

Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service



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About this inspection

This inspection is from our third round of inspections of fire and rescue services in England. We first inspected North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service in spring 2019. We published a report with our findings in December 2019 on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how it looks after its people. Our second inspection, in autumn 2020, considered how the service was responding to the pandemic. This inspection considers for a second time the service's effectiveness, efficiency and people.

In this round of inspections of all 44 fire and rescue services in England, we answer three main questions:

1. How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
2. How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
3. How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

This report sets out our inspection findings for North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

Good is our expected graded judgment for all fire and rescue services. It is based on policy, practice or performance that meet pre-defined grading criteria, which are informed by any relevant [national operational guidance](#) or standards.

If the service exceeds what we expect for good, we will judge it as outstanding.

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

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

Overview

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

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 Efficiency	 Inadequate	Requires improvement
Making best use of resources	 Inadequate	Requires improvement
Future affordability	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement

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

HM Inspector's summary

I have concerns about the performance of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and its ability to respond to fires and other risks. I have serious concerns about how sustainable its financial plans are for managing the risk of fire and other risks in an affordable way, and how effective the service is in carrying out workforce planning to make sure it has the skills and capabilities it needs. In view of these findings, we have been in regular contact with the newly appointed chief fire officer as much improvement is needed.

The effectiveness of the service requires improvement in the way it:

- understands the risk of fire and other emergencies;
- protects the public through fire regulation; and
- responds to fires and other emergencies.

It is good at:

- preventing fires and other risks; and
- responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

The efficiency of the service – that is, how it uses its resources – was found to be inadequate. This is due to the fragility of its budget. It needs to make sure collaboration activities, such as those with police, provide value for money and don't negatively affect the service. It also needs to improve how it makes its services affordable now and in the future.

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service was found to be inadequate in the way it looks after its people. The service needs to improve how it:

- promotes the right values and culture;
- ensures fairness and promoting diversity; and
- manages performance and developing leaders.

I have concerns about the service's ability to get the right people with the right skills. This is due to a lack of robust workforce planning. It should make sure effective processes are in place to support succession and training planning, staff absence and work-time management.

We would like to see improvements in the next 12 months and will be revisiting the service to monitor its progress.



Roy Wilsher

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Response

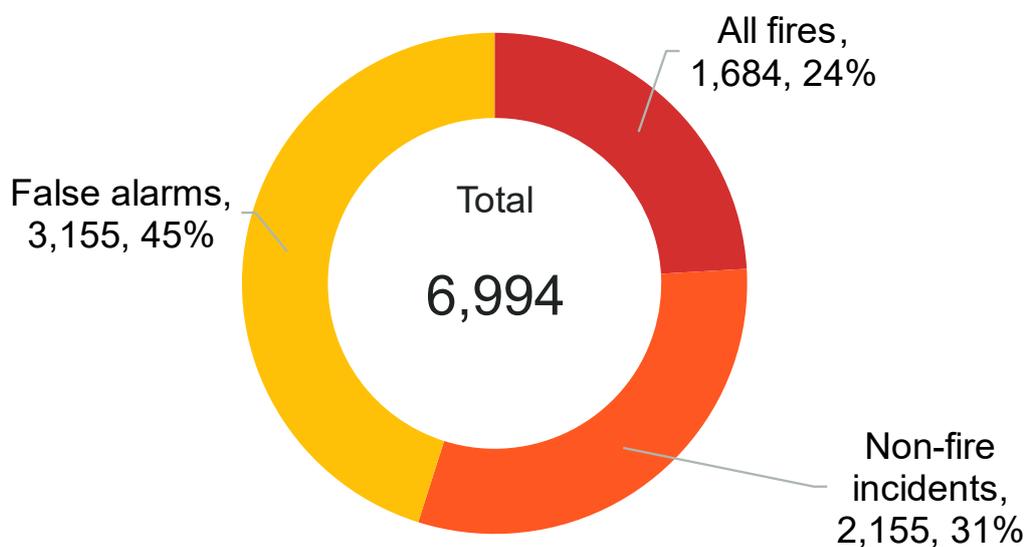
	North Yorkshire	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 30 September 2021	8.41	9.50
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	3.00	4.47
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2021	0.26	1.70
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2021	91.3%	86.4%



Cost

Firefighter cost per person Year ending 31 March 2021	£22.94	£25.02
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Incidents attended in the year to 30 September 2021





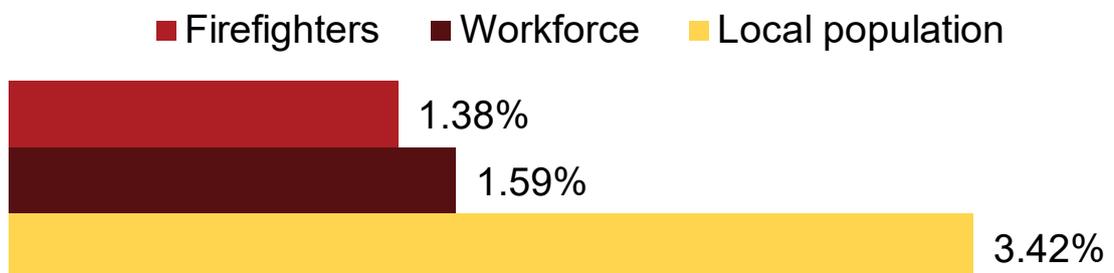
Workforce

	North Yorkshire	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2016 to 2021	-1.91%	-1.60%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	0.79	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2021	45.8%	64.4%

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



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



For more information on data and analysis throughout this report, please view the [‘About the data’ section of our website](#).

Effectiveness



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



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 should target its fire prevention and protection activities to those who are at greatest risk from fire and make sure fire safety legislation is being enforced. And when the public calls for help, it should respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness requires improvement.

For its overall effectiveness, we have graded the service as requires improvement. In our first inspection, which took place in 2019, we graded the service's effectiveness as good.

The [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#) is the same as that in place during our first inspection. In that inspection, we found the service's use of data was limited, meaning it hadn't fully assessed the risks it faced. The service hasn't yet updated the IRMP, and it hasn't made an action plan showing its progress as outlined in the IRMP. At the time of this inspection, the service was consulting with the public on a new IRMP. And in March 2022 it published a new community risk profile (CRP). We look forward to understanding how successful the new IRMP and CRP are in addressing identified risks.

We found that the service has improved how it prevents fires and other risks. At the time of our inspection a pilot of public safety officers (PSOs) was underway in North Yorkshire. PSOs carry out prevention activities with [vulnerable](#) members of the community on behalf of the fire and rescue service, police, and health partners. This helps reduce vulnerability by promoting fire safety and health and well-being. We are encouraged to see some progress has been made in ensuring protection resources are in place. But the service needs to better understand staff perception of

the changes. It also needs to ensure that its risk-based inspection programme (RBIP) includes proportionate activity to reduce risk. And the service needs to improve out-of-hours arrangements for fire safety resources.

When assessing the service's response to emergency incidents, we found it doesn't have the minimum number of fire engines it needs available at all times of the day. We also found evidence of operational staff not having the right skills and/or having to carry out dual roles, such as that of driver and officer in charge.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at understanding risk.

Each fire and rescue service should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks that could affect its communities. Arrangements should be put in place through the service's prevention, protection and response capabilities to prevent or mitigate these risks for the public.

Area for improvement

The service should ensure its integrated risk management plan is informed by a comprehensive understanding of current and future risk. It should use a wide range of data to build the risk profile and use operational data to test that it is up to date.

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

The service is taking steps to improve how it identifies risk

The service's current IRMP, known locally as its community safety plan, hasn't changed since our 2019 inspection. The IRMP was due to expire in 2021, but the service extended it until September 2022 to allow for the development of a new IRMP. At the time of our inspection, the IRMP hadn't been updated. But the service had carried out a [risk assessment](#) about the extension and was keeping associated incident data under review. The service didn't undertake any consultation about extending its IRMP.

During our 2019 inspection we found that the service hadn't fully assessed the risks it faced as part of its integrated risk management planning process. This was due to its limited use of data. The service recognises this and has developed a new CRP. The CRP uses a range of data and information, such as local authority insights, county council data, [indices of deprivation](#) and historic incident data.

At the time of our inspection, the office of the police, fire, and crime commissioner (PFCC) had started a 12-week public consultation about a new IRMP proposal, known locally as the risk and resource model (RRM). The CRP has helped the service improve its understanding of the risks it faces. It has also informed how the service has developed the RRM, which it expects to introduce in September 2022, if approved. We look forward to understanding how successful the RRM and CRP are in addressing identified risks.

We found evidence that the service engages positively with partners to better understand local risk. For example, community connect partnerships are in place in each of the seven districts. Organisations in the partnerships share information and risks to make sure they all have a common awareness.

It is unclear how effective the service's current IRMP is

The service's IRMP doesn't fully identify the risks to the public. The service recognises that the IRMP is informed by demand rather than risk. It also doesn't align with the PFCC's fire and rescue plan.

The IRMP does say how the service intends to use its prevention, protection and response resources to mitigate or reduce the risk and threats its community faces, both now and in the future. For example, staff in each of the districts carry out prevention and protection activities, such as [safe and well visits](#) and fire safety audits. And the service uses various crewing arrangements and resources to support its response to emergency incidents.

The service should publish an annual report and action plan, as detailed in its IRMP, to show what it has achieved and what it intends to do in the next year. But the service has not done this, so it isn't clear how effective its current IRMP is.

The PFCC produces an annual report on the progress of its fire and rescue plan.

The service has improved how it gathers and shares risk information

The service routinely collects and updates the information it has about the people, places, and threats it has identified as being at greatest risk. Since our first inspection, the service has made improvements to the processes and systems it uses to gather and record site-specific risk information.

Staff carry out familiarisation visits to premises to gather risk information. And the service has a process to gather short-term risk information, for example, at community events in the county. It also has a procedure to record risk information about vulnerable members of the community, such as oxygen users.

All this information is readily available for the service's prevention, protection and response staff, helping it to identify, reduce and mitigate risk effectively. For example, the service communicates information via [mobile data terminals](#) on fire engines and through weekly staff bulletins. Where appropriate, it passes on risk information to other organisations via forums such as the community connect partnerships and [safety advisory group](#).

The service should improve the way feedback from operational activity informs its IRMP

We found some evidence that the service learns from and acts on feedback from either local or national operational activity. For example, following an incident at a thatched-roof property, the service changed the appliances it sends to similar events to include a water bowser (mobile water tank). The service has also developed a plan to act on the national learning from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

But we found limited evidence that the service is using this information to regularly update risk assessments or inform the assumptions in its IRMP. There is some evidence that the service reviews national learning and incidents involving a fatality. But it is unclear how these activities have informed the current IRMP, given that it hasn't been updated.

The service has used learning from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry to reduce risk

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

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has responded positively and proactively to the learning from this tragedy. The service has assessed the risk of each high-rise building in its service area.

It has carried out fire safety audits, and it has collected and passed relevant risk information to its prevention, protection and response teams. This information is about buildings identified as high risk and all high-rise buildings that have cladding similar to that installed on Grenfell Tower.

Preventing fires and other risks



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at preventing fires and other risks.

Fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, including giving fire safety advice. To identify people at greatest risk from fire, services should work closely with

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

Area for improvement

The service should make sure its quality assures its prevention activity, so staff carry out safe and well visits to an appropriate standard.

Area for improvement

The service should evaluate its prevention activity, so it understands what works.

Promising practice: Public safety officers (PSOs) deliver prevention activities to vulnerable people on behalf of the fire and rescue service, police and health partners

The PSO scheme is a pilot being carried out in partnership with North Yorkshire Police and Yorkshire Ambulance Service. PSOs help reduce vulnerability by promoting fire safety and health and well-being, as well as helping to address local anti-social behaviour concerns. They also support on-call availability in their areas and provide some emergency medical response on behalf of the ambulance service.

Initial evaluation shows the overall gross potential savings made by PSO activities are estimated to be around £509,000 per year. The social value analysis estimates that for every £1 invested, there is a return of £4.50 in social benefits across all the organisations involved.

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

The service's prevention strategy is linked to its IRMP

The service's 2020–2025 prevention strategy is clearly linked to the risks identified in its IRMP. In addition the strategy details the service's prevention aims and objectives, how it will deliver them and measure success. There are five key areas where the service will focus on reducing vulnerability in its communities: domestic safety, business safety, road safety, water safety and [safeguarding](#). There are community safety officers in each district, delivering most of the service's prevention activities. Operational crews also carry out safe and well visits. Workloads and priorities are determined locally, linked to each district's plans.

The service's teams work well together and with other organisations on prevention, and it passes on relevant information when needed. It uses information to adjust planning assumptions and to direct activity between its prevention, protection and response functions. For example, operational and [fire control](#) staff can access information about vulnerable members of the community to help them respond to incidents.

In our 2019 inspection report, we said the service should ensure it allocates enough resources to target prevention work at people most at risk. This was an area for improvement. Although the service has acknowledged there is more work to be done, we are encouraged to see that operational staff are now carrying out safe and well visits, increasing the service's capacity.

The service is also leading a PSO pilot, in partnership with North Yorkshire Police and Yorkshire Ambulance Service. PSOs work to prevent vulnerability before it can cause harm across a range of health, fire, and crime problems. They promote fire safety and health and well-being, and they help address local [anti-social behaviour](#) concerns. The PSOs are also [on-call](#) responders for the fire service and deal with some medical response emergencies for the ambulance service.

Data-sharing agreements established during the pandemic continue

We considered how the service had adapted its prevention work during our COVID-19-specific inspection in November 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its public prevention work appropriately. Since then, we are encouraged to find that the service has continued with data-sharing arrangements established during the pandemic to help identify vulnerable members of the community.

The service is taking steps to prioritise safe and well visits according to risk

The service doesn't currently have a clearly structured risk-based approach that helps it direct prevention activity towards the people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. It carries out most of its safe and well visits in response to a referral from a partner or following an incident. It meets all referrals and doesn't have a process for prioritising them according to risk. The service has plans to introduce a new system to improve the way it prioritises safe and well visits according to risk.

The service is developing the way it uses information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable individuals and groups. It is carrying out ongoing work with partner organisations, sharing data in support of this.

It provides a range of interventions, which it adapts to the level of risk in its communities. Staff carry out activities aligned with the risk identified in their areas. For example, staff have been focusing on suicide in a specific location, and they have been working with communities there. And they target water safety advice at the age groups and locations linked to water-related incidents.

The service doesn't carry out quality assurance of safe and well visits to make sure staff perform them to an appropriate standard

Staff told us they have the right skills and confidence to make safe and well visits. These checks cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put [vulnerable people](#) at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. Safe and well visits include giving information on fire safety and advice on slips, trips and falls.

We reviewed a sample of safe and well visit records and found evidence that in some cases, the service isn't consistently carrying out follow-ups and referrals to other agencies and partners. Staff told us there is no quality assurance process in place.

Staff understand vulnerability and have the confidence to respond to safeguarding concerns

We were pleased to find an improvement since our 2019 inspection in the way staff understand safeguarding. The staff we interviewed told us they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly in response to safeguarding concerns. They are familiar with how to identify safeguarding issues and aware of the processes they need to follow.

The service works well with others to prevent fires and other emergencies

The service works with a wide range of other organisations, including North Yorkshire County Council's stronger communities team, to prevent fires and other emergencies. Staff within the districts engage with the local community safety hubs, which involve various partners organisations, to make the most of prevention and collaboration opportunities.

We found some evidence that the service refers people at greatest risk to organisations that may be better able to meet their needs. These organisations include Warm Homes and North Yorkshire County Council.

Arrangements are in place to receive referrals from others, such as Age UK, medical oxygen suppliers and district nurses. The service generally acts appropriately on the referrals it receives, for example, giving oxygen users fire safety advice.

The service also leads the York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership. Staff in several different districts told us they had been involved in road safety campaigns in their communities.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses the information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention activity. For example, in some districts the service works with partners such as GP surgeries. They refer people they identify as at risk and those who would benefit from a safe and well visit.

The service acts to tackle fire-setting behaviour

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people of different ages who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. This includes the fire-setter intervention programme. The service has several 'fire safe' officers who are trained to deal with fire-setting behaviour. When appropriate, it routinely shares information with partners, such as the police and local councils, to support a multi-agency approach.

The service would like to increase its evaluation and performance management of prevention activity

We found some evidence that the service evaluates how effective its activity is or makes sure all its communities get equal access to prevention activity that meets their needs. For example, an independent evaluation of the PSO pilot shows that the overall gross potential savings are estimated to be around £509,000 per year. The social value analysis estimates that for every £1 invested, there is a return of £4.50 in social benefits across all the organisations involved. The service should carry out more evaluation of its prevention activities, but told us that they don't have enough resource to do this.

The service reports its prevention performance – the number of activities (such as safe and well visits and youth engagement events) it carries out – at the service delivery meeting and through the PFCC's public accountability meetings. It is also developing dashboards for staff to view this information. But it is unclear if the activity in each district is proportionate to the risk and/or at the expected level. We found that district action plans are inconsistent. Some have targets, while others don't. The service recognises it needs to oversee and direct district activities more effectively so it can manage performance consistently.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at protecting the public through fire regulation.

All fire and rescue services should assess fire risks in certain buildings and, when necessary, require building owners to comply with fire safety legislation. Each service decides how many assessments it does each year. But it must have a locally determined, risk-based inspection programme for enforcing the legislation.

Area for improvement

The service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.

Area for improvement

The service should align with the [National Fire Chiefs Council's](#) Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process, and that staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has effective arrangements for giving specialist protection advice out of hours.

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

The service should ensure its protection strategy and approach align with national guidance

The service's 2020–2025 protection strategy is clearly linked to the risk it has identified in its IRMP. The strategy also details the service's protection aims and objectives, how it will deliver them and measure success. The service carries out fire safety audits:

- at a sample of high-risk and very high-risk properties;
- following an incident;
- in response to fire safety complaints; and
- according to any themes identified, such as in [houses of multiple occupation](#).

Staff across the service are involved in this activity, with information effectively exchanged as needed. Information is in turn used to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between the service's protection, prevention and response functions.

Protection staff qualified to Level 4 Certificate or [Diploma in Fire Safety](#) undertake fire safety audits at 'complex' commercial properties. Crew and [watch](#) managers qualified to Level 3 Certificate in Fire Safety carry out audits at 'simpler' properties. While this should mean resources are properly aligned to risk, we found some evidence of staff qualified to Level 3 carrying out audits at high-risk or very high-risk properties. This approach doesn't align with the National Fire Chiefs Council's Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators.

The effect of the pandemic on protection

We considered how the service had adapted its protection activity during our COVID-19-specific inspection in November 2020. At that time, we found it had temporarily changed its protection strategy from the traditional regulatory and enforcement model to a business support model, offering advice and guidance. We are pleased to find that the service has now reverted to its previous approach.

The service needs to ensure all the high and very high-risk properties identified in its risk-based inspection programme are audited

The service's RBIP is focused on its highest-risk buildings. However, it is limited in scope as only a sample of high-risk and very high-risk properties are audited.

It uses National Fire Chiefs Council guidance to define its risk categories, then carries out audits on a sample of properties. It applies weighting to some types of establishments. For example, it audits more schools to reduce the potential risk and impact on communities. It also carries out thematic audits for certain property types where the need is highlighted locally and/or nationally – for example, in houses of multiple occupation.

Once the service has audited a property, it sets a reinspection frequency depending on the level of fire safety compliance it finds. However, a review of a sample of audits showed that the service isn't consistently auditing the buildings it has targeted in the timescales it has set.

After our 2019 inspection, we said the service should ensure its systems can manage fire protection data more effectively. This was an area for improvement. The service told us data-cleansing work is underway to address audit frequency issues. It expects a new system will be available by the end of 2022.

The service is carrying out fire safety audits at all its high-rise buildings

The service has carried out audits at all high-rise buildings it has identified as having cladding similar to that installed on Grenfell Tower. It makes information gathered during these audits available to response teams and control operators, so they can respond more effectively in an emergency.

The service is taking action to make sure it carries out audits in a consistent and systematic way

We reviewed a range of audits of different premises across the service. This included audits as part of the service's RBIP, after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies, where enforcement action had been taken, and at high-rise, high-risk buildings.

Not all the audits we reviewed were completed in a consistent, systematic way, or in line with the service's policies. For example, we found that staff don't always carry out fire safety activities after incidents. The service knows about this problem and is working to resolve it.

The service is working to introduce quality assurance for its protection activities

Only limited quality assurance of the service's protection activity takes place. There was some evidence of managers checking and signing off enforcement activity, but nothing beyond this. The service acknowledges that quality assurance has been sporadic. It has used grant funding to invest in resources to improve this and to develop a new process.

The service doesn't have good evaluation tools in place to measure its effectiveness or to make sure all sections of its communities get equal access to protection services that meet their needs. It gives an overview of its protection activity at the service delivery and public accountability meetings. But without targets or objectives, there is little sense of what it has achieved.

The service carries out enforcement activities

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers, and when appropriate, prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations. The service works alongside other regulators, such as Trading Standards and Environmental Health.

In the year to 31 March 2021, the service issued 40 informal notifications, 2 enforcement notices and no prohibition or alteration notices. The service completed 13 prosecutions in the 5 years to March 2021.

The service has made some progress in making sure protection resources are in place, but it should improve out-of-hours arrangements

Our 2019 inspection report said the service should make sure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised, RBIP. This was an area for improvement. It has made some progress. It currently has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of its RBIP. We found that it has used protection uplift grants to support a team restructure. There are two additional members of protection staff on fixed-term contracts, and the service hopes to make them permanent, should finances allow. At the time of our inspection, it had also advertised a further two posts. But some staff expressed concern that workloads have increased and that the benefits of the additional resources weren't clear to them.

We also found that the service doesn't monitor fire safety complaint emails over weekends. And it can't always guarantee out-of-hours provision of a suitably qualified protection officer to carry out enforcement duties.

Protection staff get the right training and work to appropriate accreditation.

The service works with other agencies to regulate fire safety

The service works with other agencies to regulate fire safety and routinely exchanges risk information with them. It works with building regulators and takes part in safety awareness groups, dealing with community event planning.

The service has improved the time it takes to respond to building consultations

The service responds to most building consultations on time. This means it meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. We found the time the service takes to respond to building consultations has improved since our 2019 inspection. In 2020/21 the service dealt with 93 percent of building consultations within the required time frame, compared with 78 percent in 2019/20.

The service is carrying out some work to promote fire safety compliance

The service proactively engages with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. For example, it engages with hotels and attends landlord forums to discuss legislation and good practice. The service has two [primary authority schemes](#) in place, but it is unclear how active they are.

The service is acting to reduce its attendance at unwanted fire signals

An effective risk-based approach is in place to manage the number of unwanted fire signals. Fire control operators challenge calls associated with automatic fire alarms. The service doesn't attend incidents initiated by an automatic fire alarm between 8am and 6pm unless the incident is residential, has a specific risk flagged at the property or there is a confirmed fire. Staff also work with building owners to reduce false alarms.

Fewer unwanted calls mean fire engines are available to respond to a genuine incident rather than responding to a false one. It also reduces the risk to the public if fewer fire engines travel at high speed on the roads.

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at responding to fires and other emergencies.

Fire and rescue services must be able to respond to a range of incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies in their area.

Area for improvement

The service should publish its expected response standards so the public can compare expected performance against actual performance.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has effective systems in place to reliably understand resource availability.

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

The service responds flexibly, but resource availability is a challenge

The service's response strategy is linked to the risks identified in its IRMP. Its fire engines and response staff, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to help the service to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources. There is a response model, which sets out thresholds of fire cover for the service based on the number of appliances. This means the service understands how many resources it needs and where. But we found that it is a daily challenge to make sure resource availability aligns as closely as possible to this model.

The service has yet to establish any response standards and doesn't routinely review performance

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. And unlike many services, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service hasn't defined or published its own. This was an area for improvement we highlighted in our 2019 inspection report. But the service hasn't yet addressed it. The service's new RRM includes proposals to introduce response principles, which aim to show the service's commitment to [mobilising](#) the right resources safely and at speed. We look forward to understanding how the service uses these principles to manage and report response time performance, should they be introduced.

Home Office data shows that in the year to 31 December 2021, the service's response time to [primary fires](#) was 11 minutes and 39 seconds, which is exactly a minute slower than the average for predominantly rural services. The service doesn't routinely review response time data or performance.

The service doesn't always have the minimum number of fire engines available

To support its response strategy, the service has a fire cover model that sets thresholds for the number of fire engines it needs. The thresholds are:

- maximum (46 fire engines);
- optimum (38 to 45 fire engines);
- minimum (32 to 37 fire engines); and
- critical (fewer than 32 fire engines).

We found the number of fire engines available to the service sometimes falls to the critical level at certain points in the day. We also found evidence of operational staff not having the right skills and/or having to carry out dual roles.

Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely

The service has trained incident commanders who are assessed in line with service policy. Incident commanders are qualified to national standards and accredited by Skills for Justice. This helps the service safely, assertively, and effectively manage the whole range of incidents it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

As part of our inspection, we interviewed incident commanders from across the service. The incident commanders we interviewed are familiar with risk assessing, decision-making and recording information at incidents in line with national best practice, as well as the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#). But the service should consider how it can assure its incident commanders' performance when they are actively dealing with emergencies. It doesn't currently do this.

Fire control's involvement with the service's command, exercise, debrief and assurance activity has started to improve

We are disappointed to find that the service doesn't always include its control staff in its command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. But staff told us this has recently started to improve. Although control staff aren't routinely involved at the outset, they are included in any subsequent communications to share learning and/or feedback.

The service hasn't yet implemented a policy or process to help fire control give fire survival guidance to multiple callers

The service hasn't reviewed its ability to give fire survival guidance to many callers simultaneously. We would have expected it to do this as it was identified as learning for fire services after the Grenfell Tower fire. Although the service has updated its training to include fire survival guidance to multiple callers, there is currently no policy or formalised process in place.

Control has good systems in place to exchange real-time risk information with incident commanders, other responding partners and other supporting fire and rescue services. Maintaining good situational awareness helps the service communicate effectively with the public, giving them accurate and tailored advice. The service has taken the lead in national talk-group exercises, which support communications between different fire control rooms across England.

The service has improved the way it shares risk information with staff

The service has improved the way it gathers risk information and shares it with staff. It has reviewed guidance and introduced new templates. We sampled a range of risk-information records associated with a small number of properties involving long and short-term risks. These records included what is in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings, and what information is held by fire control.

The information we reviewed was up to date and detailed. It could be easily accessed and understood by staff. But some staff told us the mobile data terminals they use to view the information (which are on the fire engines) sometimes malfunction.

Encouragingly, the information had been completed with input from the service's prevention, protection and response functions when appropriate.

The service has improved the way it evaluates operational performance

Our 2019 inspection report included an area for improvement stating the service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command. We are pleased to see that the service has developed a system and process for debriefs. It systematically follows them to gather learning.

As part of this inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. We are pleased to see the service routinely follows its policies to assure itself that staff command incidents in line with operational guidance. It updates internal risk information with the information it receives. For example, following the debrief of an incident involving a water rescue, the service identified that its personal protective equipment (PPE) needed improving. It subsequently changed the PPE its staff use.

The service has responded to learning from incidents to improve its service for the public. For example, after a debrief of a cave rescue exercise, it identified that a high-volume pump (used to pump water out in this scenario) should be mobilised in this type of incident. This resulted in the service changing the types of appliances it automatically sends to these incidents.

We are encouraged to see the service is contributing towards, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services or operational learning gathered from other emergency service partners. This includes sharing [national operational learning](#). For example, following an exercise carried out with fire control room staff from other fire and rescue services, the services shared learning about how they could improve staff training.

The service has systems in place to communicate incident-related information to the public

The service has systems in place to inform the public about ongoing incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. It has processes in place with the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#) to share information with the public. It also gives relevant information to the public via the internet and social media. But it currently doesn't oversee the individual social media accounts used by stations, so it can't make sure messages are consistent.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents



Good (2019: Good)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

All fire and rescue services must be able to respond effectively to multi-agency and cross-border incidents. This means working with other fire and rescue services (known as intraoperability) and emergency services (known as interoperability).

Area for improvement

The service should arrange a programme of over-the-border exercises and share the learning from them.

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

The service should make sure staff can access risk information for neighbouring fire and rescue services

The service has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. These risks are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its integrated risk management planning. For example, it makes sure it has the capacity and capability to respond to local and national events and incidents.

It is familiar with some of the significant risks in neighbouring fire and rescue service areas, which it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. But it has more to do. For example, the service told us firefighters now have access to risk information from neighbouring services for areas within a 10 km radius of the North Yorkshire border. But staff weren't aware of this.

The service has some arrangements in place to respond to major and multi-agency incidents

We reviewed the arrangements the service has in place to respond to different major incidents, including wildfires and flooding. The service has some arrangements in place, which staff understand well. Since our inspection in 2019, the service has introduced plans to deal with marauding terrorist attacks.

But although the service has developed processes and procedures for incidents in high-rise buildings, it hasn't yet implemented them. It is carrying out ongoing discussions with trade unions.

The service works well with other fire and rescue services

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. It has effective arrangements in place with neighbouring fire and rescue services to supplement operational resources in the event of extraordinary need. It is intraoperable with these services and can form part of a multi-agency response.

The service has successfully deployed to other services and has used national assets.

Staff don't consistently carry out cross-border exercises

The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services so they can work together effectively to keep the public safe. The plan includes the risks of major events at which the service could foreseeably give support or request assistance from neighbouring services. Staff at stations near the county's border arrange some cross-border exercises with other fire and rescue services. But we found this doesn't happen consistently enough.

We were encouraged to see the service uses feedback from these exercises to inform risk information and service plans. For example, after North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service attended an incident with a neighbouring service, a problem was identified with the different radio channels they used. They subsequently issued guidance about it.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of JESIP

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with the JESIP. These are national principles that help all emergency services work together at incidents. The service could provide us with strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles, and most staff showed a good understanding.

The service is an active member of the North Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with other partners that make up the North Yorkshire LRF. These arrangements include a 'response to major and [critical incidents](#)' procedure used in the event of a major incident being declared. The procedure instigates several activities, such as establishing a dedicated communications group responsible for developing and standardising messages for the public. This means all partners and agencies can share a consistent message through their channels.

The service is a valued partner in the LRF and engages well. It is represented on several LRF groups, including strategic co-ordination and risk assessment groups, and it chairs the exercise and training subgroup. It takes part in regular training events with other members of the LRF and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents. Staff told us that several multi-agency exercises had taken place in the past year around themes such as wide-area flooding and marauding terrorist attacks.

The service works with neighbouring fire and rescue services to adopt national operational guidance

The service keeps itself up to date with national operational learning updates from other fire services and joint operational learning from other emergency services partners, such as the police service and ambulance trusts. It uses learning to inform planning assumptions that have been made with other partners. It is also part of a regional team that includes neighbouring fire and rescue services and deals with implementing national operational guidance.

Efficiency



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



Inadequate

Summary

An efficient fire and rescue service will manage its budget and use its resources properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to the risks and priorities identified in its [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#). It should try to achieve value for money and keep costs down without compromising public safety. It should make the best possible use of its resources to achieve better results for the public. Plans should be based on robust and realistic assumptions about income and costs. North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency is inadequate.

For its overall efficiency, we have graded the service as inadequate. This is a deterioration from the requires improvement grade awarded in the 2019 inspection.

During this inspection we found that the service's financial position is precarious. We also found that financial plans aren't fully linked to the requirements set out in the service's IRMP and there is no workforce plan. The service doesn't always have the minimum number of fire engines it needs or staff with the required skills and capability. It is also lacking a comprehensive fleet strategy or plan.

Enable North Yorkshire is a collaboration with North Yorkshire Police and the PFCC. We found that the transition of services involved in this arrangement has been problematic. There is little evidence of the fire service carrying out robust planning before it was implemented. The service needs to improve the way it manages and reviews performance, so it can make sure the arrangement is meeting its needs. Relationships, processes, and systems need to be much stronger to support a truly collaborative way of working.

We recognise that the service has made some efficiencies in recent years, but opportunities for future savings or to generate further income are limited. We are concerned that any unexpected costs could affect reinvestment plans associated with the new RRM.

Making best use of resources



Inadequate (2019: Requires improvement)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is inadequate at making best use of its resources.

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

The service's revenue budget for 2022/23 is £37.3m. This is a 2.7 percent increase from the previous financial year, when the budget was £36.3m.

Area for improvement

The service needs to make sure it uses its resources across all functions in a more joined-up way, and to ensure those functions have shared objectives to meet the priorities in the service's integrated risk management programme.

Cause of concern

The service doesn't have in place robust processes to ensure transformation activities provide efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommendations

By September 2022, the service should put in place plans that are designed to:

- detail in its medium-term financial plan the efficiencies that its transformation plans will bring for the service;
- make sure that its processes for working with other organisations are effective, provide value for money and benefits for the public, and don't negatively affect the service; and
- monitor, review and evaluate its collaboration activities, such as enabling services, to make sure they achieve best value for money and are beneficial for both the service and the public.

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

The service's financial position is precarious

The service sometimes uses its resources well to manage risk, but there are weaknesses that need addressing. Financial plans consider the impact that the levels of government grants, precept, pay awards and inflation will have on the service's budget. The service currently shows a balanced budget over the next four years and has achieved this by changing delivery dates for parts of the capital programme, through grant funding, and by a reduction in the revenue contribution to capital.

The financial position is precarious, and we are concerned that this may jeopardise any efficiencies that the new RRM might bring, affecting the service's ability to reinvest in operational resource requirements.

In our 2019 inspection report, we said the service should clearly outline the expected savings from its transformation plans and include them in its medium-term financial plan. This was an area for improvement. We found that the service has made savings, even though these haven't emerged from the Transform 2020 plans as originally anticipated.

The service acknowledges that its current IRMP and risk profile need improving. And its financial and workforce plans aren't fully aligned with its IRMP. At the time of our inspection, the service was consulting with the public on the new RRM (which will replace the current IRMP). If approved, it will come into effect in September 2022.

The service needs to improve how it manages and evaluates all its collaboration activities

Enable North Yorkshire is a wide-ranging collaboration between North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, North Yorkshire Police and the office of the PFCC. It involves fire and police staff sharing and jointly delivering people, technology, estates, finance, business design and assurance services.

While we recognise that this shared service arrangement is still developing, there is little evidence of the fire and rescue service achieving the anticipated efficiencies. Many of the service's staff told us the approach is disjointed, and that a lack of preplanning has meant the transition has been far from smooth. Relationships, processes, and systems need to be much stronger to support a truly collaborative way of working.

There is also little evidence of the fire service carrying out robust planning before entering the arrangement. And it is unclear how the service is managing and reviewing its performance.

The service recognises it needs to improve its leadership and management of the shared service function. It also acknowledges that it needs to develop its evaluation process, and that it needs a performance framework. A collaboration steering group, set up to scrutinise activities, is carrying out work in this area.

Although collaboration is mainly focused on the shared service activity, the service is involved in other initiatives, such as the PSO pilot, mentioned above. It runs this pilot with North Yorkshire Police and Yorkshire Ambulance Service. The service also shares several buildings with its partners. For example, Yorkshire Ambulance Service responds with resources based at some fire stations.

The service is taking steps to improve productivity and manage performance

The service has some arrangements for managing performance linked to the IRMP and the service's strategic priorities. We found evidence of managers overseeing performance. The service delivery group meets monthly, chaired by the deputy chief fire officer. And monthly meetings take place within the districts; these also include performance discussions. The PFCC also includes an overview of fire service performance at the public accountability meetings. These meetings show the public the types of incidents the service attends, the availability of resources and other areas of service activity.

At the time of inspection, the service was in the process of agreeing the performance metrics for the shared support service collaboration.

It is also in the process of developing data dashboards, which staff can access to better understand the service's performance. For example, it has recently made available data showing the call-handling times in fire control.

It hasn't identified the contribution it will make towards the national productivity target. (This involves using an extra 3 percent of national [wholetime firefighter](#) capacity to carry out additional prevention and protection work.)

The service should do more to make sure its workforce is as productive as possible. This includes considering new ways of working. It recognises this and has recently introduced new district action plans to direct activities. But there is some evidence that the service has communicated these plans poorly, and that they are inconsistent with performance measures and targets.

In relation to its workforce planning, the service has several issues to address. The availability of on-call staff is a challenge and many staff are in temporary roles. There is also some evidence of insufficient resources in the service's response function.

The service uses flexible resources, known as operational staff reserves, and it moves station staff around to help address any shortfalls. It also uses overtime to support resource availability.

The new RRM (if approved) seeks to change some existing shift patterns and redistribute resources to better align with the risks identified in the new CRP. We are interested to see how the service realises the full potential of these new and developing activities.

The service had to adapt its working practices because of the pandemic, and these are still part of its day-to-day activity. These include some staff being able to work flexibly, including working from home.

The service is developing its business continuity policy

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since the last inspection. A specialist business continuity post has been created as part of the shared support service collaboration. The service has carried out business continuity training and is developing a new business continuity policy. We found evidence of the service carrying out testing in areas where threats and risks are considered high. It regularly reviews and tests these threats and risks, so staff are aware of the arrangements and their associated responsibilities. For example, in 2021 the service carried out an evacuation of fire control. And it tests fallback arrangements with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service on a weekly basis and has carried out system failure testing.

The service needs to improve the way it shows savings from non-pay costs

The service has taken some steps to reduce non-pay costs. It uses national procurement frameworks – for example, to source some of its fire engines. It also uses the national PPE framework, which allows it to run a small store of PPE, with suppliers managing the delivery. Staff told us the service is carrying out more work to review and evaluate procurement activity. It has also made some savings through sharing buildings with North Yorkshire Police.

And although we recognise that the shared support service collaboration is still developing, it is unclear what savings or efficiencies it will make for the fire service.

The service does have challenge and scrutiny processes in place, but there is evidence that planning is not robust. We found that some data wasn't accurate, up to date or available. Examples of this relate to fleet, ICT and shared support services. Financial controls need improving so that public money is used well.

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



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at making the service affordable now and in the future.

Fire and rescue services should continuously look for ways to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. This includes transforming how they work and improving their value for money. Services should have robust spending plans that reflect future financial challenges and efficiency opportunities, and they should invest in better services for the public.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure its fleet and estates management programmes are linked to its integrated risk management programme, and that it understands the impact future changes to those programmes may have on its service to the public.

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

The service's ability to mitigate its main or significant financial risks is limited

The service has made some savings in recent years. For example, it has realigned roles in the shared support service structure, and it has shared some buildings with North Yorkshire Police.

The service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. But its ability to mitigate its main or significant financial risks is limited. While the budget is balanced over the next four years, the service acknowledges that the position is precarious.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic and prudent, and take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. These include changes to government funding, pay and inflation.

But the opportunities the service has identified to make savings or generate further income are limited. There are no forecast savings built into any of its assumptions. Plans rely on the proposed RRM being approved and carried out, so the service can reinvest in frontline services. We are concerned that any unexpected and/or higher-than-expected costs could have an impact on reinvestment plans. There is also the potential that some of the proposals may not be approved or may take longer than expected to put into practice. (At the time of inspection, the service had just started public consultation.)

The service has reviewed its reserve strategy

The service has reviewed its [reserves](#) strategy and made changes, for example in the way it deals with revenue contributions to its capital programme. The service's plan for its use of reserves is predominantly for new developments.

The service has developed short-term plans to meet some immediate estate needs

Since the 2019 inspection, the service has made some progress in making sure buildings are more accessible and meet the needs of a more diverse workforce, as well as the public. But feedback from staff was mixed as some buildings still need modernisation.

The service has developed a joint strategic asset management plan in the short term to meet some immediate needs around refurbishing buildings and/or carrying out repairs. But this doesn't take full account of the RRM proposals, so the service may have to refresh the plan once the RRM is finalised. In 2022/23, the service has set aside funds to deal with those buildings that need immediate attention. And although funds have been planned beyond this time frame, affordability will still be a key challenge and those plans will need to be reviewed.

The service is also making progress in making the most of the way it uses its premises. Fire service headquarters is now co-located with North Yorkshire Police. And police and ambulance staff use some station buildings. The shared support service structure has given the service more estate team resources and skills and is helping to drive a more flexible approach.

The service doesn't have a fleet strategy or plan

The capital investment programme factors in the need to replace almost 200 fleet assets over the next 5 years. But we are disappointed to see that the service doesn't have a fleet strategy or plan.

As detailed in the current IRMP, the service has introduced a smaller vehicle, known as a tactical response vehicle, to improve the availability of on-call resources. But it is unclear how effective this has been as the service hasn't yet carried out an evaluation.

The lack of strategy and evaluation limits how well the service can understand its effectiveness and efficiency and identify opportunities to improve.

The service invests in technology and working with others to support change and improve efficiency

The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. It also seeks to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology, and it has an ICT strategy covering the period from 2021 to 2025.

There is evidence that the service has benefitted from the additional technology support and resources given by the shared support service structure. Staff transfer specialist knowledge between them, developing the individuals and improving the service for the public. For example, fire expertise has been used to help with developments to replace police in-car CCTV. But some staff told us that

business-critical system issues, such as those used for mobilising and availability, need to be dealt with more quickly. And although the service has set aside budget to support new technology, such as the [Emergency Services Network](#) and [Multi Agency Incident Transfer](#), it is unclear if the funding will be enough.

The system the service uses to manage staff availability is crucial. We found it has made some improvements, linking the system with the mobilising system in fire control. While this has helped support fire control staff manage firefighter availability better, it needs more improvement. Some staff members told us the service planned an upgrade for July 2022. This upgrade is designed to improve working practices and processes for the service and its people. The service also has plans to improve the systems it uses to manage its prevention and protection activities.

Most of the activity the service undertakes to work with others to improve efficiency is centred on sharing support services with North Yorkshire Police and the office of the PFCC. It is unclear what preplanning the fire service carried out before making such a significant change. It needs to make sure there are clear and defined benefits when taking opportunities to work with others, and that these are accurately and coherently documented. Management staff told us the service is commissioning external auditors to examine six key areas where it has identified reoccurring problems associated with shared support services. This will help it understand how it needs to improve.

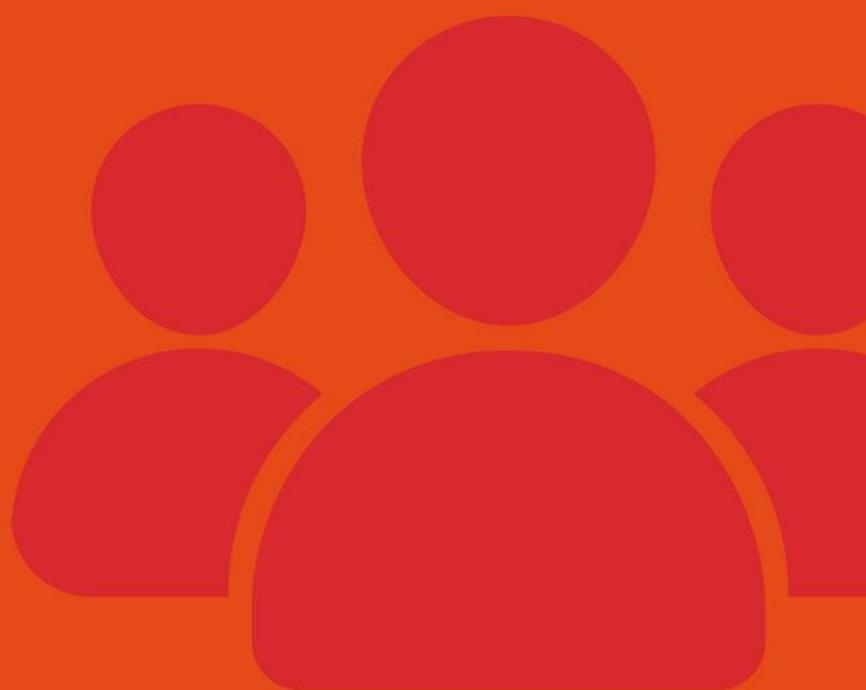
The service also recognises that setting up the shared support service structure has led to some technological challenges. For example, staff are having problems with how long it takes to process requests, lack of system access, dual logins and needing multiple devices. To address these problems, the fire service and police force have embarked on a major network integration. The service expects that the initial phases, to be implemented by the end of 2022, will address most issues. But the integration needs further design work before it can be completed, and the service expects that to take around 12 months. Home Office approval will need to be in place before proceeding. We look forward to understanding the full impact and benefits of this work once it has been carried out.

The service makes best use of external funding

We found that the service makes use of additional grant funding. It has used it to:

- establish a risk-based schedule of inspections to review fire safety arrangements in all high-rise residential buildings; and
- improve its protection (business fire safety) system and training capability to enhance technical knowledge and ensure quality assurance is understood by everyone.

People



How well does the service look after its people?



Inadequate

Summary

A well-led fire and rescue service develops and maintains a workforce that is supported, professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse. The service's leaders should be positive role models, and this should be reflected in the behaviour of staff at all levels. All staff should feel supported and be given opportunities to develop. Equality, diversity and inclusion are part of everything the service does and its staff understand their role in promoting it. Overall, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is inadequate at looking after its people.

We are pleased to find that the service has introduced a new set of values since our 2019 inspection. But staff told us it doesn't always give them the support they need, and senior leaders don't always act as positive role models.

The service has effective and well understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. But it is lacking a robust process to manage sickness absence and monitor the working hours of its staff to make sure they aren't excessive.

We are concerned to find that the service doesn't have effective workforce planning in place to make sure it has the skills and capabilities it needs. It has yet to fully establish succession planning and talent management processes across the organisation. This would help it know what its needs will be in the future. The service's understanding of its future training requirements is limited, and we also found the service employs too many staff in temporary roles. Any plans the service makes to address these issues should include all staff groups.

We conducted a staff survey and spoke to staff during our inspection. We found the service needs to improve how it seeks and acts on staff feedback. It should also review how effective its policy on bullying, harassment and discrimination is in reducing unacceptable behaviour towards its staff.

We found the service has made some progress since our 2019 inspection in its approach to EDI. It has developed an EDI strategy and introduced an EDI board. It has also improved its arrangements for female staff uniform. Although it has made some progress in making sure there are sufficient facilities to support the diverse nature of the workforce in all buildings, it recognises that more is needed. But the service should introduce a policy and process to make sure it carries out equality impact assessments for all its policies, services and processes.

Promoting the right values and culture



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at promoting the right values and culture.

Fire and rescue services should have positive and inclusive cultures, modelled by the behaviours of their senior leaders. Health and safety should be promoted effectively, and staff should have access to a range of well-being support that can be tailored to their individual needs.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.

Area for improvement

The service should take early action to monitor working hours (including overtime) to improve staff well-being.

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

Service values aren't consistently demonstrated at all levels

Since our 2019 inspection, and because of an area for improvement being identified, the service has introduced a new set of values. We found that staff know about these values and understand them.

But the culture of the organisation doesn't always align with its values. Some behaviours staff told us about didn't meet the expected standards, particularly in respect of the service value 'We put people first'. The transition to the shared service structure has undoubtedly caused problems. Some staff told us they feel

the service hasn't given them the support they need. This made some feel excluded and undervalued.

During this inspection some staff told us that that senior leaders don't always act as positive role models. Our staff survey also showed that only 48 percent of respondents (36 of 75) feel that senior leaders consistently model and maintain the service's values.

At the time of our inspection, the service was in the process of presenting to its staff the new national [Core Code of Ethics](#). Staff spoke positively of the training they received.

The service has effective support systems to improve its staff's mental and physical well-being

The service has well understood and effective well-being policies in place that are available to staff. A significant range of well-being support is available to support both physical and mental health. For example, staff have access to [occupational health nurses](#), welfare advisors and an employee assistance scheme.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff well-being. The service offers support to staff who have attended a traumatic incident. It has plans to increase this support and is in the process of establishing a group of trauma risk-management practitioners. Of those who responded to our survey, 87 percent (67 of 77) told us they feel able to access services to support their mental well-being.

But we found the service could do more to engage with its workforce and understand what else they need to support their individual needs; 30 percent of staff survey respondents (23 of 77) have never had a health and well-being conversation.

The service should have processes in place to make sure staff don't work excessive hours

The service continues to have effective and well understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. It has ways to monitor and report health and safety performance, such as the health and safety committee and the health and safety unit. It also carries out regular fitness testing of operational staff.

These policies and procedures are readily available and effectively promoted to all staff. Staff have confidence in the health and safety approach the service takes. Of the staff who took part in our survey, 79 percent (61 of 77) feel their personal safety and welfare is treated seriously at work. But this view isn't reflected by some representative bodies.

We also found the service has taken steps to improve safe systems of work. It is introducing an SOS tracking device so staff can feel safe when working alone.

But it doesn't have a robust process in place for monitoring staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts to make sure they comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours.

Absence management processes and systems need improving

As part of our inspection, we reviewed some case files to consider how the service manages and supports staff through absence.

The service has an absence policy, known locally as the ill-health absence procedure. But the files we reviewed show it doesn't always follow the policy. For example:

- the service doesn't consistently record sickness dates;
- there was no evidence of the service keeping to its absence management timelines; and
- the service made little or no contact with staff in cases of long-term sickness.

We also found that the service doesn't currently give routine absence reports to line managers. This means there is a lack of alerts should staff members reach certain trigger points in the process. Staff told us there are problems with recording the data in the sickness management system, and that this should improve once this system is upgraded later in 2022. Quarterly reporting is in place via the people insight reporting tool, which shows the senior leadership team absence levels and trends. We have included absence management in the [cause of concern](#) detailed in the following section.

Occupational health teams aren't proactively involved with sickness absence management, so their ability to identify issues and themes is limited. The cases we reviewed showed a lack of occupational health return-to-work information recorded.

It is also evident that, since the introduction of the shared service structure, the service needs clarity about who is responsible for each element of the process and what support it needs to ensure compliance.

Of staff who responded to our survey, 42 percent (32 of 77) feel the service is not so/not at all effective in managing sickness.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Inadequate (2019: Good)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is inadequate at getting the right people with the right skills.

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

Area for improvement

The service should address the high number of staff in temporary roles and promotion positions.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has an effective, accurate and accessible system for recording and monitoring all staff training.

Cause of concern

The service doesn't have in place adequate workforce planning processes. This means that areas such as safety-critical training, succession planning, absence and work-time management don't support its current and future integrated risk management plan.

Recommendation

By September 2022, the service should have put plans in place that are designed to:

- review its current workforce, succession and training planning to make sure these are provided efficiently and effectively;
- review and develop its current absence management policy and process;
- develop a policy and process to manage the working time of its staff;
- make sure that data and processes are in place to regularly assess and manage the capacity and capability of all staff groups; and
- carry out a skills gap analysis to make sure all staff have the skills and training they need to perform their roles.

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

The service can't make sure it has the skills and capabilities it needs as it doesn't have effective workforce planning in place

There is little evidence of the service having robust workforce planning processes in place. This means it can't take full account of the skills and capabilities it needs to effectively meet the needs of its IRMP. We found limited evidence that the service's planning allows it to fully consider workforce skills and overcome any gaps in capability. For example, there is no approved workforce plan and we found that access to workforce data is problematic. There is no evidence of any process being in place so all interested parties can understand current and future skill and capability requirements for all staff groups.

The service also needs to do more to improve how it considers its future needs and succession planning. It has recently introduced succession planning and talent management processes, but these aren't yet fully set up across the organisation. We found there is a high number of staff in temporary roles and staff members are frequently moved around to fill gaps. The service acknowledges this is a problem and has drawn up a 'talent pipeline' to address it over the next 18 months. But the plans are mostly focused on operational roles.

Although there is a system in place to review workforce capabilities, it is ineffective and there is a risk that staff may lack important skills for the future. The service has an operational compliance policy to ensure staff complete risk-critical training, such as breathing apparatus and emergency response driving. It carries out an annual training needs analysis to understand its needs for the coming year, but there is little evidence of the service understanding any future requirements beyond this. We found evidence of some operational staff not having the right skills, and of some not having timely access to the training they need to perform their role. Of staff who responded to our survey, only 57 percent (44 of 77) agreed or tended to agree that they had received enough training to do their job effectively.

The service has invested further to support Level 4 incident command training. And it has recently introduced a new incident command framework. This will help make sure the service carries out training in a timely manner. Fire control staff are qualified to NVQ Level 3 using national standards.

When we inspected a sample of training records, we found fire control and operational reserve staff training records aren't available in the training system. Fire control staff training is managed outside the system. Staff told us operational training data in the system is inaccurate and management oversight is unstructured.

The service also offers e-learning for areas such as health and safety and EDI training. A review of staff training carried out through e-learning showed it isn't easy to access records. The service acknowledged that it was unclear who had responsibility for the system following the shared support service restructure and that it was addressing this problem.

The service recognises that learning and development needs to improve

Although the service provides some learning and development, it doesn't meet the needs of all staff, or indeed its own needs. The service recognises this and plans to introduce an internal coaching and mentoring academy.

There aren't adequate processes in place to make sure staff have access to the resources they need to do their job effectively. For example, of those who took part in our staff survey, only 45 percent of respondents (35 of 77) agreed or tended to agree that they are satisfied with the level of learning and development available to them.

Only a few staff told us they can access a range of learning and development resources they need to do their job effectively. This is likely to affect what the service can offer the public. The service aims to give staff an annual personal development and performance review each year, which includes any individual development requirements they need. But it is unclear how consistently this happens across the organisation due to disjointed processes and systems.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

Creating a more representative workforce will provide huge benefits for fire and rescue services. This includes greater access to talent and different ways of thinking, and improved understanding of and engagement with their local communities. Each service should make sure equality, diversity and inclusion are firmly understood and demonstrated throughout the organisation. This includes successfully taking steps to remove inequality and making progress to improve fairness, diversity and inclusion at all levels of the service. It should proactively seek and respond to feedback from staff and make sure any action taken is meaningful.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has appropriate ways to engage with and seek feedback from all staff, including those from underrepresented groups.

Area for improvement

The service should review how effective its policy on bullying, harassment and discrimination is in reducing unacceptable behaviour towards its staff.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has robust processes in place to undertake equality impact assessments and review any actions agreed as a result.

Area for improvement

The service should make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographic and needs.

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

The service needs to improve how it seeks and acts on staff feedback

Although the service has some means of gathering staff feedback, they aren't consistent or wide ranging. For example, it has used EDI focus groups to help identify improvements and inform training. But it hasn't carried out a comprehensive staff survey since before our last inspection in 2019.

Staff have limited confidence in the service's feedback systems and don't think they are effective. Of the staff who responded to our survey, 74 percent (57 of 77) didn't feel confident in the ways for providing feedback to all levels. And 55 percent (42 of 77) didn't feel they would be able to challenge ideas without any detriment. Trade unions also feel that engagement with senior leaders has become disjointed and reactive.

Some staff told us they don't feel included or engaged, and that the changes associated with the shared support service restructure have contributed to this. Staff spoke of being confused by the changes in roles and weren't sure who to contact if they needed help or advice.

There is little evidence of robust systems being in place to support two-way communication or feedback between senior leaders and all fire service staff.

The service should review its approach to tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination

The service should improve staff understanding of bullying, harassment and discrimination, including their duty to eliminate them. In our staff survey, 38 percent of respondents (29 of 77) told us they had been subject to bullying or harassment and 40 percent (31 of 77) to discrimination over the past 12 months. Feedback we gathered through our survey and from speaking to staff during the inspection indicates the source of the bullying, harassment and/or discrimination is often someone more senior to the individual.

Although the service has clear policies and procedures in place, staff have limited confidence in its ability to deal effectively with cases of bullying, harassment and discrimination, as well as grievances and discipline. We also found that several of the service's policies and procedures need reviewing and updating, such as the bullying and harassment in the workplace policy. And it is unclear what oversight exists for disciplinary actions associated with bullying, harassment, and discrimination. The service doesn't specify this in its quarterly people insights report.

The service needs to improve its understanding of workforce diversity and continue its efforts to address disproportionality in recruitment

In our 2019 inspection report, we said the service should identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity and make its workforce more representative. This was an area for improvement. The service has a system to understand and remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. But although diversity data for new applicants is available, the service has problems accessing data for the existing workforce. And it doesn't routinely report or use diversity data. This means a comprehensive view of workforce diversity is not available. The service is aware of this problem.

The service recruitment processes are fair and accessible to applicants from a range of backgrounds. We found that during a recent recruitment process, the service publicised the job advert internally on the intranet and externally via the service internet, social media platforms and the *Fire* magazine website. But we were unable to confirm if the service had specifically advertised recent vacancies in groups such as Women in the Fire Service UK and the Asian Fire Service Association.

The service is taking steps to make sure recruitment campaigns are directed at or accessible to underrepresented groups. There is some evidence of it using [positive action](#). For example, it holds 'Have a go' days at stations, and it uses online testing for new applicants, making the process more accessible. The Shine programme has been developed to support positive action commitments, and it has participated in the Women in the Fire Service UK's development programme. But only 51 percent of the respondents (39 of 77) to our staff survey agree that the recruitment process is fair and accessible.

While there has been some improvement, more is needed to increase staff diversity. Out of the 12 new staff joining the service in 2020/21, 1 was female (8.3 percent) and no one self-declared as being from an ethnic minority background. This shows a reduction for both groups when compared to 2019/20.

For the whole workforce, on 31 March 2021, 1.6 percent were from ethnic minority backgrounds and 14.1 percent were women.

The service needs to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds into middle and senior level positions. We were told that the service is to be an early adopter of the National Fire Chief Council's [direct entry scheme](#). This is a good opportunity to bring in people with different skill sets and from different backgrounds. The service should also make sure it always advertises positions externally, so it makes the most of opportunities to make its workforce more representative.

The service has made some progress in relation to EDI but needs to improve its use of equality impact assessments to ensure policies, services and processes are inclusive

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service doesn't have a policy in place for equality impact assessments, and there is no process or guidance for how it should complete them. At the time of our inspection, staff told us the service has set up a working group to review the situation.

We found the service has made some progress since our 2019 inspection in its approach to EDI and is making sure it can offer the right services to its communities and support staff with [protected characteristics](#). For example, the service has developed an EDI strategy, and in April 2022 it introduced an EDI board and practitioner group, promoted by the chief fire officer.

The service has established five diversity staff networks, each of which has a senior lead. The five networks focus on: race, gender, hidden disabilities (such as neurodiversity), LGBTQ+ and faith. Some staff are aware of the networks, but the service needs to do more to publicise them. Of the staff who responded to our survey, 55 percent (42 of 77) think the service is effective in ensuring all staff are included and have equal opportunities.

Staff have electronic access to EDI training and feel confident enough to talk about issues. Staff talked positively of the EDI conversations taking place as part of the performance development review process. The service is also in the process of procuring face-to-face EDI training.

In our 2019 inspection, we found that the service needed to improve its arrangements for uniform and facilities for female staff members. We are pleased to see a uniform policy and arrangements are now in place. But progress is slow regarding suitable and sufficient facilities in all buildings to support the diverse nature of the workforce.

The service has set aside funds to carry out essential, immediate improvements over the next two years.

We look forward to seeing how successful the service's actions are when we next inspect.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at managing performance and developing leaders.

Fire and rescue services should have robust and meaningful performance management arrangements in place for their staff. All staff should be supported to meet their potential, and there should be a focus on developing staff and improving diversity into leadership roles.

Area for improvement

The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop, and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure its selection, development and promotion of staff is open and fair.

Area for improvement

The service should put in place a system to actively manage staff careers, with the aim of diversifying the pool of future and current leaders.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has systems in place to manage and develop talent for all staff within the organisation.

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

The service should make sure it manages performance and development consistently for all staff

The service continues to have an inconsistent process in place for performance and development. During our inspection, we found that staff had mixed views on how effective they find their [personal development and performance review \(PDPR\)](#). Through our staff survey, some staff reported that they have regular, meaningful discussions with their manager. And 60 percent of respondents (37 of 62) who had had a PDPR in the past 12 months agreed the review was useful.

Data provided by the service shows that PDPR completion rates in 2020/21 were low. And the service has reviewed a sample of PDPRs, which showed gaps in the links between the PDPR and the service's strategic direction. It is taking action to work on these issues. Evidence the service gave us at the time of our inspection shows that completion rates are improving.

But some staff aren't confident in the performance and development arrangements that are in place, especially for non-operational staff. There is a lack of formal process and structure to support the development of all staff groups. Of those staff who responded to our survey, only 40 percent (31 of 77) agree they are given the same opportunity to develop as other staff in the service.

The service needs to make sure its promotion and progression processes are fair for all staff

The service needs to do more to make sure its promotion and progression processes are fair. When we reviewed recent promotion processes, we were unable to confirm if they were in line with the service's policy as it couldn't give us all the relevant documentation. And 70 percent of staff who took part in our survey (54 of 77) disagree that the promotion process in their service is fair.

The service doesn't have strong succession planning processes in place to allow it to effectively manage the career pathways of all its staff, including roles requiring specialist skills.

Temporary promotions aren't well managed, and we found evidence of them being in place for longer than appropriate. Data given by the service shows that on 31 March 2021, the average length of a temporary promotion was 156 days. This is compared with 119 days at the same point in 2020. Staff also told us the service's use of temporary promotions is excessive. Senior leaders acknowledge this is a problem and they plan to address it.

The service should improve career progression for non-operational staff

During our 2019 inspection, we identified that the service needed to improve the way it actively manages the career pathways of staff. We also found it needed to put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

In this inspection, we found that the service now has some talent management schemes in place to develop leaders and high-potential staff. It introduced a Leading the Way programme and Senior Leadership Days in summer 2021, and a leadership platform in October 2021. But these initiatives aren't available to staff in a structured way, and they are only accessible to operational middle-manager levels and above.

This has resulted in inconsistency, and it undermines staff perception of fairness in the process, particularly for non-operational staff.

The service should consider putting in place more formal arrangements to identify and support all members of staff to become senior leaders. And it should make sure it has an effective system in place for succession planning, including senior leadership roles.

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