

Fire and rescue service inspections 2021/22

Summary of findings from Round 2, Tranche 2

Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services



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Foreword

This report gives an overview of the main findings from our second tranche of inspections of 15 fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England. It is the second of three tranches, which make up our second full round of inspections. It is published alongside individual reports for those services, which contain more detail.

It builds on our findings from the first tranche of 13 service inspections, which we reported on in December 2021, and Sir Thomas Winsor's 2021 [State of Fire and Rescue](#) report, also published in December 2021.

This is my first national report since I was appointed Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services in October 2021. I have dedicated my career to serving, developing and improving the fire and rescue sector, including as the first chair of the [National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\)](#). It is therefore an enormous privilege to report on the efficiency and effectiveness of FRSs in England and how they look after their people.

Senior staffing changes

I am grateful to my colleagues both in and outside the inspectorate for their support. In March 2022, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) Sir Thomas Winsor left the inspectorate. Sir Thomas was appointed HMCI of Constabulary in October 2012 and in July 2017 he took on the additional role of HMCI of Fire and Rescue Services. I would like to thank him for his service and dedication to the role. I wish him every success for the future.

I welcome Sir Thomas's successor, Andy Cooke QPM DL. Until his appointment as HMCI in April 2022, Andy was Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) with primary responsibility for police forces and FRSs in the northern region.

The future of our inspections

Our third tranche of Round 2 inspections is underway. We will have completed inspections of all 44 services by the end of 2022, and HMCI Andy Cooke will report on our findings in his 2022 *State of Fire and Rescue* report.

Our consultation on the design of our third round of inspections closed on 6 June 2022. I would like to thank all those who responded.

Our initial engagement with the sector and the Home Office suggests there is support for conducting another full round of 44 inspections. This would allow us and the sector to develop an even deeper understanding of the challenges facing FRSs.

We will seek formal approval for the new inspection programme from the Home Secretary once consultation is complete. I look forward to working with the fire and rescue sector and HMICFRS colleagues to design a third round of inspections that drives improvement.

Since joining HMICFRS in October 2021, I have been struck by the enthusiasm of individuals across services and national organisations to help develop fire and rescue services by feeding back experiences, suggesting improvements and carrying out national work. I would like to thank every person who has done their bit to help make services more effective at serving their communities, more efficient in how they use public funds and better places to work for everyone.



HMI Roy Wilsher

Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Overview

In the year ending 31 December 2021, FRSs attended 555,358 incidents. Over the past two years, we have all felt the effects of the pandemic and public health restrictions. Although the effects on the public and services have eased, I am grateful to those who worked hard to make sure their service did all it could to make our communities safer, as part of the pandemic response and when responding to other emergencies.

Our FRS inspection programme has continued with a combination of virtual and in-person activities. Services and our staff report that this approach has generally worked well.

Services and national bodies continue to make progress in some areas

As we saw in Tranche 1, it is encouraging to see many services that received [causes of concern](#) in our first round of inspections have taken meaningful steps to improve and act on recommendations.

We have continued to see a general positive shift in services prioritising protection – a theme that emerged in our Tranche 1 inspections. The sector needs to continue this focus so the public can experience long-term safety benefits. This must include sustained Government funding to make sure the number of competent fire protection staff continues to increase.

The Fire Safety Act 2021 received royal assent last year, and sections 1 and 3 commenced on 16 May 2022. The Act helps reduce the risks posed by external wall systems and makes sure those responsible for multi-occupied residential buildings duly consider fire safety. This should help protect communities in England and Wales from fire risks.

The Building Safety Act 2022 should also mitigate the risk of fire in high-rise residential buildings as it underlines how they should be built and maintained. It will also introduce a building safety regulator. As part of the Health and Safety Executive, the regulator will monitor compliance with the Act and enforce the legislation. I hope the regulator will be made up of the right people, who have the capacity and capabilities needed to carry out these important duties.

We have also found that the sector continues to be well prepared to respond to routine and major emergency incidents. An exception to this is some services' capability to respond to marauding terrorist attacks.

National Employers (England), the Local Government Association and the NFCC have worked together on an initiative called Fit for the Future. I hope it will support a greater

agreed clarity on the role of services, and help them to use their full capacity and capabilities without being encumbered by years of negotiation.

Staff continue to have confidence in services' wellbeing and health and safety arrangements. But some services still monitor working hours inconsistently. This means they can't make sure working arrangements are safe and minimise staff stress.

Some services have failed to make enough progress

Despite progress in some areas, it is extremely troubling that in this tranche we found some services have failed to act on the causes of concern we issued in our Round 1 inspections. Of the 12 existing causes of concern for services in this tranche, 3 remain in place. Of these, two relate to values and culture and one relates to fire protection. And some services have also failed to act on the areas for improvement¹ we issued in Round 1.

Change is urgently needed. As well as the 3 pre-existing causes of concern that haven't been discharged, we issued 6 new causes of concern, giving a total of 9 causes of concern across 7 of the 15 services we inspected in Tranche 2. These relate to fire prevention, values and culture, and fairness and diversity. Some of these causes of concern are a direct risk to public safety.

We issued two causes of concern about prevention in this tranche. This is as well as the three prevention-related causes of concern we issued during Tranche 1 of this round of inspections. We have continued to find many (6 out of 15) services don't prioritise prevention activity enough. This may place people, including vulnerable individuals, at greater risk from fire.

There is also a difference between the intent expressed in some services' public-facing plans and the activities they are actually carrying out.

In Tranche 1 we found there had been an improvement in the way most services promoted values and a positive professional culture. But in Tranche 2 it was troubling to find problems relating to values and culture in 8 of the 15 services we inspected. We found poor behaviours in these services – sometimes in small parts of the service, and other times across large sections. In two services, these cultures were toxic. Some staff told us these cultures have had a negative impact on their physical and mental wellbeing. In our first round of inspections, we issued four causes of concern about values and culture. We could only discharge two of these in this round as problems persist in these services. We have also issued two new causes of concern about values and culture, making a total of four in England.

I am pleased to see some services adopt the [Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services](#), developed by the Local Government Association, the NFCC and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. The sector must apply it universally for all FRS staff to truly support positive changes.

¹ If our inspection identifies an aspect of a service's practice, policy or performance that falls short of the expected standard, we will report it as one or more area(s) for improvement. Area(s) for improvement will not be accompanied by a recommendation.

As we found in Tranche 1, some services in this tranche haven't taken enough steps to promote and improve equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in their services. We issued two new causes of concern about EDI.

Services need to do more to tackle these issues and to keep their communities and staff safe.

Our national recommendations and national reform

Sir Thomas Winsor and my predecessor HMI Zoë Billingham issued six national recommendations, two of which are complete. The six recommendations were designed to address issues within the sector and overcome the barriers we have found in services since we started inspecting. They are listed in full below, alongside their respective deadlines and current statuses.

Until the recommendations are implemented in full, services and their chief fire officers (CFOs) still may not be able to use their resources in a way they consider necessary to meet local need.

This is often a result of rigid national terms and conditions. This includes the inflexible application of FRS national 'role maps' and, at times, Fire Brigades Union (FBU) disagreement, both of which restrict CFOs from deploying all staff as they see fit to deal with risk.

We have seen that some CFOs, who are trying to run their services effectively and efficiently for their communities, face barriers from their [fire and rescue authorities \(FRAs\)](#) or the FBU at a national level, even if local FBU officials have agreed specific arrangements.

For example, a service's [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#) sets out how it should allocate its resources to meet risks. But the needs a service specifies in its IRMP, such as reviewing the pay model for on-call firefighters, can be blocked at a national level by the FBU, which has effectively removed its local officials' right to negotiate such changes.

We found an example in this tranche of a service introducing a voluntary Pay for Availability scheme for its on-call firefighters. The on-call firefighters told us they welcome the scheme, which pays for an individual's availability by the hour. At the time of our inspection, 85 percent of the service's on-call stations had opted in. It combines retainer fees, and attendance and disturbance allowances, rewarding individuals for their actual hours of availability. Despite this, it was resisted by the FBU at a national level.

We also found an FRA had blocked an operational deployment put forward by a CFO as the best way of meeting local risk.

The White Paper

I welcome the White Paper [*Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service*](#), published on 18 May 2022. It contains useful proposals to address three of our four remaining national recommendations, relating to:

- reviewing and determining the roles of FRSs and those who work in them;
- considering whether the current pay negotiation machinery needs fundamental reform; and
- considering the case for legislating to give CFOs operational independence.

The consultation on the White Paper closed on 26 July 2022, shortly before this report was published. I hope implementing the White Paper's proposals will address those three recommendations and match the Government's original appetite for reforming the outdated practices that hold fire and rescue services back.

In his 2021 *State of Fire and Rescue* report, Sir Thomas Winsor raised the problem of insufficient action being taken to develop future CFOs. I share this view, particularly as we continue to see a high turnover of CFOs and appointments from small pools of candidates. There is poor succession planning in some services, which may be adding to the problem. In our service and national reports, we have said services need to do more to support future leaders and actively manage talent to encourage greater diversity in senior leadership positions. Diversity in these roles is even more limited than in the wider workforce. The Government should also consider how current pension arrangements affect people applying for leadership positions.

I am therefore encouraged that the White Paper contains proposals for a College of Fire and Rescue and a 21st century leadership programme. The college could support and nurture aspiring leaders and offer direct-entry schemes. The leadership programme could give a standardised approach for services to identify and prepare future leaders. A new College of Fire and Rescue will need to work closely with the NFCC and others, and I will observe with interest how these proposals develop.

Monitoring performance

If we identify a serious, critical or systemic shortcoming in a service's practice, policy or performance, we will report it as a cause of concern, which is always accompanied by one or more recommendations. If a cause of concern is identified, it is raised with the FRS and FRA so they can take appropriate action. We conduct follow-up inspections throughout the year.

We have recently finalised our performance and monitoring approach, which will closely align to our approach for police forces. This will include a Fire Monitoring Group (FMG) meeting, chaired by HMCI Andy Cooke, which will identify services of concern. These services will then be directed to a Fire Performance Oversight Group (FPOG), also chaired by the HMCI. Attendance will include representatives from the services of concern and other interested parties.

Services in FPOG will enter our 'engage' status. This means we will work closely with them to monitor progress in problem areas. Our first FMG and FPOG took place in May and July 2022 respectively.

Our national recommendations

Recommendation 1

As soon as is practicable the Home Office, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Local Government Association, in consultation with the Fire Standards Board and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, should establish a programme of work that will result in consistency in the following four priority areas:

1. identifying and determining risk as part of the IRMP process;
2. identifying and measuring emergency response standards and approaches;
3. defining what are high-risk premises for the purposes of fire protection; and
4. setting an expectation for how frequently high-risk premises, and parts of those premises, should be audited for compliance with fire safety legislation.

There should be completion or significant progress in the four priority areas specified above, towards a common set of definitions and standards for fire and rescue services to adopt and apply as soon as reasonably practicable, for each of the four priority areas.

Completion date

The Community Risk programme has been running for some years. Its completion date was originally set as December 2020; it was then revised to December 2021. The new completion date will be July 2023, by which time I hope this recommendation will be complete in its entirety.

Status

1. Identifying and determining risk as part of the IRMP process

The Home Office has continued to fund the NFCC's Community Risk Programme, which is designed to develop a single method for services to use so they identify and assess risk in the same way. The programme will also provide support to services so they can use this method successfully.

To support the project, the NFCC has provided guidance on the following topics on its website:

- defining scope;
- data and business intelligence;
- stakeholder and public engagement; and
- community risk management plan (CRMP) Equality Impact Assessment.

Additionally, the NFCC has made progress through its projects, including [Definition of Risk](#) and [Economic and Social Value of the UK FRS](#). The NFCC plans to introduce several products in 2023, which I hope will assist with the completion of this part of the recommendation.

2. Identifying and measuring emergency response standards and approaches

The Fire Standards Board has now published [11 professional standards](#), which include:

- operational preparedness;
- operational learning;
- operational competence;
- prevention; and
- emergency response driving.

Since the Fire Standard Board's protection standard was published in September 2021, the [UK FRS website](#) has published a range of guidance documents, including an operational response implementation guide. These are designed to support services in their implementation of the relevant standards.

In addition, the Community Risk Programme plans to start work to develop the scope and objectives for measuring response times standardisation by 2023.

3. Defining what are high-risk premises for the purposes of fire protection and setting an expectation for how frequently high-risk premises, and parts of those premises, should be audited for compliance with fire safety legislation

In addition to its continued work on high-risk premises, the NFCC has continued to co-ordinate the building risk review programme. This programme provides the most up-to-date information on a subset of buildings that will be in the jurisdiction of the new building safety regulator.

In October 2021, the NFCC Protection Policy Reform Unit (PPRU) published its document [Preliminary Guidance Technical Note: Higher Risk Occupancies for national FRS](#). The note establishes a range of risk-influencing factors and categories of higher-risk occupancies and describes how they may factor among the relative priorities set out in risk-based inspection programmes (RBIPs) and other protection activity.

The PPRU is now working with FRSs on updated guidance on good practice approaches to risk-based interventions. This guidance is aimed at protection functions and is designed to reduce risk in built environments.

Additionally, the NFCC's Definition of Risk Project, which is carried out jointly with the PPRU, has recently recommenced its analysis of national data sources to identify whether enough national data is available to recommend a single methodology for identifying and determining risk within 'other occupancies'. The outcomes will be dovetailed into the preliminary guidance or new national guidance.

These projects are still in progress and the specific requirements of this recommendation must be met in their entirety for it to be considered complete.

Although progress has been made, this recommendation is taking longer than anticipated to complete.

Recommendation 2

As part of the next spending review, the Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should address the deficit in the fire sector's national capacity and capability to support change.

Completion date

Complete

Status

Complete

Recommendation 3

The Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should review and with precision determine the roles of:

- fire and rescue services; and
- those who work in them.

Completion date

Awaiting a fire reform implementation plan from the Home Office. This date was originally set as June 2020. A new completion date will be set once we better understand relevant implementation plans.

Status

The Home Office is consulting on this matter in the White Paper on fire reform that was published on 18 May 2022.

We are encouraged that the proposals in the White Paper seek to address this recommendation.

Recommendation 4

The Home Office, the Local Government Association, the NFCC and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. If so, this should include the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the [Grey Book](#).

Completion date

This date was originally set as June 2020; it was then revised to June 2021. A new completion date will be set once we better understand relevant implementation plans.

Status

The Home Office is consulting on this matter in the White Paper on fire reform, published on 18 May 2022.

We are encouraged that the proposals in the White Paper seek to address this recommendation.

Recommendation 5

The Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give chief fire officers operational independence. In the meantime, it should issue clear guidance, possibly through an amendment to the *Fire and rescue national framework for England*, on the demarcation between those responsible for governance and operational decision making by the chief fire officer.

Completion date

Awaiting a fire reform implementation plan from the Home Office. This date was originally set as June 2020. A new completion date will be set once we better understand relevant implementation plans.

Status

The Home Office is consulting on this matter in the White Paper on fire reform, published on 18 May 2022.

We are encouraged that the proposals in the White Paper seek to address this recommendation.

Recommendation 6

The NFCC, with the Local Government Association, should produce a code of ethics for fire and rescue services. The code should be adopted by every service in England and considered part of each employee's progression and annual performance appraisal.

Completion date

Complete

Status

Complete

Our inspections

We began inspecting fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England in 2018. We are currently in the middle of our second full round of inspections, which involves inspecting all 44 services in three tranches over 18 months.

We published our findings from the first tranche of 13 service inspections, and Sir Thomas Winsor's 2021 [*State of Fire and Rescue*](#) report, in December 2021.

We carried out our second tranche of 15 service inspections between September 2021 and February 2022. At the time of writing, we have inspected 28 of 44 services. Our third tranche of the remaining 16 service inspections is currently underway and we will report on them in late 2022 or early 2023, alongside HMCI Andy Cooke's 2022 *State of Fire and Rescue* report.

We answer three principal questions:

- How effective is the service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks (the effectiveness pillar)?
- How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks (the efficiency pillar)?
- How well does the service look after its people (the people pillar)?

We grade services as 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' in our answers to each of these questions. Good is our expected graded judgment for all FRSs. It is based on policy, practice and performance that meet pre-defined grading criteria, which are informed by any relevant national guidance or standards.

Summary of Tranche 2 grades

For **effectiveness**, we didn't grade any service as outstanding or inadequate overall. We graded nine as good and six as requiring improvement.

For **efficiency**, we didn't grade any service as outstanding or inadequate overall. We graded ten as good and five as requiring improvement.

For **people**, we didn't grade any service as outstanding overall. We graded six as good, eight as requiring improvement and one as inadequate.

Our findings

These grades are slightly more positive than our Tranche 1 findings. And some Tranche 2 services have taken appreciable steps to improve since our first round of inspections. However, with six causes of concern issued across our people pillar to services in this tranche, some services need to do more in relation to their values, culture, fairness and diversity. Some services have not done enough to remedy the problems highlighted in Round 1. As we found in Tranche 1, there are both excellent and concerning practices across services. In Tranche 1 we gave services the following grades:

- for effectiveness, four good and nine requiring improvement;
- for efficiency, one outstanding, two good and ten requiring improvement; and
- for people, five good and eight requiring improvement.

We have summarised our findings from every inspection from September 2021 to February 2022 over the next few pages, divided into our three inspection pillars of effectiveness, efficiency and people.

Our judgments

Effectiveness

Service	Effectiveness	How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies?	How effective is the FRS at preventing fires and other risks?	How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety?	How effective is the FRS at responding to fires and other emergencies?	How well prepared is the FRS to respond to major and multi-agency incidents?
Devon & Somerset	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Essex	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Gloucestershire	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Humberside	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Lancashire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
London	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Norfolk	Requires improvement	Good	Inadequate	Good	Good	Good
Northamptonshire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

Service	Effectiveness	How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies?	How effective is the FRS at preventing fires and other risks?	How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety?	How effective is the FRS at responding to fires and other emergencies?	How well prepared is the FRS to respond to major and multi-agency incidents?
Nottinghamshire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Oxfordshire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good
Shropshire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Staffordshire	Good	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good
Tyne & Wear	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
West Sussex	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement
West Yorkshire	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Good

Efficiency

Service	Efficiency	How well does the FRS use resources to manage risk?	How well is the FRS securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks now and in the future?
Devon & Somerset	Good	Good	Requires improvement
Essex	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Gloucestershire	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Humberside	Good	Good	Good
Lancashire	Good	Good	Good
London	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Norfolk	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Northamptonshire	Good	Good	Good
Nottinghamshire	Good	Good	Good
Oxfordshire	Good	Good	Good
Shropshire	Good	Good	Good
Staffordshire	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good

Service	Efficiency	How well does the FRS use resources to manage risk?	How well is the FRS securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks now and in the future?
Tyne & Wear	Good	Good	Good
West Sussex	Good	Good	Good
West Yorkshire	Good	Good	Good

People

Service	People	How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?	How well trained and skilled are FRS staff?	How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity?	How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability?
Devon & Somerset	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Essex	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Gloucestershire	Inadequate	Inadequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Requires improvement
Humberside	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Lancashire	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good	Good
London	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Norfolk	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Northamptonshire	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Nottinghamshire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

Service	People	How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?	How well trained and skilled are FRS staff?	How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity?	How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability?
Oxfordshire	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement
Shropshire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Staffordshire	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Good
Tyne & Wear	Good	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
West Sussex	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
West Yorkshire	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

Effectiveness



How effective are the services at keeping people safe and secure?

In this pillar, we ask five questions:

1. How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies?
2. How effective is the FRS at preventing fire and other risks?
3. How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety?
4. How effective is the FRS at responding to fires and other emergencies?
5. How well prepared is the FRS to respond to major and multi-agency incidents?

We have outlined our findings below.

Protection

When services carry out protection work, they should comply with the provisions established in the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#), which is concerned with the safety of premises from the risk of fire. This includes working with businesses to educate and support them in connection with the risks of fire in their buildings. If necessary, they use enforcement powers to require that premises are made compliant with fire safety legislation.

In our Round 1 inspections, we found that many services needed to improve their fire protection work. But in the first tranche of our Round 2 inspections, we started to see a positive shift in services prioritising protection and risk-planning. Of the 15 services we inspected in Tranche 2:

- 12 have good-quality risk-based fire inspection processes;
- all work well with partners such as building control and safety advisory groups; and
- 13 carry out audits to a high standard.

This prioritisation has been partly due to increased Government investment in protection.

Building Risk Review programme

As in Tranche 1, we are encouraged to see that almost all services we inspected in the second tranche were up to date with their Building Risk Review work. This Government-led programme aims to help services understand and reduce the fire risk in high rise residential (HRR) buildings. It involves services inspecting and reviewing HRR buildings at least 18 metres high or with at least 7 storeys. As of April 2020, there were an estimated 12,500 HRR buildings of this sort in England. Phase one of the programme relates to HRR buildings with cladding similar to that on Grenfell Tower; phase two is the remainder of HRR buildings.

Risk-based inspection programmes

Services have a duty to enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The [Fire and rescue national framework for England](#) states that this should be achieved through a risk-based inspection programme. The NFCC's Protection Policy and Reform Unit has issued interim guidance on how services should construct these programmes, outlining how they should classify risk. It also suggests what services should offer to different risk groups as a result. We expect more detailed guidance will be released soon. But we found that some services don't have a robust risk-based inspection programme that identifies areas of highest risk and where they should carry out audit activity.

Services also don't always have enough inspectors to meet their need. We have seen an increase in the number of staff working towards relevant qualifications. This should mean that in future there will be more staff to carry out fire safety audits as part of their risk-based inspection programme. But it will take time to fully feel the impact of this while these individuals work towards becoming fully competent. As at 31 March 2021, 23 services across England have increased their number of competent protection staff since 2018/19. And as stated earlier, additional Government funding has helped. Despite this, some services told us they find it difficult to recruit, develop and retain competent protection staff. One of the reasons for this is the high demand for their skills in the private sector.

Prevention

Fire prevention work focuses on the people most at risk from fire. Preventing incidents occurring in the first place is the best and most cost-effective outcome. Services carry out a range of prevention activities, such as [safe and well visits](#) in people's homes, and they educate the public on matters relating to road, water and fire safety.

As in our Tranche 1 inspections, we have continued to see teams without the right resources, plans or leadership to be able to help those most at risk from fire.

Identifying those at risk from fire

Services have a legislative duty under the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) to promote fire safety, and the [Fire and rescue national framework for England](#) requires services to identify those most at risk from fire. However, services aren't always clearly identifying those people. And they aren't always then classifying and understanding that risk to help them decide what intervention or education to offer. This may be because they over-rely on referrals from partners such as health and social care providers and charities that work with vulnerable people. Or it may be because their approach isn't sophisticated enough. Roughly half (54.8 percent) of services conduct more prevention visits as a result of either agency referrals or requests from the public than as a result of the service directly targeting the visits. This isn't necessarily a negative. But we expect services to adopt a blended approach by identifying vulnerable people through self-generated targeting and partnership working.

Prevention visits

Most services (86 percent) moved to virtual prevention visits since the start of the pandemic. Some are moving back to in-person contact but are still keeping some elements of virtual visits. Virtual prevention visits have allowed services to conduct more [home fire safety checks](#) and safe and well visits without attending homes. This means they could keep providing communities with essential fire-prevention information during the pandemic. More than 30 FRSs have signed up to the NFCC Online Home Fire Safety Check tool.

Humberside FRS has an effective partnership with local health bodies to provide a falls response service. This is a team of people from throughout the organisation who work on an on-call basis. It has a significant impact on the local health situation, helping more people live in their homes for longer, and reducing demand on local health and care services.

Risk management

As part of the [Fire and rescue national framework for England](#), each fire and rescue authority must produce an [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#), which is available to the public. The NFCC's Community Risk Programme will give services a set of standardised tools to help them consistently identify, assess and mitigate community risks.

However, as we found in our first tranche of inspections, many services' IRMPs don't clearly show how they intend to use their prevention, protection and response resources to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats faced by the communities they serve, both now and in the future. Instead, we have found a lack of joined-up working between identifying communities' risks and carrying out plans to mitigate those risks. We were only satisfied that seven Tranche 2 services' IRMPs directed their resources to the right place.

Only nine Tranche 2 services were good at sharing information between their prevention, protection and response functions. All Tranche 2 services collect a suitable range of risk information about their communities, but they don't always use that information well enough to direct their sometimes scant prevention, protection and response resources to mitigate risk in a joined-up way.

Services' prevention and protection functions have traditionally been poor relations to their response function. We are slowly seeing services start to use their prevention and protection functions as an efficient and effective way to stop fires happening, reducing the need to respond. But we are still finding that many services' strategies to protect those most at risk from fire aren't always clearly linked to the risks identified in their IRMPs. This disconnect between services' IRMPs and their communities' needs must improve.

Although non-fatal fire casualties have generally decreased in the past ten years, and the number of fire-related fatalities is relatively low, there was a 27 percent increase in the number of fire-related fatalities in England in the year ending 31 December 2021 compared to the year ending 31 December 2020. Services must make sure they understand the link between fire prevention and the specific risks within their communities that are set out in their IRMPs.

Incidents

Learning from incidents

Although services in this tranche are generally well prepared to respond to incidents such as wide-area flooding, they don't always have good enough debrief systems in place to make sure they adjust their policies, plans or training to take any learning into account. There is long-established guidance for services on carrying out debriefs after incidents, but in many services we have found either a lack of robust debrief policies or staff not using them.

In our Tranche 2 staff survey, only 66.4 percent of the 3,112 firefighters who responded agreed that their service listened to their feedback about operational incidents. And 71.4 percent agreed or tended to agree that their service takes action as a result of learning from operational incidents.

The number of incidents to which FRSs are called has generally decreased over the past few decades. We have also seen differences in the types of incidents services attend. There was an increase of 18 percent in non-fire incidents in England in the year ending 31 December 2021 (to 183,439) compared to the previous year. Services in England attended 147,295 fires in the year ending 31 December 2021, which was a 4 percent decrease from the previous year. It is important that services gather learning from incidents, share it and use it to make improvements and to adjust planning assumptions.

Preparedness

Incident commanders in most services are generally well trained and meet local need. In the 15 services we inspected in Tranche 2, we were encouraged to find that the proportion of required incident commanders who had been trained and assessed was 88 percent on 31 March 2021. This compares to 92 percent who are accredited nationally.

In the year ending 31 December 2021, there was a marked increase (25 percent) in incidents where services collaborated with other emergency services, compared to the previous year. We have also seen a notable improvement in incident commanders' familiarity with [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#), which ensure emergency services make joint decisions after completing a joint risk assessment.

Services have also continued to implement [national operational guidance](#). This makes sure services respond to emergency incidents in a consistent, safe way so they can work seamlessly together and with other emergency services. But the pace of implementation is slow.

Response times

The average response time to primary fires in England in the year ending 31 December 2021 was 8 minutes and 46 seconds – an increase of 11 seconds compared to the previous year. The largest component of this increase was drive time, which increased by 13 seconds to 5 minutes and 51 seconds. Of the 15 services we inspected in Tranche 2, 12 improved their average response times in the year ending 31 December 2021 compared to the previous year. Two services (Norfolk FRS and Oxfordshire FRS) significantly improved their average response time – by 20 seconds and 9 seconds respectively.

The average crew turnout time for primary fires has generally improved since data became available, from 2 minutes and 2 seconds in the year ending 31 March 2010 to 1 minute and 35 seconds in the year ending 31 December 2021. Almost all Tranche 2 services (13 of 15) decreased their average crew turnout time for primary fires in the year ending 31 December 2021 compared to the previous year. The average decrease for those services was 6 seconds.

Marauding terrorist attack capability

Some services' arrangements to respond to marauding terrorist attacks (MTAs) aren't up to date with recent changes to operational procedures agreed nationally between fire, police and ambulance services. This means firefighters may not have been given the information, instructions or training they need to appropriately help other blue light services in the event of an MTA.

Efficiency



How efficient are the services at keeping people safe and secure?

In this pillar, we ask two questions:

1. How well does the FRS use its resources to manage risk?
2. How well is the FRS securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks, now and in the future?

We have outlined our findings below.

Financial planning

Most services have a sound understanding of what financial difficulties they are likely to face in the future. Services have generally made realistic assumptions with budgets, and have considered a range of financial planning scenarios and future risks.

Many services have made plans for responding to events that may affect their budgets. For example, Tyne and Wear FRS has set aside reserves to manage risks, such as the volatility of insurance costs, increased private finance initiative scheme costs and reductions in Government grant schemes. The service also has contingency plans to reduce capital expenditure to protect revenue budgets from any reasonable financial shocks.

Staffordshire FRS has prepared and evaluated a series of options to make savings ahead of an anticipated budget shortfall. The options include selling land and buildings it no longer needs.

Some services are considering the implications of the December 2018 Court of Appeal ruling on the firefighters' pension scheme. For example, West Yorkshire FRS has found that the ruling has led to more staff than expected wanting to retire. The service has offered potential retirees an incentive to give an extended notice period and therefore support its workforce planning. While many services recognise that the ruling will lead to higher employer costs, some haven't budgeted for this future expenditure.

Some services are considering financial planning scenarios and risks such as a higher inflationary financial environment, particularly for energy costs, and council tax precepts and business rates not keeping pace with inflation.

Capacity

Many services have capacity problems in some areas of their operation. In 8 of our 15 Tranche 2 services, we found they either don't have enough fire protection staff to carry out fire safety audits or other protection work, or it is too early to see the impact of increased resources.

Over the past two years there has been a general increase in overtime spend across the Tranche 2 services. We found five services in this tranche rely too much on overtime to maintain an operational response cover. And some have seen a considerable increase in overtime expenditure per head of workforce since 2019/20.

Some services are taking steps to mitigate this problem, such as by increasing their protection resources or recruiting unfilled vacancies to reduce the need for overtime payments. But we are yet to see the full impact of these interventions.

As Sir Thomas Winsor set out in his 2021 *State of Fire and Rescue* report, most services have problems with crew availability at their on-call fire stations. Some services in Tranche 2 have changed how they attract and retain on-call firefighters. For example, one predominantly rural service with more than 1,000 on-call firefighters has introduced a voluntary Pay for Availability scheme (see above, [Our national recommendations and national reform](#)). Oxfordshire FRS (another predominantly rural service with more than 350 on-call firefighters) is running a trial whereby on-call firefighters can use fire stations as a space for their primary employment. West Yorkshire FRS (a predominantly urban service with on-call firefighters making up a far smaller proportion of its workforce) has introduced new on-call employment contracts providing better financial security for staff. It is too early to determine whether these initiatives improve on-call availability or represent value for money.

Some services don't have the capacity they need to bring about change. In one service, we found its departments don't have enough resources to carry out both routine work and make changes for the future. Another service isn't co-ordinating its project work well enough to support its plans for change.

Other services have improved how they resource changes for the future since their last inspection. For example, Northamptonshire FRS has entered extensive collaboration arrangements with Northamptonshire Police. This has increased the skills it has access to in back-office functions. Tyne and Wear FRS has increased the number of staff working in information and communications technology (ICT) from 9 to 19. All services need to make sure they invest enough money and have enough skilled people to bring in the ICT improvements they need.

Allocating resources according to risk

So they can safely serve their communities, services must resource all three of their functions (prevention, protection and response) in a way that is aligned to their [integrated risk management plans \(IRMPs\)](#). Too many services aren't doing this: a third of the services we inspected in Tranche 2 (5 of 15) and almost half (6 of 13) of Tranche 1. There is a correlation between services failing to align their resources to the risks identified in their IRMPs and those issued with a 'requires improvement' grade for efficiency. It is difficult for a service to achieve a 'good' grade for efficiency without aligning its resources to risks.

One Tranche 2 service allocated some of its resources based on previous funding allocations. Another service doesn't have enough information to determine the level of resources it needs for its future risk-mitigation plans. And one service's strategic plan hasn't been updated since 2017, so it doesn't have enough information to determine what level of resource it needs to meet future risk.

We also found that four services in Tranche 2 haven't allocated enough resources to their prevention activities. As set out above, fire prevention work helps to protect those most vulnerable to risk from fire. For services to meet their communities' needs, this situation must be improved.

Funding and governance

As in our Tranche 1 inspections, we have continued to find inconsistent funding arrangements, which prevent some services from doing their jobs. The arrangements causing this disparity include one-year funding settlements and varying county council financial arrangements. Services continue to report that short-term funding settlements can make medium and longer-term planning difficult.

The Government has given the eight lowest-charging fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) who receive direct fire funding from central government a council tax precept flexibility in 2022/23. This has enabled these FRAs to increase council tax by up to £5 per year for a band D property. Because governance and financial arrangements differ by service, this increase hasn't necessarily helped those services most in financial need. Other FRAs are more constrained by how much they can increase council tax, as a referendum is needed for proposed increases of 2 percent and above.

In one service we found an example of the chief fire officer (CFO) being unable to make an independent operational decision, which resulted in a less efficient outcome. It is still unfair that some CFOs can easily make day-to-day decisions that will benefit their communities, but others can't due to their governance arrangements.

Productivity

Some services are improving the productivity of their workforces. These services are making sure their staff always contribute as much as possible when they are available. This includes using wholetime and on-call staff to carry out prevention activities such as:

- advice on slips, trips and falls;
- advice on social welfare;
- ensuring working smoke alarms are fitted;
- ill-health prevention;
- health screening and detection activities;
- identifying potential fire risks; and
- taking action to reduce fire risks.

As at 31 March 2021, most services' (32) wholetime staff were carrying out at least four of these activities and most wholetime staff were making sure working smoke alarms are fitted. But on-call staff are used slightly less often for prevention work: only 28 services' on-call staff carry out at least four of the above prevention activities. In one service, most on-call staff don't make sure working smoke alarms are fitted at all during their prevention visits.

Most services could do more to make sure their workforces are productive and to ensure they use public funds in a way that best serves communities. This includes services:

- improving their performance management arrangements;
- using firefighters for more prevention and protection work; and
- making more efficient use of technology.

For example, as a result of the shift changes made by Humberside FRS, operational crews are more productive. Each station has a plan that aligns service priorities to local risk with clear minimum standards. The crews now routinely carry out protection and prevention work, and they gather risk information alongside their operational duties.

Nottinghamshire FRS has implemented a performance management framework that applies to all areas of the organisation. It monitors performance and escalates it to the programme and performance board where necessary. The service scrutinises its activities, so it knows if it is meeting its targets and how it needs to improve.

Tyne and Wear FRS has improved performance monitoring and uses information technology (IT) to give real-time data that is accessible and simple to understand.

Lancashire FRS uses an app that monitors the availability of firefighters and fire engines in real time. This means the service can crew fire engines differently when there isn't a full crew available. For example, it can send fewer firefighters to smaller incidents, such as rubbish fires.

Devon and Somerset FRS has recently introduced new work routines for its wholetime staff so they are more productive. And West Yorkshire FRS's command leadership and management project has resulted in new responsibilities for watch managers, increasing their capacity and productivity.

Some services are making more efficient use of technology. For example, Humberside FRS has procured a new IT system that allows on-call firefighters to manage their availability effectively. And West Yorkshire FRS has invested in a self-serve purchase order system and a new rostering system, which allow more local management of staff movement.

But more services could use technology to help improve their productivity. For example, some services still record their activities in paper-based systems. This means staff have to transfer information from paper on to computer systems. And one service records sickness and attendance in different systems, which aren't integrated. Managers in the service need to manually check reports from one system against the other to make sure the information is recorded correctly in both. In another service, a lack of computers fitted with video conferencing software means staff can't adequately access training courses. And in a different service, firefighters can't take the mobile data terminals off the fire engines, so they waste time printing out risk information.

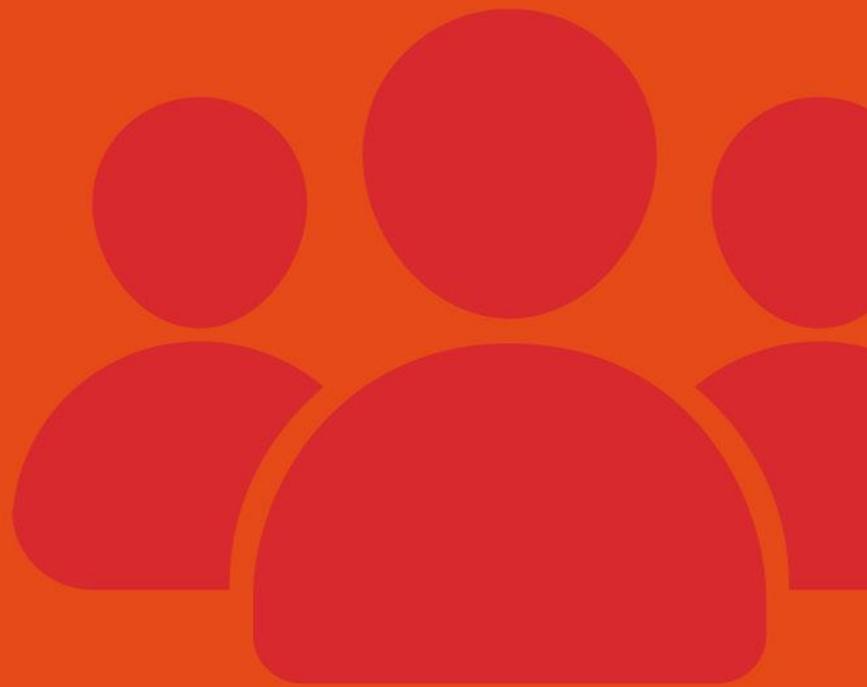
In 2020/21, the majority of services (32) didn't work with their partners, such as social services, the voluntary sector and primary care trusts, to conduct fire prevention visits. Indeed, services could do a lot more to improve staff productivity. This is something we will focus on in our third round of inspections.

Paying twice for marauding terrorist attack capability

Two services in England, including one service in this tranche, have inefficient plans for funding a marauding terrorist attack (MTA) capability. They will give all firefighters a 2 percent pay increase to provide a generic MTA capability, something that is already part of a firefighter's role.

As Sir Thomas Winsor set out in his [letter of 28 September 2021](#) to the London fire commissioner and the CFO of Greater Manchester FRS, this is unjustified and likely to be detrimental to public safety and/or the efficiency and effectiveness of FRSS throughout England. This is because it means paying firefighters twice for an essential service.

People



How well do the services look after their people?

In this pillar, we ask four questions:

1. How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?
2. How well trained and skilled are the FRS staff?
3. How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity?
4. How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability?

We have outlined our findings below.

Staff engagement

In general, we found that services enjoy good working relationships with local representative bodies, including trade unions. Of the 39 local representatives that responded to our Tranche 2 survey, 26 agreed that FRS leaders listen to and value their opinions and views. Lancashire, Oxfordshire and Shropshire FRSs are performing particularly well in this area.

But some services are failing to engage in meaningful ways with their staff. For example, some services are communicating with their staff but aren't making changes in response to feedback. In one service a number of staff reported not feeling confident that feedback would be listened to.

Health, safety and wellbeing

Staff continue to have confidence in services' wellbeing and health and safety arrangements. The majority (89 percent) of respondents to our Tranche 2 staff survey said that they have the right general PPE they need to do their job, and that it fits properly.

Most respondents (93.9 percent) told us they can access services to support their mental wellbeing, and 91.6 percent feel confident that their service would offer wellbeing services after incidents. The majority (73.5 percent) of respondents have a conversation about health and wellbeing with their manager once a year or more often. But 23.7 percent of on-call staff who responded told us they never have a conversation about health and wellbeing with their managers, compared to 16.8 percent of all respondents.

Only 46.9 percent of staff survey respondents think their service is extremely or very effective at managing sickness absence. In 6 of the 13 Tranche 2 services that gave us sickness data, the number of days or shifts lost per full time equivalent staff

member was higher than the England average of 6.9 days or shifts lost in the year to 31 March 2021.

Monitoring working hours

Most services are still inconsistent in their approaches to monitoring working hours. As at March 2021, 25 percent of wholetime firefighters had second jobs and 12.8 percent had dual contracts with the same service. Insufficient monitoring of staff working hours means services can't be sure working arrangements are safe and minimise stress.

Workforce and succession planning

We have continued to see improvements in workforce and succession planning in our Tranche 2 inspections. London FRS discharged its Round 1 cause of concern in this area and has improved by two grades. But in some services poor planning is resulting in actual and potential skills shortages.

High levels of chief fire officer turnover are an ongoing concern for service continuity, capacity and morale.

The inadequacy of some services' workforce and succession plans is particularly concerning when considering the number of staff retiring from FRSs in England. Of the 3,522 staff who left in the year ending 31 March 2021, the most common reason cited for leaving was 'normal' or 'early' retirement. This accounted for 35.3 percent of all leavers (1,243 staff).

Although the retirement rate across services is high, many services still don't have plans in place to meet their obligations regarding changes to pension arrangements, as they are still waiting for Government guidance. They haven't considered the potential implications of this.

Inequality of access to training

Risk-critical training is generally prioritised, and we are consistently finding that services don't scrutinise training in softer skills well enough, especially for managers. We found that some services use different systems to record operational and non-operational competencies. At times, the former receives more scrutiny, and this results in unequal learning and development for different roles across the workforce. This also results in services applying policies inconsistently across the workforce.

We have found shortcomings in the way some services apply policies and processes, such as those on absence management, working time regulation, grievances, bullying and harassment, and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Where those shortcomings appear, there is often also a problem with the training of staff in management and other roles.

Values and culture

We previously recommended that the sector would benefit from a code of ethics. In May 2021, part way through our Tranche 1 inspections, the NFCC, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Local Government Association established the [Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services](#). It was encouraging to see most services in Tranche 1 had prioritised improving the promotion of values, and some were starting to consider how to integrate the code of ethics into their values and other policies.

We were pleased to find that this was also the case in most Tranche 2 services. Humberside, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire and West Yorkshire FRSs in particular have clearly worked hard to improve their values and culture. Lancashire FRS has maintained its outstanding grade from its previous inspection.

Shropshire FRS has a clear set of values that are supported throughout the organisation. Its workplace charter incorporates the code of ethics, setting out the standards of behaviour expected in the service. The organisation's positive culture was evident throughout our inspection. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the service, and all staff understand this is a priority. Positive behaviours are firmly in place, and staff across the whole organisation accept, demonstrate and understand them.

But in 8 of the 15 Tranche 2 services, it was troubling to find evidence of poor cultures and behaviours, reminiscent of the disgraceful examples we found in Round 1. In two services we found toxic cultures. Some services haven't embedded their values to make progress against the issues we raised previously, meaning two causes of concern were sustained from Round 1. And we issued two new causes of concern about values and culture.

Less than half (47.5 percent) of respondents to our Tranche 2 staff survey told us they think their service is effective or very effective at providing a positive culture that reflects their service's values. When asked if they are treated with dignity and respect at work, 19.4 percent disagreed.

We found numerous examples of bullying, harassment and discrimination, including staff behaving poorly towards each other in inappropriate and unacceptable ways. In some services we found evidence of racism, sexism and homophobia, and a culture where staff, including managers, didn't always feel confident to challenge poor behaviour. Many told us they felt they couldn't challenge ideas without detriment and that staff were scared to speak out. Worryingly, those who did were sometimes subject to victimisation.

Specific examples reported to us include:

- men using women's toilets and women not feeling confident in challenging this;
- no action being taken against reported discriminatory behaviour;
- no action being taken by managers who witnessed bullying behaviour or inappropriate comments;
- on-call firefighters being treated differently from wholetime firefighters;

- staff not wishing to work in specific areas of the service because of poor behaviours;
- an individual who challenged inappropriate comments being shunned by colleagues, who said their comments were “banter”;
- staff using inappropriate language, such as stating that “you had to be a woman to get on”; and
- a watch manager refusing to support positive action.

More than one in five respondents to our Tranche 2 staff survey (21.6 percent) had experienced either bullying, harassment or discrimination at work in the past 12 months. In relation to that period, 13.1 percent said they had been bullied or harassed and 17.4 percent said they had been discriminated against at work.

On-call firefighters reported higher levels of discrimination (20.7 percent of respondents) than other staff groups (17.4 percent). And staff from ethnic minority backgrounds reported discrimination more often (20 percent) than white respondents (16.6 percent).

In our Tranche 2 inspections, we found some senior leaders don’t model or maintain service values. This is particularly concerning. Our Tranche 2 staff survey showed 93 percent of respondents are aware of their service’s statement of values, but only 63.7 percent of those who are aware of those values think their senior leaders consistently model and maintain them. In the majority of cases reported in our staff survey, the source of bullying, harassment or discrimination was someone more senior to the person experiencing the behaviour.

Where bullying, harassment or discriminating behaviours were reported, no action had been taken in the majority of cases. Staff in these services generally reported low confidence in the ability to challenge these behaviours and in mechanisms to resolve grievances. Of those who chose not to report a particular behaviour, around half (39.5 percent for bullying or harassment and 51.3 percent for discrimination) told us the main reason for this was thinking nothing would happen.

Nearly half (48.6 percent) of Tranche 2 staff survey respondents said they didn’t feel confident in the mechanisms for providing feedback to all levels of staff within their service. And 43.9 percent said they felt they couldn’t challenge ideas without any detriment to how they would be treated afterwards.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

As with Tranche 1 services, some services in this tranche must do more to promote and improve their equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We issued two new causes of concern about EDI in this tranche.

The diversity of most FRSs is in need of real improvement. We continue to see worryingly low numbers of female and ethnic minority staff, particularly in firefighter roles. A few services (including Norfolk and West Yorkshire FRSs) are starting to look outside the sector to improve this issue.

Norfolk FRS has a comprehensive and measurable EDI action plan that links to its strategy and is open to public scrutiny. Its objectives are to:

- develop strong, inclusive cultures;
- understand the common barriers members of the public may face when accessing FRSs and fire safety information; and
- be an employer of choice.

West Yorkshire FRS is investing in recruitment, including improving diversity through positive action. It has employed a positive action officer, and the chief fire officer is also the positive action champion. It has adapted its engagement style and held recruitment events in specific locations to increase engagement. And the service has made its assessment panels more diverse so candidates can better identify with the service, including under-represented groups.

As of 31 March 2021, only 18 percent of the workforce in FRSs in England identifies as female. Although this is a 3 percentage point increase from 10 years ago, when the proportion was 15 percent, the actual number of women in the workforce is now lower. This is because the workforce as a whole is smaller than it was in 2010, and the number of men has decreased more than the number of women. Women make up the majority of staff in fire control roles (76 percent) and support staff roles (55 percent), but only 8 percent of firefighters identify as female. In the three years since 2018/19, 12.9 percent of new joiner firefighters identified as female.

Of the members of the workforce who reported their ethnicity, only 5.3 percent identify as being from an ethnic minority background, compared with 14.6 per cent of the population in England (estimated for 30 June 2021). This is a slight increase from the previous year (up 127 people from 5.1 percent in 2020, and up 162 people from 4 percent 10 years ago). Only 4.7 percent of firefighters identify as being from an ethnic minority background. In the three years since 2018/19, 6.3 percent of new joiner firefighters who stated their ethnicity identified as being from an ethnic minority background.

To encourage diversity in new recruits, and to retain them in the long term, services must do more to make sure their environments and cultures are inclusive.

We have continued to find that although many services have acted with good intentions to promote EDI, efforts have often lacked strategy, staff consultation or staff EDI training. It is therefore unsurprising that initiatives have lacked clear results in many cases.

Only 12.8 percent of the local representatives who responded to our Tranche 2 survey told us they have been completely involved in equality impact assessment processes; 51.3 percent said they have been somewhat involved, and 35.9 percent said they haven't been involved at all or don't know.

Positive action projects have been limited in scope, and we found few examples of services using data and evaluation to inform diversity and recruitment plans. We did find elements of good work in this area in Humberside, Norfolk, Shropshire and West Yorkshire FRSs.

The failure to tackle issues of fairness and diversity (including services completing training and equality impact assessments) is having a wider negative impact on services' culture and is resulting in unacceptable behaviours. We find this to be a growing trend.

Unequal progression opportunities for staff

As well as contributing to poor workforce and succession planning, unequal development opportunities may also mean services miss opportunities to modernise and improve the diversity of their staff.

Services should give all staff appropriate opportunities to reach their full potential. But many on-call and non-operational staff don't get good enough opportunities to develop or progress. This also means female staff and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds, fewer of whom work in operational roles, may not have equal access to these opportunities. Only 42.4 percent of respondents to our Tranche 2 staff survey told us they think their service is extremely or very effective at supporting their progression and development. This was echoed in our inspection findings in four Tranche 2 services.

It is promising that nearly all Tranche 2 services are making changes to their promotion processes and giving structured progression routes. The suite of leadership products being offered by the NFCC is something we will expect services to take advantage of. But it is too early to report any meaningful results. And more than one in three respondents to our staff survey (42.3 percent) disagreed that they are given the same opportunities to develop as other staff. More than half (52.9 percent) of respondents disagree that promotion processes in their service are fair.

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