

Fire & Rescue Service

Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19

An inspection of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service



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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 Gloucestershire Fire and 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**.

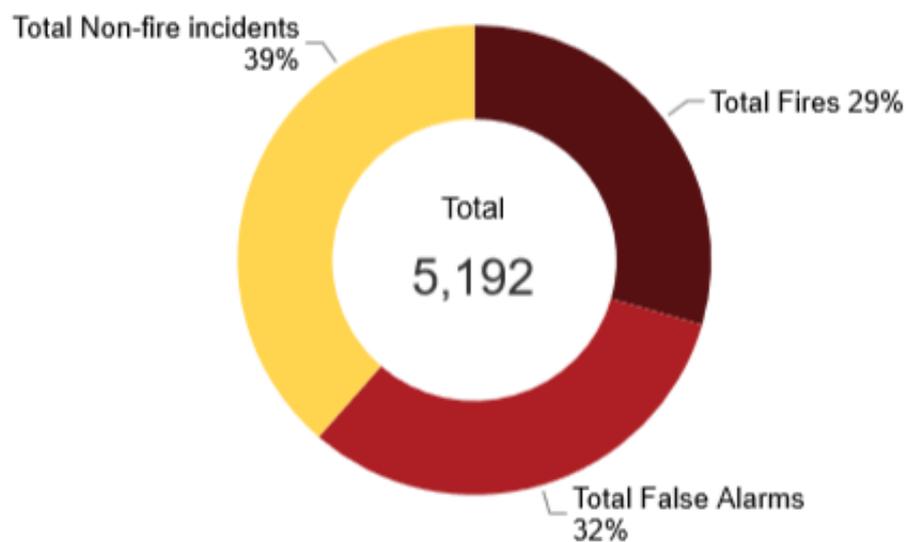
If we find serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, we will judge it as **inadequate**.

Service in numbers

 Public perceptions	Gloucestershire	England
Perceived effectiveness of service Public perceptions survey (June/July 2018)	86%	86%

 Response	Gloucestershire	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 December 2018	8.3	10.4
Home fire risk checks carried out by FRS per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2018	12.2	10.4
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises 12 months to 31 March 2018	1.7	3.0

Incidents attended in the 12 months to 31 December 2018





Cost

Gloucestershire

England

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

£16.42

£22.38



Workforce

Gloucestershire

England

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

0.6

0.6

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

-19%

-14%

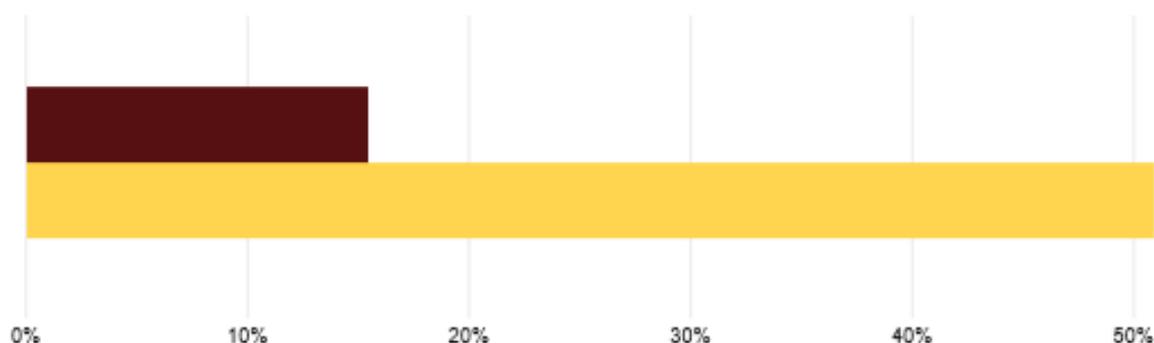
Percentage of wholetime firefighters
As at 31 March 2018

49%

70%

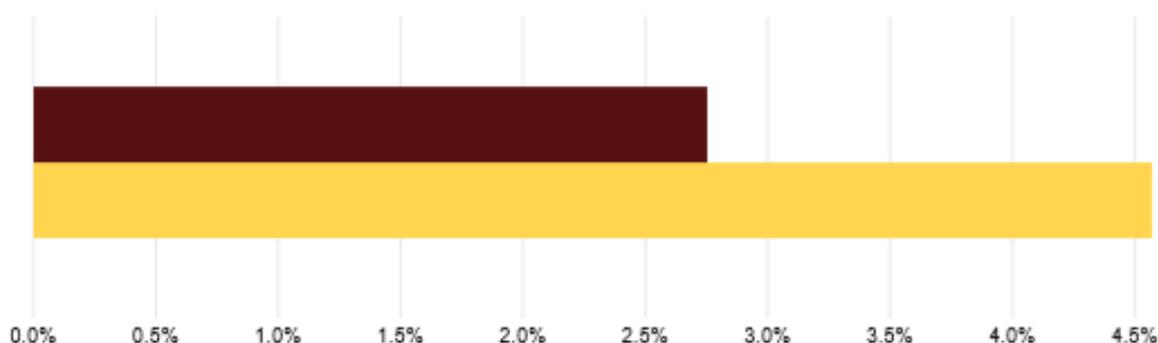
Percentage of female firefighters as at 31 March 2018

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



People



Requires improvement

Promoting the right values and culture



Inadequate

Getting the right people with the right skills



Requires improvement

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 Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). But there are several areas where the service needs to make improvements.

The effectiveness of Gloucestershire's service requires improvement. The way it protects the public through fire regulation is inadequate. It requires improvement to:

- its understanding of the risk of fire and other emergencies;
- the way it prevents fires and other risks;
- its response to fires and other emergencies; and
- its response to national risks.

Gloucestershire FRS requires improvement to the efficiency of its services. We judge it to require improvement in how it uses resources and makes its services affordable.

The service requires improvement to the way it looks after its people. The way it promotes the right values and culture is inadequate. It requires improvement in:

- getting the right people with the right skills;
- ensuring fairness and promoting diversity; and
- managing performance and developing leaders.

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

Effectiveness



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



Requires improvement

Summary

An effective fire and rescue service will identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks its community faces. It 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. Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness requires improvement.

The service doesn't currently show enough ambition to improve through its [integrated risk management plan](#) (IRMP). It needs to base its plan on a full understanding of risk. This should show how the service plans to address risk through a balanced approach to prevention, protection and response activity.

The service needs to manage its prevention work better. It should focus this work on the people most at risk and carry out [home fire safety checks](#) more promptly. It also needs to reduce the backlog of high-risk safe and well referrals. More positively, the service's SkillZONE initiative is a proactive approach to safety education for children and other target groups. The service collaborates with other organisations to provide safety advice and messages. It also works with its partner organisations to support [vulnerable people](#) and reduce demand.

We are concerned that the service has not given its protection responsibilities sufficient importance or enough staff to manage its duties. It needs to develop a clear protection strategy to direct how it will manage its risk-based inspection programme. It should make sure it can offer specialist protection advice 24/7. And it should work more closely with businesses to share information and make sure they comply with fire safety regulations.

The service's response strategy should make sure it provides the quickest response for the public. It needs to adopt [national operational guidance](#) (NOG), including joint learning. Operational staff should develop a better understanding of the joint decision model and use of discretion. However, the service does make good use of its [on-call](#) staff, using them for a range of specialist response roles and as community safety advisers.

The service's training for national incidents needs to improve. It should make sure its staff have access to the risk information they need, and carry out shared training exercises with neighbouring services and partner organisations.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure the data it collects to inform its integrated risk management plan is understood and used to manage its risk within the county.
- The service should ensure it gathers and records relevant and up-to-date risk information and ensure a programme of risk site visits.

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

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has an IRMP that covers the period 2018–2021. The service used the county council's consultation services department to maximise public engagement and shape the plan. The service told us it received 147 responses to its consultation, although it had hoped to receive more. The IRMP made few changes to the previous plan for 2015–2018 and, in our view, the service showed limited ambition to improve how it operates.

Local resilience managers engage at district level with local partner organisations, such as social housing, to gather local intelligence. The service has maps highlighting at-risk groups within the area that allow managers to target their prevention work. However, we couldn't see how it uses this local information to guide its wider risk profile as part of its IRMP.

The service uses a range of data to identify local risk. This includes information from partner organisations such as the Safer Gloucestershire Partnership, which holds a range of data on crime, health and anti-social behaviour. However, the partnership doesn't receive fire and rescue service data to add to the picture of overall risk in the county.

The service's computer modelling uses various data (dwelling house fires, other building fires, casualties, and indices of multiple deprivation) to create a risk map to inform its IRMP. This allows it to define risk, target resources and map problems such as arson. The service previously used an external consultancy to evaluate its response model and the location of its fire stations and fire engines. This resulted in it changing its crewing arrangements at Cirencester and closing an on-call station at Painswick. This was part of its 2015–2018 IRMP and the data was used for its 2018–2021 IRMP as well.

The service doesn't engage with partner organisations on a regular basis to understand current and future risk and what it will need to plan for. We recognise this is now changing in preparation for the next IRMP in 2022.

Having an effective risk management plan

The service's IRMP reflects the national risk assessment and the local community risk register, as well as highlighting risk sites within the county.

The IRMP has a strong emphasis towards prevention and collaboration with partner organisations, such as the county council and clinical commissioning group. But it doesn't have enough detail about protection and response.

The IRMP has three objectives:

1. Increased focus on prevention and protection.
2. Explore, further develop and maximise opportunities to collaborate with partners and other stakeholders.
3. Reconfigure and reform our service.

An annual business plan and a prevention strategy underpin the IRMP. These documents don't clearly set out who is responsible for actions or identify any targets for completing them. As a result, the business plan doesn't make it clear how the service will manage risk to the public or meet the requirements of the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#).

Maintaining risk information

The service's handling of risk information is mixed. It doesn't collect, or manage effectively, risk information for sites that present a risk to firefighters and members of the public. The service told us it rates risk using the provision of operational risk information system (PORIS) methodology. However, in most of the risk ratings we examined, we found discrepancies between how the service had rated risk and what the grading should have been using the PORIS methodology. This leads to inconsistencies across the service.

The firefighters we interviewed were confident accessing up-to-date risk information through [mobile data terminals](#) (MDTs) on fire engines. However, staff told us older MDTs weren't reliable. The service was in the process of rolling out replacement MDTs at the time of our inspection and this had greatly improved reliability.

As at 31 December 2018, the service had 175 risk sites. In the nine months to 31 December 2018, it had inspected 147 of them. Most of the records we reviewed were in date for their planned inspection.

[Wholetime](#) staff have a programme of inspections and visits to all the risk sites within their fire station area, with information recorded on an IT system. The allocation of inspections is rotated to make sure all staff visit every site within a four-year cycle, with high-risk sites taking priority. On-call staff don't routinely visit risk sites.

The service's local resilience managers attend safety advisory groups within their areas. For short-term risks, such as sprinklers temporarily not working, [fire control](#) shares information on the service's [mobilising](#) system to alert crews where necessary. For example, the planning of the Cheltenham Gold Cup included training for staff and temporary risk plans on the MDTs. This information is given an owner and review date to make sure it is removed when no longer relevant.

We saw effective exchange of information carried out during shift changes and during on-call training evenings. The service uses 'stop and go' notices for health and safety problems that need something to be highlighted and then actioned. All staff need to read and sign the notices to confirm they understand them. However, this process is inconsistent and doesn't currently give the organisation assurance that staff have read and understood the information.

Preventing fires and other risks



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it targets the most vulnerable referrals as a priority, and that staff understand the service's high risk factor categories.

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

Prevention strategy

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has a comprehensive strategy for prevention. It has established partnerships to target activity at people who are at the greatest risk of fire. The service provides [safe and well visits](#) and takes referrals from partner organisations such as housing associations and the Gloucester Deaf Association. The service leads a sub-group of the Gloucester adult [safeguarding](#) board to provide opportunities to reduce demand for fire, health and social services.

The service has identified seven fatal fire risk factors that it uses to target and prioritise prevention work. These are:

- the victim lives alone;
- alcohol;
- housekeeping and housing concerns;
- limited mobility;
- mental health needs;
- drugs (both prescription and illegal); and
- smoking.

Since 2016, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has provided telecare call handling and response to more than 500 subscribers who don't have next of kin close by. Fire control sends an on-call firefighter to respond if there is an activation of the system. On-call staff carry out this role on a voluntary basis. The service has completed an internal evaluation of the benefits of this agreement. It recognises that the management arrangements should be more formal. With these improvements in place, we recognise the value this could have for the public in Gloucestershire.

The service has developed a pilot project with Gloucestershire Hospital Trust, with a part-funded staff member who takes on the role of care navigator. They identify those with potential vulnerabilities and co-ordinate partner organisations to provide additional support. This support is designed to prevent re-admission within 90 days and reduce the chance of fires. It reflects the fact that a higher proportion of dwelling fires involve older people who have just been discharged from hospital.

Promoting community safety

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service carries out significant prevention work for the size of the service.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service carried out 7,649 safe and well checks. This equates to 12.2 safe and well checks per 1,000 population, which is above the rate for England of 10.4. These visits include fire safety activities such as identifying and reducing fire risks and fitting fire alarms, as well as welfare-related activities such as health screening and advice on health prevention, social welfare and how to avoid trips and falls. In the same period, 37.4 percent of these checks were to households occupied by a person registered as disabled. This is above the England rate of 24.7 percent and an increase since 2014/15. The service targeted 54.3 percent of these checks at households occupied by an elderly person, a similar rate to the England average (54.1 percent).

However, at the time of inspection, the service had a backlog of over 800 safe and well visits. The service allocates visits to wholetime crews in their own station area and to community safety advisers (on-call staff who volunteer to carry out safe and well visits in on-call areas or where visits are more complex in nature). There is an electronic system to manage referrals and record visits. But the service doesn't manage the allocation of staff to high-priority safe and well visits. In some cases, this means high-risk visits have been awaiting allocation for months. The service should address the backlog and make sure its monitoring of referrals is effective.

The service has a target to complete safe and well checks in 75 percent of all high-risk households. Although the service is meeting this target, the classification by staff of what constitutes high risk is inconsistent. In the files we examined, staff had incorrectly classified a large number as high risk and therefore the accuracy of records on which the service bases its reporting of high risk is not clear. If the service improves its staff's understanding of what constitutes high risk, this could not only potentially place the service in a position of far exceeding the national rate of safe and well checks, but could also provide it with extra capacity to clear its backlog, in circumstances where it already carries out a high number of checks.

The service engages with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#)'s prevention campaigns. It gives firefighters materials and communications plans to use in support of these campaigns. This included stations being involved in national Drowning Prevention Week.

Staff are trained and confident in recognising vulnerability and making safeguarding referrals where necessary. There are pathways established for staff to refer people to appropriate organisations.

The service runs an education centre called SkillZONE. This is a life skills village that teaches children, vulnerable adults and other target groups about how to keep themselves safe in a range of realistic scenarios. The service also provides education and training to schoolchildren across Gloucestershire, and partners with the county council and police. The service assesses its work with schools by asking pre and post visit questions and comparing the data, although we didn't see the results of the evaluation during our inspection.

Road safety

The service's strategy for improving road safety isn't clear. There is no formal road safety partnership in Gloucestershire. However, the service does carry out some activities. For example, along with the police and crime commissioner, it jointly funds:

- a safe and social driving co-ordinator post; and
- several road safety programmes such as the 'What if?' programme that targets new drivers.

The service has also been involved in drink driving prevention events and cycling safety events in Cheltenham.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Inadequate

Causes of concern

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service does not have a clear protection strategy that describes how it will manage its statutory responsibilities using its risk-based inspection programme (RBIP) to identify the highest-risk premises. The service has difficulty in maintaining and interpreting its data and can't carry out the number of audits of high-risk premises that it commits to as part of its RBIP.

Recommendations

By 30 April 2020, the service should:

- agree a plan to ensure its risk-based inspection programme is sufficiently resourced and targets its highest-risk premises; and
- ensure it conducts the number and frequency of high-risk premise audits that it sets out in its inspection programme.

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

The service's approach to protection is poor. It doesn't have a protection strategy. And it doesn't describe in any detail how it will manage its statutory responsibilities relating to fire protection within its IRMP. The service has a schedule of audits, but it doesn't include detail, such as how the service would enforce compliance or engage with businesses. The schedule defines the number and types of known premises within its fire safety system: the last schedule dated 2018 included 22,317 premises. But this differs from the data provided to the Home Office of 16,674 known premises as at 31 March 2018.

The service recently changed its definition of high-risk premises. It now prioritises premises where there is a risk people might be sleeping there. It also prioritises premises with a low compliance rating or no inspection history. In its 2018 work schedule, the service identified that it has a significant number of premises (1,076) that have the potential to be high risk due to a previous poor risk rating or no inspection history. The service committed to target them in 2018/2019 and across the three-year work schedule and aims to inspect all 1,076 potentially high-risk premises

in 2018/2019. The service calculated that it has a total capacity of 1,056 per year with its current staff, which is below the number of targeted inspections it plans to carry out.

We are concerned that the service hasn't allocated enough resources to protection activity. At the time of inspection, the service had four specialist fire protection inspectors. However, two of these were still in training, leaving just two people to carry out the high-risk inspections.

Currently, operational firefighters don't carry out any protection audits to ease the burden on specialist staff. The service told us that, as part of the work schedule, it has highlighted proposals to alter this. It hasn't yet trained its staff to do this.

Gloucestershire County Council has recently agreed additional funding to increase the resources assigned to protection activity. However, any improvements will be difficult due to the service having no defined policy and not enough staff at present. This means that the service needs to make sure its protection strategy is clear, with enough oversight to meet its statutory requirements.

The service had difficulties explaining its protection data to us. The data it supplied to us was different from the data it supplied to the Home Office. The service needs to make sure it has confidence in data submissions, and it needs to improve its own understanding of its protection data. However, it is meeting most of its deadlines for responding to its statutory consultations for building regulations. Between 1 April 2018 and 31 December 2018, the service received 380 building consultations and responded to 96.3 percent within the required timeframe. Managers consistently evaluate audits on a quarterly basis.

The service isn't able to provide 24/7 out-of-hours capability for responding to complaints, concerns and dangerous fire safety conditions. This means that the service can't immediately address dangerous issues outside office hours.

Enforcement

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service conducted 277 audits, down from 732 audits in the year to 31 March 2015. This equates to 1.7 audits per 100 known premises, which is lower than the England rate of 3.0. Of the 277 audits, 78.3 percent were satisfactory; this is higher than the England rate of 68.5 percent. In the same period, the service issued 43 informal notices, eight enforcement notices, four [prohibition notices](#) and carried out one successful prosecution.

In the audits reviewed by inspectors, we found that the action taken by fire safety inspectors was appropriate and proportionate to the findings of the audit. Given the small numbers of protection staff, it is encouraging to see that they are using the full range of powers.

Due to the team being very small, with only a few people having this specialist knowledge, any departures have the potential to significantly hinder the service's ability to mount a prosecution. The service needs to take steps to mitigate this risk.

The protection team and the county council trading standards team are located in the same building. Although we heard examples of the teams working together during the run-up to bonfire night, it was disappointing to find there are no formal processes for exchanging information.

Working with others

In the year to 31 December 2018, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service received 2,704 requests for assistance to automatic fire alarms (AFAs). Of these, it did not attend 1,764 (65.2 percent). The service has a robust policy for challenging unwanted fire signals and only responds to AFAs when there are other reports of a fire as well as the alarm. It completes follow-up engagement with the businesses to address underlying problems.

However, the service doesn't proactively engage with businesses to promote fire safety and doesn't highlight how businesses should comply with fire safety regulations. Its website provides links for businesses, giving them information and guidance on risk assessment and responsibilities under the Regulatory Form (Fire Safety) Order 2005. But it has no [primary authority schemes](#) or plans to create any.

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure its response strategy provides the quickest response for the public.
- The service should ensure it understands what it needs to do to adopt national operational guidance, including joint and national learning. It should then put in place a plan to do so.
- The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command.

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 carried out a review of the location of its fire stations and fire engines in 2015. It used external consultants to model response times and potential changes to stations and crewing. Since then, the service hasn't updated its response model and doesn't have a response strategy. It hasn't carried out any scenario planning to understand the number of fire engines it needs to meet its foreseeable risk, or if it faces multiple incidents.

The service uses wholetime and on-call staff to supplement stations if they drop below minimum staffing levels. Control treats all [wholetime stations](#) and three on-call stations as essential stations and will always try to keep them staffed, moving resources as necessary.

Fire control uses a mobilising system that works out the quickest fire engine to send to each emergency by using automatic vehicle location. But although the service sends the quickest fire engine on most occasions, this isn't the case in Gloucester and Cheltenham. In these places, control will send wholetime fire engines before on-call ones, even if the system is showing the on-call engine as quicker. We acknowledge that control staff have the discretion to amend this if there is a significant time difference. But this doesn't necessarily give the quickest response for the public every time.

Staff are confident in using breathing apparatus and can explain emergency procedures. The service uses its on-call staff to support a wide variety of specialist roles such as crewing an aerial ladder platform, line rescue and swift water rescue. This is different from what we have seen in most services and is worthy of note as a different approach to the use of on-call. The integration across wholetime and on-call is generally good, with on-call firefighters riding on wholetime engines to cover staffing shortages.

In the nine months to 31 December 2018, the service had average monthly fire engine availability ranging from 77 percent to 85 percent. More recent data received after the inspection shows that average availability increased to 88 percent in the year to 31 March 2019. This includes a rate of 100 percent for wholetime fire engines and 86 percent for on-call fire engines.

Response

The service hasn't progressed work to adopt NOG quickly enough. Until recently, it was still working through its gap analysis. It recently established a team to progress this, but due to the delay, the service hasn't implemented NOG and is behind other services. This could hinder how the service works alongside other fire and rescue services when responding to a cross-border incident.

In the year to 31 December 2018, the service attended 8.2 incidents per 1,000 population. This compares with the England rate of 10.4 over the same period. 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 a range of different ways.

The service publicly consulted as part of its IRMP 2015–2018 and agreed a set of response standards for the first fire engine to reach risk category areas. The higher the risk category, the quicker the response the incident will receive. The service's response standards are:

- risk category 1 dwelling fires within 8 minutes, 80 percent of the time;
- risk category 2 dwelling fires within 14 minutes, 80 percent of the time; and
- risk category 3 dwelling fires within 14 minutes, 80 percent of the time.

The service exceeded those targets between 1 April 2018 and 31 December 2018, achieving the response standards 81.5 percent, 95.4 percent and 91.6 percent of the time respectively. However, Home Office data shows that when comparing the service to other services classed as significantly rural, Gloucestershire has the longest response times to dwelling fires at 9 minutes 43 seconds and to [primary fires](#) at 11 minutes 3 seconds.

The service has a range of pre-determined attendance to different types of incidents and control has recently adopted the national incident type classifications. The service is also able to send an on-call engine with a crew of three to certain types of incident such as road traffic collisions and car fires. This means that control can send an engine when otherwise it would be unavailable due to not having enough staff.

Staff are confident retrieving data, such as risk information and location data, from MDTs. However, staff told us that the service recently removed information that crews use to determine where the safest place is to cut crashed cars. It would be useful to include this information once more. The service installed this software as a trial in 2015 but it was discontinued in 2017 due to financial restraints. The service could reintroduce the software for all appliances if the funding were available.

Certain on-call stations provide a first response to medical emergencies on behalf of the ambulance service. The service has continued with emergency medical response following an initial trial with wholetime staff. However, some staff have stopped providing this response due to an ongoing national industrial dispute. This doesn't affect how they respond to fires and other emergencies.

Command

Control operators have the discretion to vary how the service responds based on information received from callers. Incidents we reviewed had the appropriate messages and dynamic risk assessments sent to control at appropriate intervals. But some managers aren't sure of the service's response strategy. For example, some middle managers told us that they aren't sure whether they have to respond to incidents when the control room tells them about those incidents. This was raised with the service at the time of inspection and resolved shortly afterwards.

The service has introduced the Safer Firefighter programme. This supports and strengthens core skills and has recently focused on incident command. However, while staff know the basic principles of incident command, some operational staff don't fully understand [operational discretion](#) and the joint decision model.

Keeping the public informed

The service doesn't keep the public routinely informed about incidents, despite being able to use the county council's communications team. It has 24/7 support from the communications team for more notable incidents. Fire control staff use Twitter for prevention messages.

The service's work on telecare has better equipped its control staff to know about and manage vulnerabilities and safeguarding issues. Operational staff have had training in vulnerability, so they know how to identify people who are vulnerable and can make safeguarding referrals where necessary.

The control room has correct procedures in place to manage incidents. Its command and control system provides prompt sheets for operators around specialist subjects. These include breathing apparatus emergencies and providing survival guidance to those trapped by fire.

Evaluating operational performance

While the service has a process for gathering operational learning, not all staff understand this. Most operational staff said they have taken part in a [hot debrief](#) and are confident in its approach.

After all incidents attended by two or more fire engines, staff must record on an assurance form where tangible lessons have been learned. But most staff we spoke to hadn't participated in this process. The service doesn't monitor the number of incidents to make sure staff submit the corresponding number of forms. Its operational performance improvement group considers returns and manages trends and emerging issues. However, the service couldn't show us what results this group had had or how it was dealing with arising issues.

It was encouraging to see that the service submits information to national operational learning. For example, it submitted information following an incident with a liquid natural gas tanker where it reported problems in isolating the vehicle.

The service's process for dealing with complaints isn't effective. The complaints we reviewed were recorded inconsistently. During our review, the service only had records for one out of the four complaints we asked to view. The service has recognised this and has recently adopted the county council's process to improve consistency.

Responding to national risks



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information. This should include cross-border risk information.
- The service should make sure it runs a programme of service, cross-border and partner exercises, sharing the learning from these 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

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has arrangements in place to access extra resources for incidents such as wide-scale floods or major accidents. Control room staff and officers know how to request national assets and how to update the national reporting tool. The service supported national requests for resources recently. It provided wildland firefighting teams in Manchester in 2018 and enhanced logistical support to the Cumbria floods in 2015. Control managers have recently taken part in training on marauding terrorist attacks with police control colleagues. This followed a local review within the county of the learning outcomes from the Manchester terrorist attack of 2017.

The service's chief fire officer (CFO) is responsible for the county council's civil protection team. This team works in the same building as the protection team at HQ. This is an effective and joined-up approach. With police and fire control rooms also located together, staff believe the ability to exchange information face to face is easier.

Working with other services

The service borders five other English fire and rescue services and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. It exchanges premises risk information with these neighbouring services up to ten kilometres from each border. However, due to staff resources not being available, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue staff can't view neighbouring service risk information on their MDTs. The service is aware of this and is working on a solution.

The service has recently reviewed its mutual aid arrangements. These allow neighbouring fire and rescue services to support each other at incidents. Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has reaffirmed that it will support requests for mutual aid from neighbouring services. This follows a period where previous senior managers hadn't always allowed this to take place.

The service doesn't have a regular programme of exercises either within the county or with neighbouring fire and rescue services. Staff told us that they regularly respond with neighbouring fire and rescue services, but rarely carry out cross-border training. The staff survey we carried out as part of our inspection (see Annex A for more details) also confirmed this. Of the 105 firefighters and specialist support staff who responded to the survey, 77 percent disagreed that their service regularly trains/exercises with neighbouring services.

Working with other agencies

The service has experienced severe flooding in the past and has used national resources. It therefore has experience of managing large-scale national deployments into the county.

While the service conducts exercises with local resilience partners, these are sporadic and there is no formal exercise programme. The service told us that the low number of exercises might be because the organisations don't have enough staff or resources. There have been some large-scale exercises recently – including using a large car factory and a training centre with a high-rise training building – as well as control room training for responding to a marauding terrorist attack.

The police and fire service headquarters are both on the same blue light campus. The multi-agency tactical and strategic co-ordination centres are also on this site. The duty principal fire officer becomes the strategic lead for the county council if a strategic co-ordinating group (SCG) is called. If the officer needs further support, they can ask additional directors to attend depending on the necessary skills.

As part of national arrangements for terrorism-related incidents, the service has specialist capability alongside Avon Fire and Rescue Service.

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

The service needs to make better use of its resources. It has met its previous savings requirements, but it needs to have a clearer understanding of how it assigns its resources. It doesn't allocate resources according to an assessment of risk. In some areas, such as protection, it has reduced staffing levels even though the risk hadn't gone down.

The service works with several partners to provide its services. It needs to regularly review these arrangements in detail to make sure it is getting the expected benefits. It has documented and tested its business continuity arrangements, but still needs to make them better. The control room is a good example of where testing has led to improvements.

The service needs to make sure it has the skills and capacity to manage future changes. This is particularly the case for its financial plans and its relationship with the county council. It needs to make sure it makes the most of its future working arrangements with the county council. The service would benefit from building on its use of specialist functions such as those established with HR, procurement and finance.

Making best use of resources



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

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

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

How plans support objectives

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has a net annual budget of £16.3 million and has achieved budget savings of £3.7 million since 2013. The service has the lowest firefighter cost per head of population in England at £16.42 in the year to 31 March 2018. This compares with the England rate of £22.38 over the same period. This is due to it having cut back office and protection services significantly, as well as the fact that it is predominantly an [on-call](#) service. The county council carries out medium-term financial planning. The service supports this with its own process, to help budget planning and mitigate risk to the county council.

The service has been through a period of upheaval. The former CFO resigned suddenly in July 2018. Also, a number of internal audit investigations started following whistleblowing allegations, including some in relation to financial conduct. The service has published several audit reports via the county council and is working on others.

The service doesn't allocate resources according to the risk outlined within its [IRMP](#). In some areas, it has reduced resources with no evidence that the risk in that area had gone down. For example, between 31 March 2011 and 31 December 2018, the number of dedicated and competent protection staff within the service fell from ten to two. While the service has met its saving targets, it hasn't carried out a review to see if the reductions are in the appropriate areas. It wasn't able to give us any assessment of the effect of these reductions.

Prevention has undoubtedly been the focus for the service, and the IRMP is heavily weighted towards the prevention function. As highlighted earlier, this has been at the expense of protection.

Productivity and ways of working

The service has reduced its support functions. Between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2018, the number of support staff fell from 79 to 40 full-time equivalents. The service is also operating with a number of temporary promotions across its management structure up to assistant chief officer. As at 31 March 2018, the service had 27 staff on temporary promotion, but more recent data received after the inspection shows this has increased to 53 as at 31 March 2019. Managers have been moving around the service and this has affected the service's capability and capacity to make major changes. The service needs to make sure staff in important roles have the right capabilities and capacity to develop the service. The current lack of stability is negatively affecting managers' confidence in making decisions.

There aren't enough processes to manage the distribution and priority of prevention work. The service uses on-call staff as community safety advisers to carry out [safe and well visits](#). But it hasn't evaluated whether paying on-call staff to carry out this work is providing value for money, or whether it is reaching the most [vulnerable people](#) in its community. Also, while [wholetime](#) crews have a target of 20 high-risk safe and well visits a month, to meet this target they aren't necessarily carrying out visits to high-risk homes.

We acknowledge that the service is using its workforce flexibly. For example, it uses its on-call staff to respond to high-line rescues and water rescues as well as to carry out safe and well visits. In the two main population centres of Cheltenham and Gloucester, one [watch](#) manager covers two stations. They will ride the fire engine at either, depending on crewing levels at each station.

Collaboration

The service has several collaborative partnerships in place. It shares:

- a control room and headquarters building with Gloucestershire Police;
- a joint private finance initiative (PFI) training centre with Avon Fire and Rescue Service and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service;
- telecare with Gloucestershire clinical commissioning group; and
- concern for safety and co-responding cardiac arrest with South Western Ambulance Foundation Trust.

For the last two organisations, the service carries out cost recovery for the services they provide. The service has done some early case studies and evaluated outcomes. We believe the service should carry out more regular, detailed reviews and evaluation. This will help it understand the benefits for the participating organisations and make sure collaborations are achieving the desired aims.

The costs of the joint training centre with Avon Fire and Rescue Service and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service are met through a financing model over 25 years. A recent remodelling exercise suggests an £808,000 deficit by the project end. Each service will need to increase its contributions to minimise the risk of this deficit arising. For Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, this means it will need to find another £200,000, which it currently plans to meet from county council [reserves](#).

Continuity arrangements

The service recognises the need to improve its business continuity arrangements and is in the process of updating its plans. It is doing this with the county council's civil protection team, which manages business continuity for all the council. The new plans appear more managed and tested than previous ones.

[Fire control](#) regularly tests its plans with an evacuation exercise carried out every quarter. We saw evidence of the service using learning from previous exercises to develop the plan. For example, control operators now use a 4G tablet to manage [mobilisation](#) as they travel from Gloucester to Stroud. The service has changed network provider to make sure this device has good enough coverage, because of lessons learned from a previous exercise.

The service has developed its own safe and well software. This relies on a single person to maintain and develop the software. The service needs to mitigate any risks from this single point of failure.

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



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it has sufficient capability and capacity to manage future change.

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

Several internal audit reports have indicated shortfalls in financial and procurement procedures as well as in human resources recruitment and selection processes. In June 2019, when the service initially published these reports, it gave assurance that it was taking (and had already taken) immediate action to correct any major problems and pursuing follow-up actions.

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has been able to meet savings requirements through underspends and reductions in support roles. The county council had required the service to reduce its costs by 1 percent (£160,000) in this financial year, but it has since removed this requirement.

As is common with county council services, the service doesn't hold any reserves of its own apart from those identified for PFI and fire service pensions. If it needs more funding, the service must submit a business case to access county council reserves for any new areas of work. This is a new process for the service. It has established a financial monitoring group that meets monthly to review expenditure and

plan future budget forecasting. The service is working with the county council to improve how it manages principal non-pay costs such as contract renegotiation and joint procurement.

The service has its own fleet strategy, but it doesn't link to the current IRMP in relation to future requirements. The service told us that it will review its fleet strategy when it develops its new IRMP. The county council includes fire service buildings (apart from PFI sites) within its asset management plan. However, there are no fire-specific actions within the plan to assess future changes within Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service estates.

Innovation

The service has decided to upgrade its [MDTs](#) and is currently in the process of rolling these out across the service. It has taken the decision to move to 4G-enabled MDTs to improve the data-transfer capability and reduce the costs of the Airwave network. The service told us that the new MDTs will be compliant with the emergency services network when it is rolled out.

Staff use tablets for carrying out their safe and well visits. They can use them to make referrals to other agencies and update records. Staff told us that the service could increase the functionality of these tablets, especially in using the data to produce performance and analytical information.

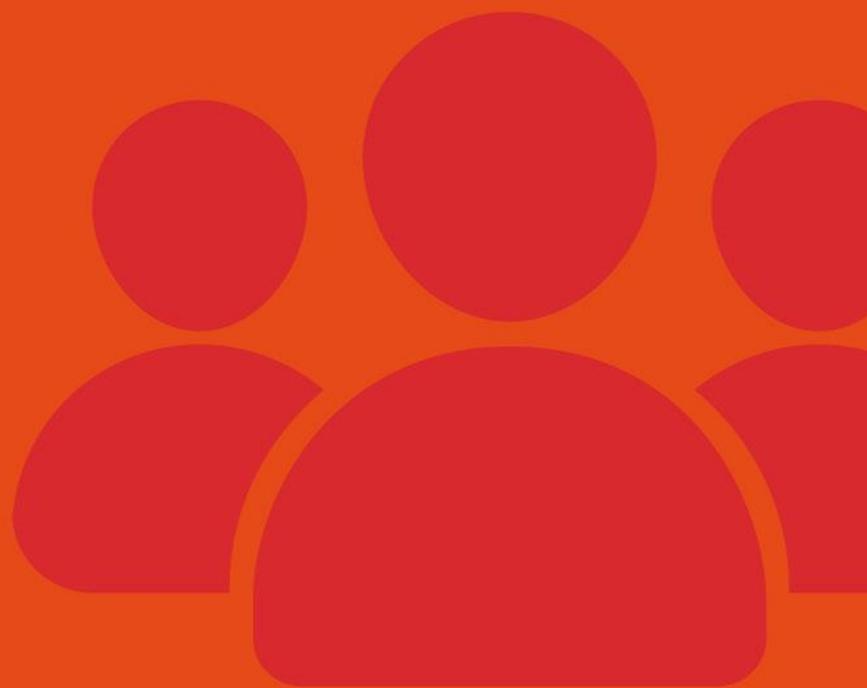
Future investment and working with others

The service has several collaborations in place. The police and crime commissioner has submitted a business case to the Home Office to take over governance of the service from the county council. The Home Secretary has postponed this decision until after the next police and crime commissioner elections in May 2020. Progress in some areas of joint working with the police force has slowed as a result. But meetings between the assistant chief fire officer and the assistant chief constable with responsibility for collaboration continue to take place to work on collaboration.

The service generates approximately £500,000 a year – on a cost-recovery basis – from its partnerships through telecare and cardiac response. It has no current plans to generate further income.

It is common for county council-governed fire and rescue services to be able to draw on wider county council resources such as HR, IT and procurement. This hasn't been the case in Gloucestershire. The service has its own support functions, such as operational assurance and risk information, which in some areas are under-resourced and not providing the required level of service. At the time of our inspection, the new CFO has agreed with the county council a new integration plan to align the service more closely to Gloucestershire County Council and use its support functions.

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

The service isn't good enough at promoting the right values and culture. It has allowed a culture of bullying and harassment to develop. It needs to introduce its new values and service structure as a matter of priority. And it needs to make sure that all managers demonstrate these values through their behaviour.

Occupational health support is generally good, though not all staff and managers are aware of how to access it. The service needs to improve its process for testing equipment, to make sure staff have access to equipment that they know is safe to use.

The service needs to develop its workforce planning to create stability and reduce the need for temporary promotions. It needs to improve the support it gives its newly promoted managers. It should review its decision to reduce the length of its training course for new firefighters. The service needs to make sure specialist staff have enough time to maintain their required skills to the right standard. It should also make sure it properly trains firefighters who have additional medical response duties.

The service is trying to become more open to challenge, but it will take time to re-establish the trust necessary for staff to feel confident in the procedures. It needs to make sure it has an effective grievance procedure that staff feel confident using.

The service has had considerable success in raising its number of female firefighters and it now has the highest proportion nationally. It should assess its approach and share the learning with the wider fire and rescue community.

The service should develop a promotions policy to underpin its 'recruit for values and train for skills' approach. This will help staff understand how they can develop and progress. It should bring in an open and fair process for developing people with talent.

Promoting the right values and culture



Inadequate

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure its programme for testing and maintaining equipment has suitable managerial oversight.

Causes of concern

Gloucestershire FRS values are tarnished and are not credible with staff. The service needs to introduce its new values and service structure to allow staff and managers to understand the priorities for the future.

Recommendations

- The service should publish its new values and vision for the service to all staff.
- The pathway for change the service chooses should be clearly documented for the organisation to follow.
- Managers need to be seen to demonstrate the new values through their behaviours to rebuild trust.

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

Workforce wellbeing

Staff generally see the provision of welfare support from occupational health (OH) as positive. They gave us examples of receiving support from OH over issues such as bereavement and mental health. However, managers and staff have a varied knowledge of how to access wellbeing services. Some were well informed, and others said they have never received training and didn't know how to access services. The service's intranet has minimal information for staff on how to access wellbeing support.

The service is introducing diffusing as a process for post-traumatic incident support. It is training some of its staff and managers. However, staff are unclear as to how this should work in practice.

Health and safety

The service has a health and safety policy in place and has an electronic system for accident reporting. The service told us that capacity problems make it difficult for it to monitor and report on trends. The quality of risk assessments at stations was varied. The process for tracking accident reports through to actions and improvements isn't always effective or clear.

The service has recently audited its programme of equipment testing after it realised that some equipment was past its due date for testing. Staff told us that the service doesn't centrally monitor the testing of specialist rope and water rescue equipment. This has caused problems between the central equipment team and local specialist crews. The service should ensure that managers properly oversee its programme for testing and maintaining equipment.

Culture and values

The service has undergone a period of change over the last 11 months with the difficult resignation of the former CFO and the appointment of a replacement. It is important to highlight that we heard from staff across the organisation who had differing experiences around the two management structures.

The service introduced a values policy following a cultural review in 2016, under the former CFO. Staff told us these values were tarnished and not fit for purpose now, because of the difficult circumstances surrounding the CFO's resignation. Staff described disappointing and sometimes distressing examples of previous bullying and harassment by senior leaders. This included leaders humiliating staff in front of peers and threatening demotion for temporary promoted managers if they didn't carry out certain leaders' wishes.

Our staff survey reflected these concerns. Of the 139 respondents to our staff survey, 41 percent reported feeling bullied or harassed and 32 percent feeling discriminated against at work in the last 12 months. This had resulted in staff not trusting managers and there being a culture of 'them and us'. While most staff are positive that the service is making a fresh start, they are still cautious due to concerns that the management team doesn't have the capacity to lead cultural change. The service will be aligning with the county council's values in future.

The new CFO faces the challenge of making sure staff understand his vision and plans for the service, and making sure the whole organisation embraces the values and culture. In doing so, there need to be visible plans to show how these changes will be brought about and these need to be communicated throughout the service.

The service is still responding to cardiac emergencies using [wholetime stations](#) following a national trial. This has been a contentious issue for those carrying out the role, and staff told us that this had brought them into conflict with colleagues. The service should make sure it manages any division between staff who carry out this role and those who don't.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it has oversight and assurance that local specialist training is recorded and managed.
- The service should ensure it has development support for all newly promoted managers.

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 is poor at workforce planning and hasn't taken account of the skills and capabilities required to meet its [IRMP](#). We saw this in the protection team with its low level of staffing, and several areas where the service relies on one member of staff. While the service has monthly workforce planning meetings, these need to be a main part of future planning for the service. We recognise these meetings are a relatively new function. The reliance on temporary promotions, often for several years, indicates a lack of previous planning. As at 31 December 2018, the longest-serving temporary promotion is around three and half years. A variety of staff informed us that due to the number and frequency of changes of their uniformed line managers, making progress in a department can be difficult as each new manager must understand and learn new information.

The service has a policy of 'recruit for values and train for skills'. This means that the service will look primarily at what values a person has for a role. If successful, the service will train the person in the skills they need to carry out the role. We saw some positive examples of the service developing staff and newly promoted managers and moving them from different conditions of service. But we also found that some managers had received little support or training to meet the required skills after they had been promoted.

The service recently reduced the length of its training course for new firefighters. Some staff told us this reduction has made them feel less confident going on to fire stations as they didn't feel as prepared as they thought they would. The service hasn't carried out effective evaluation of the change. It should consider this.

The service relies on its [on-call](#) staff to crew several specialist vehicles or functions, such as rope rescue. While the service gives these crews additional training hours, it doesn't record competencies for specialist roles. The use of on-call staff in a variety of roles allows the service to send them to a wider range of incidents, which can help with staff retention. The service needs to assure itself that, given the limited time

available to on-call staff, they can maintain core competencies as well as their additional specialist competencies to a required standard.

The service manages its staffing effectively on a day-to-day basis via an electronic management system. [Fire control](#) makes sure enough cover is always available to staff the five wholetime/mixed stations and the three main identified on-call stations. It does this by deploying staff from other stations or calling staff in on overtime.

Learning and improvement

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has a training recording system and an e-learning management system to provide online training. While the majority of training records for core competencies are complete, assurance of those records varies due to some staff recording their own evidence, particularly from incidents. The service doesn't currently include control staff and support staff on these systems, but has told them that work is underway to change this.

The service has introduced the Safer Firefighter programme to ensure that all operational staff receive the same training in core competencies. Staff are positive about this programme, which ensures they maintain their essential skills.

Staff informed us that they have received limited training for the additional medical emergency response with the ambulance service; in some cases only limited training for cardiac incidents. While the continuation of this duty is positive, the service should make sure staff are appropriately trained and confident to carry out the role.

The service moves new [wholetime staff](#) around stations in pairs during their early careers to gain experience. Staff feel that this created difficulty in some areas, as they had to go back over areas of their development with new managers.

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service introduced its People First strategy to focus on appraisals, personal development and mentoring. The policy is comprehensive and supportive. Unfortunately, after launching it, the service didn't have the capacity and capability to follow it up. The policy has since lost credibility with staff.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service needs to understand and address the impact positive action is having on staff.
- The service should assure itself that it has effective grievance procedures. It should identify and implement ways to improve staff confidence in the grievance process.

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

Many staff told us that the service hadn't previously been open to challenge. Staff across all levels gave examples of concerns they have raised that the service hasn't dealt with. They also gave examples of the service reprimanding them for raising concerns, particularly from individuals from underrepresented groups. Of the 139 respondents to our staff survey, 55.4 percent disagreed that they felt able to challenge ideas without any detriment as to how the service would treat them afterwards. This has left the service with a legacy that will take time to change. Recently the service has re-introduced its staff suggestion scheme. While it is too soon for us to review the process, it appears well thought out.

The service receives very few formal grievances. Staff told us that they aren't confident about using the grievance procedure due to fears of a lack of confidentiality and possible negative consequences. While the service offers welfare support and uses county council managers to provide impartiality for grievances, the way the service records grievances is disjointed. The service could manage processes more efficiently.

Diversity

The service has made considerable progress in recruiting female firefighters into both on-call and wholetime positions. As of 31 March 2018, 15.4 percent of firefighters were female (10.6 percent of [retained](#), 21.6 percent of wholetime). This is, by quite a margin, the biggest proportion of female firefighters in England. The service has tried to remove potential barriers while maintaining the necessary standards. For example, it allows female candidates to carry out further upper-body strengthening if they fail this requirement on a selection day; it then retests them prior to starting training. In addition, the service uses existing female staff as role models on selection days.

In the last round of recruitment, the service recruited 53 percent female firefighters. Some staff questioned the processes used to achieve this success, as they felt that the service had lowered the physical fitness standards for female applicants. The service has reassured staff that the tests are suitable and fair. However, it needs to communicate this more openly to existing staff to provide transparency and challenge suspicions.

The service hadn't evaluated its most recent recruitment processes at the time of inspection. We would encourage the service to assess its success and share the learning across the sector.

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service recognises that it hasn't been as successful at attracting black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) staff. As at 31 March 2018, 2.8 percent of firefighters were BAME; this compares with 4.6 percent of the population. The service should use its new equality and diversity forum to better understand how it can engage with these communities to achieve the same success with recruitment and retention of BAME staff.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it has an effective system in place to manage staff development, performance and productivity.
- 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

The service replaced appraisals with an individual performance plan (IPP) as part of the introduction of its People First strategy. This received a mixed response from staff we spoke to, with some preferring the new approach and others feeling it was only for people who wanted promotion. While some staff had been set goals that link to the service plan, others were unclear how this would work and were unaware of any performance objectives. Without oversight and management of the IPP process, the service won't be able to use the information to inform effective workforce planning. As at 31 March 2018, the service had low levels of IPP completion. The service should review the approach to People First for any future amendments.

The service will need to ensure that it makes appropriate plans for developing new managers in the future. Support staff feel that opportunities for progression are infrequent. They told us that the frequent management changes have made things much less clear, with managers not always understanding the roles and individual capabilities of staff within their teams.

The service has changed its promotion process in the past 12 months and has broadened the involvement of staff. It uses county council staff to provide independent scrutiny. Staff feel that the process had improved, and that these changes send out a positive message about fairness and inclusion.

The service has a 'recruit for values and train for skills' policy. The service doesn't have a promotions policy. When we asked how staff would know the areas they would need to prepare for, the service wasn't clear on how staff could understand the process and development pathways. It needs to address this.

Developing leaders

The service doesn't currently have a process for identifying and selecting staff with high potential to be senior leaders. It acknowledges that it still needs to improve development pathways. With several senior positions being filled on a temporary basis, the service should ensure it plans these development pathways and can support them when required.

Management development courses are available, and some managers are undertaking training through modern apprenticeships. However, the service hasn't offered this opportunity to all the staff we spoke to. The service is using leadership training from the police and county council to develop staff.

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. Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service is a unitary authority.

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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