service consistently mobilises fire engines fast enough.

Developing leaders

The service provides development programmes as staff progress into management and leadership roles. Staff have a mixed view on the benefit of the development programme for middle managers. But they recognise programmes have recently improved, with more relevant courses. The service has given training and briefings for middle managers on support staff through the Safer Together programme.

The service has improved promotion processes. The service recently added an endorsement stage to the process in which a line manager is required to endorse and recommend the candidate for promotion. An endorsement panel considers successful candidates.

However, some staff continue to feel that there is a lack of fairness and transparency. Inspectors viewed a sample of records from recent promotion processes. They found appointments had been made that didn't follow promotion guidance. Successful candidates are graded. This gives an order in which someone would be appointed to a post. However, we found examples where this was not the case. The service couldn't clearly say why.

Despite asking for feedback on promotions, unsuccessful staff don't usually receive it.

The service has no process for identifying or selecting high-potential staff to be senior leaders of the future. However, there is evidence that staff at all levels get access to coaching and mentoring. The service has a coaching pool of about 30 staff and access to external coaches as and when needed.

Annex A – About the data

Data in this report is from a range of sources, including:

- Home Office;
- Office for National Statistics (ONS);
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA);
- our public perception survey;
- our inspection fieldwork; and
- data we collected directly from all 45 fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England.

Where we collected data directly from FRSs, we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with services and with other interested parties, such as the Home Office. This was primarily through our Technical Advisory Group, which brings together representatives from the fire sector and the Home Office to support the inspection's design and development, including data collection.

We give services several opportunities to validate the data we collect to make sure the evidence presented is accurate. For instance, we asked all services to:

- check the data they submitted to us via an online application;
- check the final data used in each service report; and
- correct any errors they identified.

We set out the source of Service in Numbers data below.

Methodology

Use of data in the reports and to form judgments

The data we cite in this report and use to form our judgments is the information that was available at the time of inspection. Due to the nature of data collection, there are often gaps between the timeframe the data covers, when it was collected, and when it becomes available to use.

If more recent data became available after inspection, showing a different trend or context, we have referred to this in the report. However, it was not used to form our judgments.

In a small number of cases, data available at the time of the inspection was later found to be incorrect. For example, a service might have identified an error in its original data return. When this is the case, we have corrected the data and used the more reliable data in the report.

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use [ONS mid-2017 population estimates](#). At the time of inspection this was the most recent data available.

2018 survey of public perception of the fire and rescue service

We commissioned BMG to survey attitudes towards FRSs in June and July 2018. This consisted of 17,976 surveys across 44 local FRS areas. This survey didn't include the Isles of Scilly, due to its small population. Most interviews were conducted online, with online research panels.

However, a minority of the interviews (757) were conducted face-to-face with trained interviewers in respondents' homes. A small number of respondents were also interviewed online via postal invitations to the survey. These face-to-face interviews were specifically targeted at groups traditionally under-represented on online panels, and so ensure that survey respondents are as representative as possible of the total adult population of England. The sampling method used isn't a statistical random sample. The sample size in each service area was small, varying between 400 and 446 individuals. So any results provided are only an indication of satisfaction rather than an absolute.

[Survey findings are available on BMG's website.](#)

Staff survey

We conducted a staff survey open to all members of FRS workforces across England. We received 3,083 responses between 8 March and 9 August 2019 from across the 15 Tranche 3 services.

We view the staff survey as an important tool in understanding the views of staff who we may not have spoken to, for a variety of reasons, during fieldwork.

However, you should consider several points when interpreting the findings from the staff survey.

The results are not representative of the opinions and attitudes of a service's whole workforce. The survey was self-selecting, and the response rate ranged from 7 percent to 40 percent of a service's workforce. So any findings should be considered alongside the service's overall response rate, which is cited in the report.

To protect respondents' anonymity and allow completion on shared devices, it was not possible to limit responses to one per person. So it is possible that a single person could have completed the survey more than once.

Each service was provided with a unique access code to try to make sure that only those currently working in a service could complete the survey. However, it is possible that the survey and access code could have been shared and completed by people other than its intended respondents.

We have provided percentages when presenting the staff survey findings throughout the report. When a service has a low number of responses (less than 100), these figures should be treated with additional caution. Percentages may sum to more than 100 percent due to rounding.

Due to the limitations set out above, the results from the staff survey should only be used to provide an indicative measure of service performance.

Service in numbers

A dash in this graphic indicates that a service couldn't give data to us or the Home Office.

Perceived effectiveness of service

We took this data from the following question of the 2018 survey of public perceptions of the FRS:

How confident are you, if at all, that the fire and rescue service in your local area provides an effective service overall?

The figure provided is a sum of respondents who stated they were either 'very confident' or 'fairly confident'. Respondents could have also stated 'not very confident', 'not at all confident' or 'don't know'. The percentage of 'don't know' responses varied between services (ranging from 5 percent to 14 percent).

Due to its small residential population, we didn't include the Isles of Scilly in the survey.

Incidents attended per 1,000 population

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, ['Incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England, by incident type and fire and rescue authority'](#) for the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2019.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- There are seven worksheets in this file. The 'FIRE0102' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and fire and rescue authority (FRA) for each financial year. The 'FIRE0102 Quarterly' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and FRA for each quarter. The worksheet 'Data' provides the raw data for the two main data tables (from 2009/10). The 'Incidents chart - front page', 'Chart 1' and 'Chart 2' worksheets provide the data for the corresponding charts in the statistical commentary. The 'FRS geographical categories' worksheet shows how FRAs are categorised.
- Fire data, covering all incidents that FRSs attend, is collected by the Incident Recording System (IRS). For several reasons some records take longer than others for services to upload to the IRS. Totals are constantly being amended (by relatively small numbers).
- We took data for Service in Numbers from the August 2019 incident publication. So, figures may not directly match more recent publications due to data updates.

Home fire safety checks per 1,000 population

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, '[Home Fire Safety Checks carried out by fire and rescue services and partners, by fire and rescue authority](#)' for the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Each FRS figure is based on the number of checks it carried out. It doesn't include checks carried out by partners.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire FRSs before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.
- Figures for 'Fire Risk Checks carried out by Elderly (65+)', 'Fire Risk Checks carried out by Disabled' and 'Number of Fire Risk Checks carried out by Partners' don't include imputed figures because a lot of services can't supply these figures.
- The checks included in a home fire safety check can vary between services. You should consider this when making direct comparisons between services.
- Home fire safety checks may also be referred to as home fire risk checks or safe and well visits by services.
- After inspection, East Sussex FRS resubmitted data on its total number of home fire safety checks and the number of checks targeted at the elderly and disabled in the year to 31 March 2018. The latest data changes the percentage of checks that were targeted at the elderly (from 54.1 percent to 54.9 percent) and disabled (from 24.7 percent to 25.4 percent) in England. However, as noted above, in all reports we have used the original figures that were available at the time of inspection.

Fire safety audits per 100 known premises

Fire protection refers to FRSs' statutory role in ensuring public safety in the wider built environment. It involves auditing and, where necessary, enforcing regulatory compliance, primarily but not exclusively in respect of the provisions of the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005 \(FSO\)](#). The number of safety audits in Service in Numbers refers to the number of audits services carried out in known premises. According to the Home Office's definition, "premises known to FRAs are the FRA's knowledge, as far as possible, of all relevant premises; for the enforcing authority to establish a risk profile for premises in its area. These refer to all premises except single private dwellings".

We took this from the Home Office fire statistics, '[Fire safety audits carried out by fire and rescue services, by fire and rescue authority](#)' for the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- Berkshire FRS didn't provide figures for premises known between 2014/15 and 2017/18.
- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire FRSs before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

- Several FRAs report ‘Premises known to FRAs’ as estimates based on historical data.

Firefighter cost per person per year

We took the data used to calculate firefighter cost per person per year from the annual financial data returns that individual FRSs complete and submit to CIPFA, and [ONS mid-2017 population estimates](#).

You should consider this data alongside the proportion of firefighters who are wholetime and on-call.

Number of firefighters per 1,000 population, five-year change in workforce and percentage of wholetime firefighters

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, ‘[Total staff numbers \(full-time equivalent\) by role and by fire and rescue authority](#)’ as at 31 March 2018.

Table 1102a: Total staff numbers (FTE) by role and fire authority – Wholetime Firefighters and table 1102b: Total staff numbers (FTE) by role and fire authority – Retained Duty System are used to produce the total number of firefighters.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- We calculate these figures using full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers. FTE is a metric that describes a workload unit. One FTE is equivalent to one full-time worker. But one FTE may also be made up of two or more part-time workers whose calculated hours equal that of a full-time worker. This differs from headcount, which is the actual number of the working population regardless if employees work full or part-time.
- Some totals may not aggregate due to rounding.
- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire FRSs before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

Percentage of female firefighters and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) firefighters

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, ‘[Staff headcount by gender, fire and rescue authority and role](#)’ and ‘[Staff headcount by ethnicity, fire and rescue authority and role](#)’ as at 31 March 2018.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- We calculate BAME residential population data from ONS 2011 census data. This figure is calculated by dividing the BAME residential population by the total population.
- We calculate female residential population data from ONS mid-2017 population estimates.
- The percentage of BAME firefighters does not include those who opted not to disclose their ethnic origin. There are large variations between services in the number of firefighters who did not state their ethnic origin.

- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire FRSs before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

Annex B – Fire and rescue authority governance

These are the different models of fire and rescue authority (FRA) governance in England. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service is a combined FRA.

Metropolitan FRA

The FRA covers a metropolitan (large urban) area. Each is governed by locally elected councillors appointed from the constituent councils in that area.

Combined FRA

The FRA covers more than one local authority area. Each is governed by locally elected councillors appointed from the constituent councils in that area.

County FRA

Some county councils are defined as FRAs, with responsibility for fire and rescue service provision in their area.

Unitary authorities

These combine the usually separate council powers and functions for non-metropolitan counties and non-metropolitan districts. In such counties, a separate fire authority runs the fire services. This is made up of councillors from the county council and unitary councils.

London

Day-to-day control of London's fire and rescue service is the responsibility of the London fire commissioner, accountable to the Mayor. A Greater London Authority committee and the Deputy Mayor for Fire scrutinise the commissioner's work. The Mayor may arrange for the Deputy Mayor to exercise his fire and rescue functions.

Mayoral Combined Authority

Only in Greater Manchester. The Combined Authority is responsible for fire and rescue functions but with those functions exercised by the elected Mayor. A fire and rescue committee supports the Mayor in exercising non-strategic fire and rescue functions. This committee is made up of members from the constituent councils.

Police, fire and crime commissioner FRA

The police, fire and rescue commissioner is solely responsible for the service provision of fire & rescue and police functions.

Isles of Scilly

The Council of the Isles of Scilly is the FRA for the Isles of Scilly.

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