

Mark Baxter  
Chief Fire Officer  
Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service

Councillor Nigel Pepper  
Chair of Fire Authority

20 January 2023

Dear Mark,

## Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service revisit

In March and April 2021, we inspected Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service. During that inspection, we identified two causes of concern that we shared with you and made the following recommendations:

### Cause of concern

The service hasn't taken enough action since the last inspection to appropriately resource its protection function.

### Recommendation

By 30 September 2021, the service should:

- produce a clear plan for how it will make sure all premises it has identified as high risk are audited in line with the timeframe set out in its risk-based inspection policy;
- review its administration of the protection function to make sure it can record and review all work clearly and consistently; and
- make sure it has an effective quality assurance process in place so the service can assure itself that staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.

## **Cause of concern**

The service hasn't done enough since the last inspection to improve equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the service.

## **Recommendation**

By 30 September 2021, the service should:

- give greater priority to how it increases awareness of EDI throughout the organisation;
- make sure that all staff get appropriate EDI training;
- improve how it works with its staff and give feedback about EDI issues;
- improve the understanding and use of equality impact assessments in all aspects of its work and consider if its policies and procedures are inclusive and support people with protected characteristics; and
- put in place a clear plan with timescales for improving its management of risk information.

You submitted an action plan setting out how you would address the areas of concern and the recommendations.

In February and March 2022, we revisited Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service to review progress against the action plan in relation to the cause of concern on resourcing its protection function.

On 22 April 2022, we wrote to you with our findings and informed you we were satisfied the service had done enough to address the recommendation relating to the administration of its protection function. We said we would revisit to further review your progress on the other recommendations in autumn 2022.

On 29 and 30 November 2022, we revisited and interviewed managers and staff with responsibility for protection. We concluded by interviewing you as chief fire officer and shared our initial findings on 16 December 2022. This letter provides an update on our findings.

## **Governance**

We found that the service had continued to maintain the governance arrangements put in place to monitor progress on the action plan, particularly in relation to the causes of concern. We considered that these arrangements, described in our letter of 22 April 2022, were sufficient in our first revisit.

## **Action plan**

The service has an action plan covering the causes of concern, described in our letter of 22 April 2022.

## **Progress against the cause of concern**

On our first revisit, we found that the service had made good progress with reducing the backlog of its audits, but 40 audits of premises identified as high risk were still outstanding. The service assured us that these would be completed by the end of March 2022. During this revisit, we found that the service had completed all outstanding audits, although some after the March deadline.

Since then the service has reviewed the way that it scores the risk of premises in line with National Fire Chiefs Council methodology. The service has four categories:

- high risk with sleeping accommodation;
- high risk;
- medium risk with sleeping accommodation; and
- medium risk.

All four categories will be audited over a four-year period, with the highest-risk premises receiving an audit every 12 months.

Through this review, the service identified premises that hadn't been audited for many years, and we found that it was prioritising them. The service is making good progress and after six months of the new programme, it has completed 515 of 679 planned audits for the year. It has also audited half of its highest-risk premises.

Although the service still only has 12 fully qualified members of protection staff, which it had at our last revisit, we noted that 3 staff members were progressing well to becoming competent. With the current resources, the service is making good progress with its risk-based inspection plan.

We were pleased to see that the service reviewed its risk-based inspection plan every quarter to make sure it had correctly categorised premises. This helps to make sure the service is auditing the right premises in the right timescales.

We are satisfied that the service has now made sufficient progress to address the first recommendation on protection. It has a plan in place for how it will audit premises identified as high and medium risk, and is making good progress with auditing these within the timescales it has set out.

We are satisfied that the service has now made sufficient progress to address the third recommendation. In September, the service introduced a quality assurance process, which means that every inspector is assessed every six months. The service needs to ensure that this becomes fully accepted and understood by everyone, and should consider other ways to make sure that inspectors carry out audits in a consistent way and to an appropriate standard.

## **Conclusion**

The inspection team was pleased to see that the service had continued to make progress to address the cause of concern in protection. The service has taken steps to identify its highest-risk premises and develop a risk-based inspection programme. And it has made good progress with auditing premises in line with this programme.

We are pleased that progress has been made in relation to the quality assurance process. We look forward to seeing further improvements in this area during our next inspection.

The cause of concern for protection is discharged.

As outlined in the April letter, we didn't review the cause for concern regarding EDI during this inspection. It will be reviewed during our scheduled inspection of the service in early 2023.

This letter will be published on our website.

Yours sincerely,



**HMI Roy Wilsher**

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services