

Fire & Rescue Service

Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19

An inspection of Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service



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About this inspection

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

In carrying out our inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services in England, we answer three main questions:

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

This report sets out our inspection findings. After taking all the evidence into account, we apply a graded judgment for each of the three questions.

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

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


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


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

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

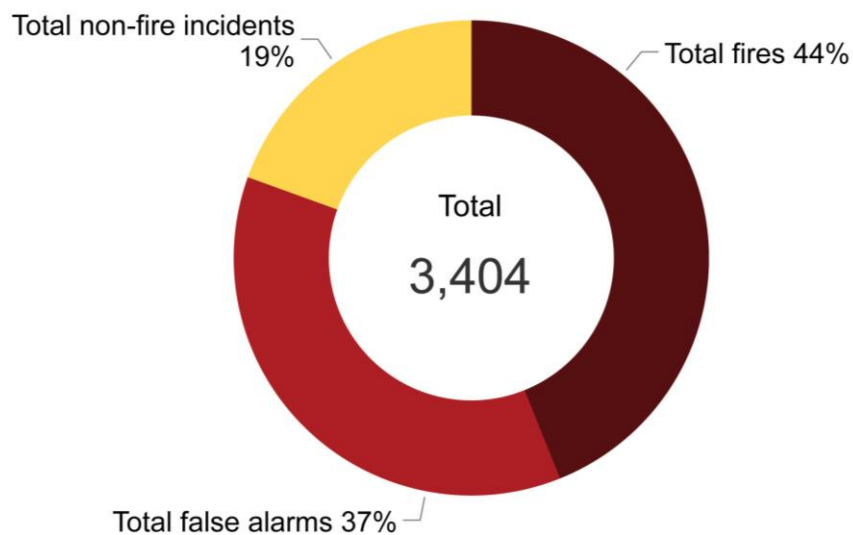
If we find serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, we will judge it as **inadequate**.

Service in numbers

 Public perceptions	Northumberland	England
Perceived effectiveness of service Public perceptions survey (June/July 2018)	89%	86%

 Response	Northumberland	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 September 2018	10.7	10.5
Home fire risk checks carried out by FRS per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2018	24.6	10.4
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises 12 months to 31 March 2018	3.8	3.0

Incidents attended in the 12 months to 30 September 2018





Cost

Northumberland

England

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

£26.67

£22.38



Workforce

Northumberland

England

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

0.8

0.6

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

-27%

-14%

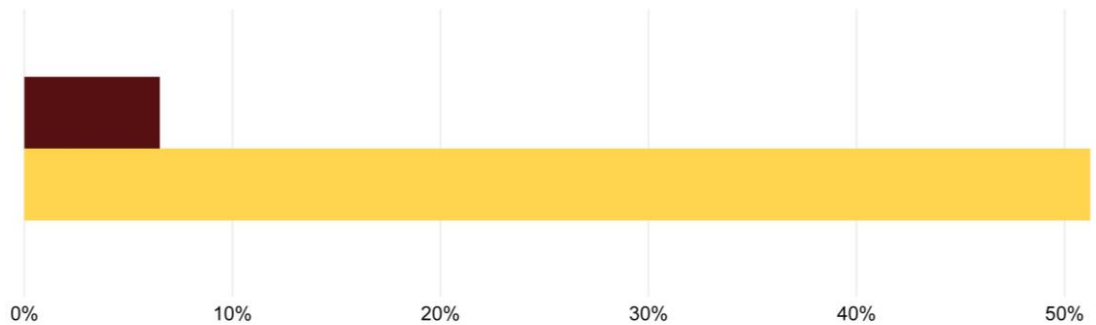
Percentage of wholetime firefighters
As at 31 March 2018

54%

70%

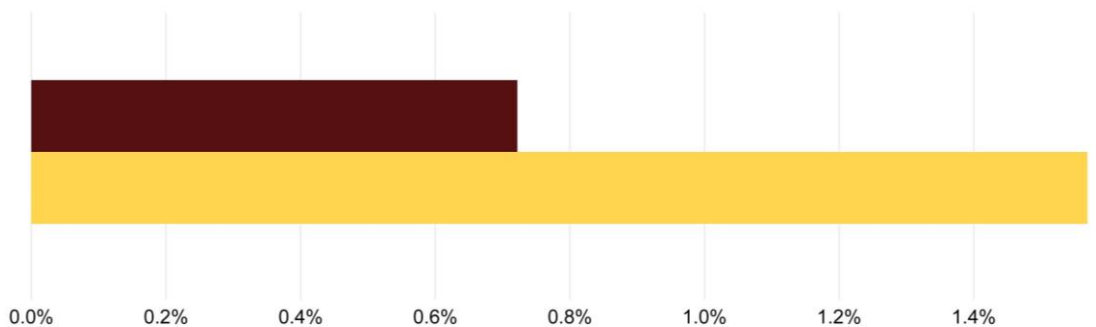
Percentage of female firefighters as at 31 March 2018

● Female firefighters ● Female residential population














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

● BAME firefighters ● BAME residential population



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

Overview

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



People



Requires improvement

Promoting the right values and culture



Requires improvement

Getting the right people with the right skills



Requires improvement

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement

Managing performance and developing leaders



Requires improvement

Overall summary of inspection findings

We are satisfied with some aspects of the performance of Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). But there are several areas where the service needs to make improvements.

Northumberland FRS requires improvement to the effectiveness of the service it provides. In particular, it requires improvement to its work in:

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

But we judge it to be good at responding to national risks.

The service requires improvement to its efficiency. Specifically, it requires improvement to the way it uses resources and the affordability of the service it provides.

It requires improvement to the way it looks after its people. So it requires improvement to the way it:

- promotes the right values and culture;
- gets the right people with the right skills;
- ensures fairness and promotes diversity; and
- manages performance and develops leaders.

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

Effectiveness



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



Requires improvement

Summary

An effective fire and rescue service will identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks its community faces. It will target its fire prevention and protection activities to those who are at greatest risk from fire. It will make sure businesses comply with fire safety legislation. When the public calls for help, the fire and rescue service should respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness requires improvement.

The service understands its risk and has an [integrated risk management plan](#) (IRMP), the Fire and Rescue Plan, which it updates annually and uses to determine priorities. All main areas have their own departmental plans and the service oversees them well. The service needs to improve how it:

- gathers and analyses up-to-date risk information;
- manages building risk information; and
- communicates with the public.

The service's prevention work requires improvement. It needs to improve targeting those most at risk, evaluating its effectiveness and promoting safety messages to the public.

There are several problems in this area:

- The service says it carries out [safe and well visits](#), but actually it carries out home safety checks.
- Its record keeping during [home fire safety checks](#) isn't accurate.
- Local prevention work isn't aligned to local risk.
- There is a lack of media campaigns to inform the public about the risk of fire.

The service's protection activities also need improvement. It has a risk-based inspection programme, but the number of inspectors has been reduced. So it can't conduct the number of inspections it needs to, or carry out additional activities to promote business safety.

Response to fires also requires improvement. Problems in this area include:

- fire engines being unavailable;
- increasing response times;
- commanders lacking appropriate training;
- an inability to communicate about community risk effectively with the public; and
- a lack of operational learning.

The service's response to national risk is good and it is the national lead on wildfires. It takes the lead locally in training other agencies in [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles](#) (JESIP).

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information. This should include site-specific risk information.

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

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

Understanding local and community risk

Northumberland FRS has an integrated risk management plan (IRMP), which runs until 2021.

When it created this plan, the service sought the views of the community and consulted the public over a six-week period. It used various ways to raise public awareness of this consultation: for example, media campaigns and contacting a range of interested parties. The chief fire officer spoke at several local authority meetings. Data that the service gave us showed that the online survey drew 54 responses.

The service engages with the public via a variety of means, such as community events and through the promotion of business and community safety, as well as during incidents. The service should consider greater use of digital technology to engage with its communities, including those that are harder to reach.

The IRMP details how information from other sources, such as local and national data and partner agencies, helps the service understand the community risk profile. The service uses this data to define its future priorities.

The service recognises that it lacks the capacity and the expertise to fully analyse and evaluate risk data to target its resources more effectively. To mitigate this, in 2015, the service commissioned an independent review of its operational response model. This resulted in a detailed analysis of a range of response scenarios that the service has used, and it has since changed the way it responds to incidents. It has commissioned a further review to take place in 2019 to inform the service's new IRMP. We note this planned review has a broader scope to help inform the service's prevention and protection activities.

Having an effective risk management plan

The IRMP covers a number of areas, including how the service identifies risk, promotes community and business safety and responds to incidents, and the service's financial circumstances. The plan also covers how the service deals with a major incident as part of a multi-agency response, and how to prepare for such events. The service's priorities are defined within each section.

An annual update of the plan reviews progress made against stated priorities, and revises priorities for the year ahead. The service directs the activities outlined in its IRMP through departmental business plans. Principal areas such as response, prevention and protection each have their own plans. Every month, senior leaders scrutinise progress against these plans.

Each fire station also has its own plan to inform its local activities. However, the activities described in them don't always correspond to local risk and we found some crews do not understand how to use the local plans. Therefore, local plans did not always translate into local action to reduce risk.

Maintaining risk information

Operational crews inspect buildings to identify hazards to firefighters and draw up plans that can be used to reduce risk during an incident. In the year to 31 March 2018, the service carried out 105 inspections. From 1 April to 31 December 2018, it had completed a further 65 inspections. The service is unlikely to meet its target of 140 inspections this financial year.

At the time of our inspection, we found that the service didn't have a nominated person responsible for managing building risk information. Staff informed us that they hadn't received training on how to conduct these inspections and were unable to systematically gather accurate risk information. We found that some staff lacked confidence in the new risk rating system. The service couldn't assure us that there were risk plans for all appropriate buildings.

Crews can access information about operational risk, information for road traffic collisions and operational guidance notes via [mobile data terminals](#) (MDTs) on its fire engines. We found that crews were familiar and confident with using MDTs.

Supervisory managers hold daily briefings to pass on current information about risk. This includes temporary risks, such as road closures, local events or hydrant information. We found that staff were aware of the [safety flashes](#) used to communicate safety-critical information. Stations have made good use of noticeboards to highlight important information.

Preventing fires and other risks



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself it allocates the right resources to prevention activities and that prevention activities align to risk.
- The service should evaluate and assure its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.
- The service should improve its use of communications to provide information about fire prevention and to promote community safety.

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

Prevention strategy

The service's prevention strategy is outlined in its IRMP. The service has clearly defined prevention objectives, which a central team of specialist prevention officers and local fire crews carry out.

We found the central prevention team had limited capacity. Data the service gave us shows that the team has reduced in size from 37 staff in 2008 to 9 at the time of inspection.

The service doesn't co-ordinate its prevention work consistently enough. We found that the departmental plan doesn't ensure that the prevention work of local crews is effective, and crews did not always understand the plan. Local activities aren't always aligned to the local risk profile, and the central team was often unaware of this activity.

One of the main areas of prevention work is conducting home fire safety checks. In the year to 31 March 2018, the service carried out 7,839 visits, equating to 24.6 per 1,000 of the population. This is above the England rate of 10.4 per 1,000 population.

While the service has a system in place for carrying out these visits, we identified several issues that the service needs to manage more effectively.

For example, in 2017, the service changed the name of its home safety visits to safe and well visits. This was intended to reflect a broader ambition to improve people's wellbeing through the visits. However, we found that some staff were confused by this new approach and didn't understand its benefits. Staff were still conducting narrower home fire safety checks just focused on fire safety rather than on fire safety and wellbeing.

When crews carry out a safe and well visit, if they find someone needs more support, they can refer them to the prevention team, which then conducts an 'enhanced' safe and well visit. We found no difference between ordinary and 'enhanced' visits. This is not an effective use of resources.

We found that the level of risk recorded for an individual following a safe and well check wasn't always correct. The assessment of risk isn't routinely updated to reflect interventions, or the support the service has provided, such as installing smoke alarms and providing safety advice. In March 2017, for financial reasons, the service stopped making follow-up visits to high-risk individuals.

When we reviewed some safe and well case files, we found that several files for people considered 'very high risk' were incomplete. Important actions hadn't been recorded, such as whether a [safeguarding](#) referral had been made. The service could not therefore be confident it was consistently taking action to protect [vulnerable people](#).

We found the service doesn't assure the quality of, or evaluate, all of its prevention activities. As a result, it doesn't know if all of its prevention activities are effective.

Promoting community safety

The service takes part in some national campaigns to promote fire safety, but local media campaigns to inform the public about local fire or incident risk are limited. Staff told us they couldn't access social media platforms directly, which limits their prevention work.

The service runs several youth engagement programmes, including The Prince's Trust and Young Firefighters. Both promote fire and road safety messages with a focus on personal development and on increasing young people's life skills. Staff spoke passionately about these programmes and their positive effects. The service also runs fire safety sessions in some schools, which staff spoke positively about. While this is welcome, the number of schools involved was limited. We believe the service could engage more consistently with schools across the service.

We found the service also runs a programme called 'Extinguish' to reduce deliberate fire setting. Partner agencies refer young people, up to the age of 18, and the service runs an educational programme on the dangers of deliberate fire setting. Data that the service provided shows that around 60 fire setters take part each year in the programme.

The service has recently trained its staff to identify vulnerability and how to safeguard vulnerable people. We found that the level of understanding of safeguarding varied among both crews and members of the central prevention team. The service is increasing the number of safeguarding referrals it makes to partners (e.g. to its local authority or police force) each year. However, it can't show how many of these referrals are accepted as safeguarding cases, so it does not know how useful the additional referrals are.

Road safety

The service aims to improve the quality of its road safety education and is a partner in the county's road safety group. We found that the local station plans contain only a generic road safety objective, which isn't necessarily aligned to local risk.

We found that local road safety activities are often reactive, responding to a request from schools or community groups, as opposed to being proactive and corresponding to the wider community need set out in the service plans.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.
- The service should ensure it works proactively with local businesses to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations.

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

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

Risk-based approach

The service identifies buildings that need a fire safety audit through its risk-based inspection programme (RBIP). This defines both the level of risk and how often a building should be audited.

In the year ending 31 March 2018, the service carried out 3.8 fire safety audits per 100 known premises (which equates to 339 audits). This compares to the England rate of

3.0 over the same period. However, this is a 57 percent reduction in the number of fire safety audits when compared with the previous year, when 786 were carried out.

Each month, the service generates a list of all the buildings that have to be audited. These are then assigned to inspectors and highest-risk buildings are always inspected first. The service has 30 buildings it classifies as being of the highest risk, which it requires to be re-inspected every three years. The service acknowledges that it can't meet all the audits required by its RBIP. The service told us that during 2018 it failed to audit 367 premises. These were audits that should have been completed as part of its monthly tasking but were not completed primarily due to staffing shortages.

The number of trained protection staff has reduced from ten inspecting officers in 2010 to five in 2018, although for much of 2018 there were only four. While demand has reduced by 12 percent since 2010 (these include both proactive audits and reactive work in relation to responding to building consultations and complaints), the number of staff has been reduced by 50 percent.

The service is aware of the need to increase its capacity and is currently training a number of [wholetime](#) managers so they can conduct fire safety audits. This should increase the service's ability to complete audits.

The service has trained operational crews in 'operational health checks'. These are checks of low-risk buildings. If the crews note a concern, this is then passed to an inspecting officer to investigate further.

Between 1 April 2018 and 31 December 2018, the service received 128 building regulation consultations and responded to 93 percent of these in the required timeframe.

Positively, the service has 24/7 cover where a qualified fire safety officer is available to respond to any fire safety concern and take the required action. This may include prohibiting a building's use if deemed unsafe.

Enforcement

The service works with local businesses to make sure they comply with fire safety regulations. We found that the service has the appropriate skills in place to take enforcement action when necessary.

In the year ending 31 March 2018, the service issued 99 informal notices and one prohibition notice. It did not issue any alterations notices or enforcement notices, or pursue any prosecutions.

Despite the low amount of enforcement activity, the service is ensuring its staff have the confidence and expertise to carry out enforcement work if considered appropriate. Inspectors receive annual training to maintain their competence in prosecuting. The service has also developed closer working relationships with the county council's legal team.

The service is part of a regional working group with other fire and rescue services to seek a consistent approach to enforcement activity. We found evidence of some joint enforcement work with partners such as Border Force.

Working with others

The service is attempting to reduce the burden of attending false alarms. In June 2018, it introduced a new policy to recover its costs from businesses for attending repeated false alarms. The service intends to evaluate this policy after 12 months.

Trading standards, environmental health, food standards and building control bodies are co-located at the fire service's headquarters. This creates the opportunity for the routine exchange of relevant information. For example, these partners are working together to resolve a range of problems at a hotel that are of mutual concern. This partnership working helps make sure that any potential interventions are effectively co-ordinated.

The service has limited capacity to proactively engage with the business community to promote safety and compliance, which is disappointing.

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure staff know how to command fire service assets at incidents effectively and safely.
- During incidents, the service should ensure it gives relevant information to the public to help keep them safe.
- The service should ensure an effective system of debriefing to enable staff to learn from operational incidents to improve future response and command.

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

Managing assets and resources

One of the biggest challenges for the service is managing an operational response across a large, sparsely populated county.

The service's operational response model was independently reviewed in 2015. As at 31 March 2018, the service had 15 fire stations and 22 operational fire engines.

In the 12 months to 30 September, the service attended 3,404 incidents. Based on data provided by the service, seven of 15 fire stations attended fewer than 50 incidents each in the year ending 31 March 2018.

In the year ending 31 March 2018, the average response time to a [primary fire](#) was 11 minutes and 54 seconds; this is an increase from 10 minutes and 46 seconds the previous year. The service has one of the slowest response times to primary fires compared with other predominantly rural services.

At some on-call fire stations we found the service regularly suffers from staff shortages resulting in fire engines being unavailable to respond to incidents. To mitigate this, the duty manager will move staff between stations to achieve the best level of fire cover. Priority is given to stations it considers most important due to their location or risk profile. From April to December 2018, the average monthly availability of fire engines ranged from 83 percent to 90 percent.

Response

The service is in the process of adopting [national operational guidance](#). When this requires the introduction of new policies, we found that there was a clear action plan to develop relevant training packages.

The service has a shared [fire control](#) system with Tyne and Wear FRS. This has improved some areas of joint working and helps to ensure that resources are effectively deployed. However, we noted that at night the service's fire control may be staffed by two people who are also responsible for managing out-of-hours calls to the local authority. The service should ensure this arrangement is resilient and has the capacity to respond to a protracted major incident.

The service has recently introduced a new system for responding to smaller low-risk incidents such as bin fires. It can now deploy a fire engine with a reduced crew of three firefighters. The service stated this has improved the availability of appliances for this type of call, but we noted a degree of confusion among both fire control staff and crews about what incidents a fire engine with a smaller crew could attend. The service should make sure its staff understand how this system works.

Command

We found that there was inconsistency in the way the service trains its commanders at all levels across the organisation. For example, we found:

- knowledge gaps in technical areas among supervisors. These gaps concerned changes in practices that had been made to national operational guidance in 2015;
- middle-tier commanders being used to command incidents when they had not attended a role-specific command-training course; and
- strategic-level commanders who hadn't completed fire-specific strategic command courses.

The service should make sure commanders have the necessary training and are competent to safely and effectively command operational incidents.

Keeping the public informed

The service doesn't routinely provide information to the public. Its website contains general safety information, but no details regarding ongoing or previous incidents.

The service has limited social media channels to give the public real-time information about incidents such as road closures, smoke plumes or safety hazards. This limits its ability to warn or inform people who may be affected by an ongoing incident.

We found staff hadn't received recent training in providing essential information to the public. For example, fire control staff haven't received safety-critical training, such as providing survival advice to callers trapped by fire during incidents, in a number of years. The service doesn't provide media training to operational officers at any level across the organisation.

Evaluating operational performance

The service has recently introduced a new system to gather feedback from operational incidents. Understanding of the new process varied. We found that over a period of six months there hadn't been a single feedback form returned from [hot debriefs](#) that follow operational incidents. Also, the use of formal debriefs, conducted after larger incidents, wasn't widespread.

The service has introduced an active monitoring system to assess the performance of incident commanders. This enables a more senior colleague to monitor an incident in live time and provide feedback to the commanding officer about their performance.

The service produces 'safety flashes' to communicate any risk-critical learning and we found that crews were aware of this process. However, we found that crews weren't aware of the service's operational bulletin, which is used to communicate any wider learning from operational debriefs.

We found that the service reviews major incidents that occur across the country to identify any potential learning. An action plan is then produced to embed this learning and monitor its implementation.

Responding to national risks



Good

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure that supervisory managers know how to apply Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles.
- The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information. This should include cross-border risk information.

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

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

Preparedness

The service has a dedicated team that manages civil contingency arrangements for both the service and the council. The fire service takes a lead role in managing and supporting major multi-agency events that occur within the county. The service's headquarters is used as the multi-agency command room.

The service is an active partner of the [local resilience forum](#) and has plans in place that link to the community risk register. These include responding to incidents such as wildfires, major flooding and a [site subject to control of major accident hazards regulations](#). We found these plans were well understood and tested through an exercise programme. We saw evidence of debrief reports following major events or exercises. However, it wasn't clear how the service had implemented the learning from these.

The service takes the lead in training other agencies in Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP). This supports closer work through a greater understanding of each other's roles at a large multi-agency incident. However, we found that the service's supervisory managers didn't show a good enough understanding of JESIP principles to be able to apply them at a multi-agency incident.

Due to the geography of the county, wildfires are a potential risk. The service is the national lead on wildfire incidents. It has 55 wildfire plans in place, which it has created with its partner agencies. We found this system to be well managed.

Working with other services

The service has formal arrangements with other fire and rescue services to access specialist support when necessary. For example, the service doesn't have its own aerial ladder platform (ALP), so it has an agreement with a neighbouring service to use its ALP when the need arises. The service should make sure these arrangements are regularly exercised.

The service has a plan to exercise annually with its neighbouring services and we found some evidence of this taking place. However, the service cannot readily and consistently access risk information in premises in all neighbouring services. This has the potential to compromise firefighters' safety should they be required to respond to an incident. The service should take steps to address this.

Working with other agencies

We found evidence of the service exercising with partners such as mountain rescue, the police and the ambulance service to test the multi-agency response to incidents.

The service's close integration within the local authority means that it assumes a variety of roles when major events occur. This was evident in the service's response during adverse weather in 2018 when it supported the community's broader needs. Its actions ranged from snow ploughing to providing vital access to rural areas and using its 4x4 vehicles to deliver medicines and prescriptions to remote communities. We see this as a good example of the wider role that a fire and rescue service can play in supporting its communities.

Efficiency



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



Requires improvement

Summary

An efficient fire and rescue service will manage its budget and spend money properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to its risk. It should try to keep costs down without compromising public safety. Future budgets should be based on robust and realistic assumptions. Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency requires improvement.

This is a fire service which has already had to make significant savings. It has done this by reducing the numbers of support staff and management, and by changing its operating model. But the service is struggling to align its plans to the significant cuts in staffing it has made. The cuts have created gaps that have affected its activities, including its core functions of prevention and protection, as well as its broader ability to change and improve.

The service is reliant on staff working extra hours to complete workloads and some staff are full-time firefighters and provide [on-call](#) firefighting cover during their time off. The service isn't managing this effectively to support staff wellbeing.

The service has a clear strategic intent to do more collaborative work. While there are examples of collaboration projects being led by a strategy or business need, currently most are driven by opportunity.

The service also has an inconsistent approach to ensuring that business continuity arrangements are in place and regularly tested. Its overarching business continuity plan has passed its review date and the service could not demonstrate that it was testing departmental plans regularly.

Further savings are required to be made over future years. When we inspected the service, it did not have any agreed plans in place for how these savings will be realised. In considering the need for future efficiencies, the service needs to balance its resources across the areas of response, prevention and protection if it is to continue to meet the priorities set out in its IRMP. We recognise this will be a challenge.

Making best use of resources



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure resources allocated to prevention, protection, response and support activities are linked to risks and priorities set out in its integrated risk management plan.
- The service needs to improve how it monitors the productivity of staff. It needs to ensure there is appropriate monitoring and management of working time.
- The service should ensure it has good continuity arrangements in place that take account of all foreseeable threats and risks. It needs to review and test plans regularly.

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

How plans support objectives

The service is part of Northumberland County Council (NCC). In February 2016, the council agreed its medium-term financial plan for 2016 to 2020 and a two-year budget for 2016 to 2018. The council had to reduce its budget by £6m in 2017/18. It also needs to make further savings of £36m from 2018 to 2022. The service is therefore required to contribute to this. The service has a good track record of achieving savings and has already made significant savings of £4.5 million, which it achieved through reductions in staff, fleet and a station closure.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the cost of one firefighter per head of the population was £26.67. This compares with the England rate of £22.38 over the same period. However, many factors influence this cost: for example, the ratio of [retained](#) staff, which is in part influenced by the rurality of the service. The service's spending on operational firefighting activity in 2017/18 was £16m. This is the third lowest in England after the Isles of Scilly and Isle of Wight fire and rescue services.

Annual budgets are delegated to departmental managers and expenditure is monitored every month by the service's management team and a council accountant. We found the systems of financial management and financial governance within the service to be robust.

The service has been asked to make further budget reductions of £1.1m over the next three years. It has yet to develop plans to ensure it can provide a resilient fire and rescue service that meets the level of service set out in the IRMP.

Productivity and ways of working

The service's need to reduce staff to meet budget cuts has influenced its workforce model in recent years. As at 31 March 2010, the service had 176 full-time equivalent (FTE) wholetime firefighters; at the same point in 2018, the service had 137. This is a reduction of 22 percent. In March 2016, the service changed its response model to meet budget reductions. This included the closure of a fire station and the loss of an on-call fire engine.

Almost half the service's firefighters are on call. Like many other services, Northumberland FRS has a number of on-call vacancies, which means that some of its on-call engines are not always available to respond to incidents. Each day, the duty manager will move operational resources around the county to ensure the best level of fire cover. The scale and frequency of these changes can affect the pre-planned activities of wholetime crews. We found examples of planned training not being carried out, and community safety activities and building risk inspections having to be cancelled or rearranged.

The service has reduced the number of staff in management roles. There are just eight managers from group manager level up to chief officer. We found that management capacity at all levels of the organisation is stretched.

Specialist departments have seen large reductions in staffing numbers. For example, the community safety team has reduced staff from 37 in 2008 to 9 in 2018, fire protection inspectors from 10 in 2010 to 5 in 2018 and training staff from 13.5 in 2010 to 8.5 in 2018. Staff repeatedly told us that staff numbers in specialist departments had now been reduced too far.

We also found that the service doesn't manage staff working time effectively. We identified that staff are working extra hours to complete workloads and accumulating a significant number of additional hours of leave. Many staff told us that, even when they work additional hours, they still can't manage their workloads. In prevention and protection departments, the lack of capacity was stated as the reason targets weren't being met.

Collaboration

The service has a clear governance structure for overseeing how it discharges its legislative duty to collaborate with other emergency services. It has established good working relationships with the other local emergency services.

Examples of collaboration we saw included outsourcing, partnership working and shared services. We found that the decisions to take part in collaborative activities seem to be based on opportunities that occur (for example, where the service is invited to work with another partner), as opposed to being led by a financial or business case. But we found that these arrangements were beneficial in supporting closer working with partner agencies.

Continuity arrangements

We found a lack of accountability for business continuity arrangements among senior management and a lack of understanding of business continuity at departmental level.

The service doesn't have a system in place for regularly testing its continuity plans. The main organisational continuity plan has passed its review date. It was also unclear when departmental or functional plans were last tested.

Continuity testing for the service's fire control function, a potentially high-risk area of service, wasn't routine. No programme of continuity exercising was in place, even after a joint user of the control system had experienced continuity problems. The service should ensure its business continuity arrangements are in place, understood and regularly tested.

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



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service needs to agree ways of working within its reducing budget that enables it to meet future prevention, protection and response requirements.

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

Improving value for money

Northumberland County Council needs to make savings of £36m between 2019 and 2022. As part of the council's plan, the service needs to contribute to this and make £1.1m of further savings from its budget over the next three years.

Staff costs constitute three-quarters of the service's revenue budget. Consequently, if the service wants to maintain its current establishment figures, the £1.1m in savings must come from its remaining budget of around £3.5m.

At the time of our inspection, the service didn't have agreed plans in place to meet the totality of its future savings requirements. It has identified some potential areas of savings, such as reducing overtime, which should meet the savings needed for years one and two.

The greater part of the savings required, £0.9m, is scheduled for 2021/22. This is a significant percentage of the service's controllable budget and will mean considerable changes are needed to the service's current operating model. The service is currently looking at ways to make these savings, including commissioning feasibility studies and a review of collaborative opportunities with other fire and rescue services.

The service's future efficiency plans should make sure it is able to meet the objectives within its IRMP. This includes areas such as prevention and protection. We recognise this is going to be difficult because it is already a lean service.

The council has provisionally allocated the service capital expenditure of £3.9m over the next three years. This will go towards replacing fire engines with new, more affordable and efficient ones.

Innovation

The service seeks opportunities to improve business practices and make future savings. For example, the service has recently built an in-house breathing apparatus training facility. This has resulted in annual savings of around £50,000. Half of this saving is being reinvested to further develop the training facilities. This facility also creates logistical efficiencies in terms of travel time, accessibility and ease of use.

We found a good example of how the service delivers savings through the outsourcing of fleet servicing and personal protective clothing for firefighters.

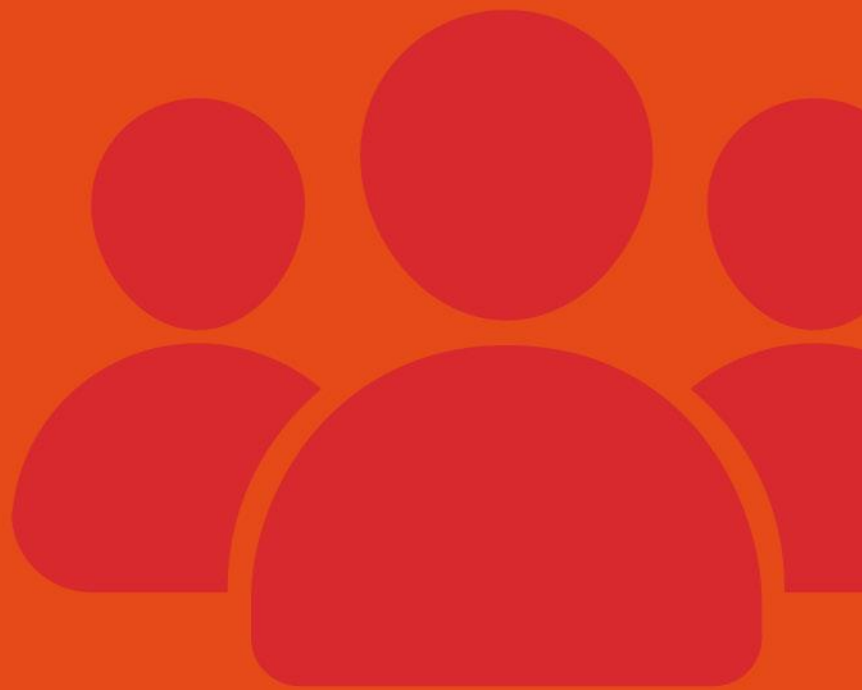
We saw that the service is using its investment in the on-call system to improve recruitment and retention. For example, the service has recently increased the disturbance allowance to on-call staff to £10 per hour, which is above the national rate. As this is a new scheme, it hasn't yet been possible to evaluate any benefits arising from this.

Future investment and working with others

We found that the service is generating some external income. For example, the service is increasingly exploring opportunities to share its estate. We saw examples of this at several fire stations, with partners co-located.

The fire service has previously provided commercial training but, at the time of our inspection, this had stopped. This was to allow for the council to explore whether to bring all such activities under a single council-owned trading entity.

People



How well does the service look after its people?



Requires improvement

Summary

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

The service needs to do more to improve its values and culture. Staff feel the service's values are too aligned to the county council rather than the fire service. As a result, these do not influence the behaviour or work of fire staff. We also have concerns with the service's culture. Some staff told us they felt unable to raise concerns and give feedback, and that the behaviour of some managers was poor. We also heard examples of bullying and harassment. As part of our inspection, we carried out a survey of staff to get their views of their service. The survey showed that, of the 93 respondents (27 percent of the workforce), more than a quarter felt that they had been bullied or harassed in the last 12 months. There are limitations to the staff survey which should be considered alongside the findings. We explain these in Annex A.

Training needs to improve. The service lacks a strategy to make sure all operational commanders have had the right training. Control staff don't have a structured training plan or a way to record their training, and there aren't any plans to standardise local training.

The area that the service covers is one of the least ethnically diverse in England. But the service could still do more to encourage diversity and its understanding of it within the workforce.

Staff views about the value of the appraisal system are mixed, mainly because firefighters have group appraisals. The service should offer all staff individual appraisals and tailored feedback.

Promotion possibilities are limited, and the service lacks a formal talent management process. The service should rely less on people in temporary promotions.

More positively, the service's awareness of the importance of mental health wellbeing is growing. It has blue light champions and offers a range of occupational and mental health services, although not all staff seemed aware of them. It updates its health and safety statement of intent annually.

Promoting the right values and culture



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure its values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated at all levels of the organisation.

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

Workforce wellbeing

The service provides good wellbeing support for its staff. We found that there was a growing awareness across the service of mental health and wellbeing. The service has trained blue light champions who raise awareness of mental health in the workplace. Most staff we spoke to were aware of the support that this role could offer, how to recognise any mental health concerns, and how they could refer someone for support.

The service has established procedures for debriefing [critical incidents](#) to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of the staff involved. More broadly, we found staff know how to access support if they need it and staff who had sought support were complimentary about the benefits.

The service uses an occupational health service provided by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, via Northumberland County Council, to provide occupational health support. We found there to be a range of occupational health and wellbeing services available. Some staff said they felt it was difficult to access this support and that they wanted to be able to self-refer, without having to go through their line manager or HR. The service should do more to promote its occupational health support, so that staff are fully aware of all the services on offer and how to access them.

Health and safety

The service has a health and safety (H&S) statement of intent. This is updated every year and signed by the chief fire officer.

We noted a disparity between the aspirations of central H&S and what is being done locally. We found that, while staff had some knowledge of their responsibilities about H&S, they had gaps in their knowledge about guidance and training, and about the support available to staff. We note that the service is reviewing its H&S governance, including its policy.

We consider the service's system for reporting and recording [near misses](#) and accidents robust.

Culture and values

The service is currently working to the county council's people strategy. It is developing its own fire-specific people strategy, which it hopes to launch later this year, which will cover engagement, development, culture and leadership, and set action points and targets.

We found that most staff we interviewed as part of our inspection are proud to work for the service. Despite this, there are some underlying problems which the service needs to address. For example, we found a widespread misunderstanding of the service's values and mission statement at all levels of the organisation. Most people were aware of the service's values poster, which is displayed on noticeboards, but they weren't aware of any specifics or, more broadly, how the values have helped to shape their work or behaviour. Staff told us they felt the values are more aligned to the county council than the fire service and weren't relevant to their work. Staff didn't feel that the service had a set of organisational or behaviour values that they could identify with.

We found concerns among staff about the behaviour of some senior managers. Some staff viewed management as autocratic and overly assertive. Others described a culture of not being able to approach managers. They felt their views were not heard and that they were undervalued.

As part of our inspection, we carried out a survey of FRS staff to get their views of the service. Of the 93 respondents, 27 percent felt they had been bullied or harassed at work over the past 12 months. The service told us it is in the process of commissioning a cultural survey which should support the service to identify and then address staff concerns.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure its workforce plan includes how it intends to reduce the number of staff in temporary positions.
- The service should assure itself that it trains all staff properly for their roles.
- The service should make sure there is a training plan for all staff and there is a consistent method of recording when staff have received training.

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

Workforce planning

The service does some workforce planning, albeit not to the level we have seen in other services. This can partly be explained by its smaller size and its recent focus on reducing staff numbers.

Since 2010, the service has had to make large reductions in its workforce. It has had to make difficult decisions to reduce its staffing numbers from 423 FTE staff to 306 FTE in the year ending 31 March 2018. Posts have been removed from all parts of the organisation including operational, support and management roles.

With the recent focus being on reducing staffing numbers, until recently, workforce planning has focused on introducing new organisational structures and creating a more multi-skilled workforce so that a single member of staff can fulfil multiple roles as required. The service recognises that it needs a more structured approach in future and has recently adopted the county council's workforce planning methodology.

Maintaining a fully trained and resilient on-call workforce is a constant challenge for the service. We found that, at some stations, staffing levels are good and there is a waiting list to join. But, at others, there were notable staff shortages, which means that, at times, engines aren't available to respond to incidents.

The service is now part of a regional partnership for recruiting and training wholetime firefighters and is intending to use this new arrangement for the first time later this year. We will monitor how a regional process of this kind achieves the outcome of creating a more diverse workforce.

We are concerned to see that a high number of staff are temporarily promoted. As of 31 December 2018, 25 staff were on temporary promotion; this is 7 percent of its workforce headcount. Notably, the longest temporary promotion, as of 31 December 2018, was nearly seven years. The service should seek to reduce these figures

in future. Temporary promotions aren't good for organisational stability and can leave staff feeling insecure in their role.

Learning and improvement

The service co-ordinates and provides safety-critical training at its central training centre. We found that the service has invested in its operational training provision and has recently installed new breathing apparatus training facilities.

We observed some good practice at fire stations, with structured training plans to prioritise and direct future training, but this wasn't consistent. Some [watches](#) couldn't demonstrate they had a robust plan for future training. At [wholetime fire stations](#), we found the need to deploy fire engines and staff to provide fire cover at other stations often interrupts planned training.

Staff within fire control don't have a training plan. Training is carried out locally, usually co-ordinated by the watch manager. We found gaps in key areas of training, such as fire survival. We also found that fire control staff haven't been able to record their training for the past 12 months.

Corporate staff have an annual training plan aligned to the council's wider workforce development plan. This includes a series of mandatory e-learning modules that they complete annually. However, the service does not keep accurate training records for operational commanders, including their level of competence.

The service has started conducting departmental debriefs to identify areas of good practice and areas of learning within departments. We saw an example of a debrief which had an action plan to address the points raised. We look forward to seeing what improvements this initiative brings.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure issues identified through its staff survey are appropriately addressed and that actions taken are communicated to staff in a timely way.
- The service should assure itself that staff are confident using its feedback mechanisms.
- To identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity, and achieve a more representative workforce, the service should make sure diversity and inclusion are well understood and become embedded in the service.

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

Seeking and acting on staff feedback

The service uses annual staff surveys to gain staff feedback. In 2017, it also carried out a survey to ask for feedback from on-call staff on specific issues.

We found mixed views among the staff about the surveys. Some voiced concerns that their responses to a survey generated from a link sent to their personal email addresses wouldn't be treated confidentially. Others felt that the survey wouldn't result in any action.

The service had taken action as a direct result of issues raised in the on-call survey, although some of these could have been resolved more quickly.

We found that, while corporate staff felt confident about speaking to their line manager or even to a senior manager about an issue, some operational staff felt less confident to raise concerns. We noted a perception among staff that raising a concern might damage their career prospects, or their chances of moving from an on-call to a full-time role in future.

Some staff expressed similar concerns about the grievance procedure. In the year ending 31 March 2018, there had been low levels of formal grievances submitted. We do not know the reasons for this, although managers told us that issues were often dealt with informally without the need to raise a formal grievance.

Diversity

The service has a good understanding of its community demographics. Areas of Northumberland are among the least ethnically diverse in England. The service has carried out a review of the county's demographics, including its working-age population. While the service is currently downsizing, it is identifying how it can improve the diversity of its workforce when it next recruits.

As at 31 March 2018, only 0.7 percent of all its firefighters were from a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background. This compares with a BAME residential population of 1.6 percent. Also, only 6.5 percent of all firefighters were female.

The service has previously followed the council's equality and diversity strategy, but it now aims to produce its own fire-specific equality and diversity strategy. It has also recently established an equality, diversity and inclusion staff group chaired by the council's lead member for engagement and inclusion.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

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

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

Managing performance

We found mixed views among staff about the purpose and credibility of the service's appraisal system. Some staff were unclear about their personal goals and continuing professional development objectives.

The service has an appraisal system which requires staff to have an annual appraisal with a six-month review. We found that this didn't always happen, and that firefighters on station have a 'group' appraisal instead. Staff informed us that this was a generic briefing given by a supervisor to a group of people, and largely focused around broader station objectives. Staff stated they did not get individual feedback, objectives for the year ahead or recognition for work they had done.

In contrast, we found that corporate staff had individual appraisals and were largely positive about them. We heard examples of how they could get feedback about performance and make development requests. However, feedback from both corporate and operational staff was that appraisals felt like a 'tick-box' exercise, and line managers often lacked the time to do them properly.

Developing leaders

The service now has a lean middle and strategic management structure. There are eight managers from group manager level up to, and including, the chief fire officer. There are no corporate staff above group manager level within the service.

The service's management structure is stable as the people with group manager or equivalent roles have held these roles for several years. Opportunities for promotion are therefore limited, not least as a result of the high number of temporary promotions, some for several years, and progression depends on senior officers retiring or leaving the service.

We found that the service lacks a formal process for developing high-potential staff. It has recently introduced a new, more comprehensive development programme for aspiring managers. Those identified as having potential can join the programme to move to a higher role. Data that the service gave us showed that 18 people are being developed for supervisory roles, and 8 for station manager roles. A process for fire control staff and group managers is due to be launched soon.

Annex A – About the data

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

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

Where we collected data directly from fire and rescue services (FRS), we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with services and with other interested parties such as the Home Office. This was primarily through the FRS Technical Advisory Group, which brings together representatives from FRSs and the Home Office to support the inspection's design and development, including data collection. We gave services several opportunities to validate the data they gave us and to ensure the accuracy of the evidence presented. For instance:

- We asked all services to check the data they submitted to us via an online application.
- We asked all services to check the final data used in the report and correct any errors identified.

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

Methodology

Population

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

BMG survey of public perception of the fire and rescue service

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

However, a minority of the interviews (757) were conducted via face-to-face interviews with trained interviewers in respondents' homes. A small number of respondents were also interviewed online via postal invitations to the survey.

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

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

Staff survey

We conducted a staff survey open to all members of FRS workforces across England. We received 2,905 responses between 1 October 2018 and 15 February 2019 from across 16 FRSs during this period in Tranche 2.

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

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

The results are not representative of the opinions and attitudes of a service's whole workforce. The survey was self-selecting, and the response rate ranged from 8 percent to 31 percent of a service's workforce. So any findings should be considered alongside the service's overall response rate, which is cited in the report.

To protect respondents' anonymity and allow completion on shared devices, it was not possible to limit responses to one per person. So it is possible that a single person could have completed the survey multiple times. It is also possible that the survey could have been shared and completed by people other than its intended respondents.

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

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

Service in numbers

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

Perceived effectiveness of service

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

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

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

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

Incidents attended per 1,000 population

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, '[Incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England, by incident type and fire and rescue authority](#)' for the period from 1 October 2017 to 31 September 2018.

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

- There are seven worksheets in this file. The 'FIRE0102' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and fire and rescue authority (FRA) for each financial year. The 'FIRE0102 Quarterly' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and FRA for each quarter. The worksheet 'Data' provides the raw data for the two main data tables (from 2009/10). The 'Incidents chart - front page', 'Chart 1' and 'Chart 2' worksheets provide the data for the corresponding charts in the statistical commentary. The 'FRS geographical categories' worksheet shows how FRAs are categorised.
- Fire data, covering all incidents that FRSs attend, is collected by the Incident Recording System (IRS). For several reasons some records take longer than others for FRSs to upload to the IRS. Totals are constantly being amended (by relatively small numbers).
- We took data for Service in numbers from the February 2019 incident publication. So figures may not directly match more recent publications due to data updates.
- Before 2017/18, Hampshire FRS did not record medical co-responding incidents in the IRS. It is currently undertaking a project to upload this data for 2017/18 and 2018/19. This was not completed in time for publication on 14 February 2019.

Home fire safety checks per 1,000 population

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

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

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

- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset & Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.
- Figures for 'Fire Risk Checks carried out by Elderly (65+)', 'Fire Risk Checks carried out by Disabled' and 'Number of Fire Risk Checks carried out by Partners' don't include imputed figures because a lot of FRAs can't supply these figures.
- The checks included in a home fire safety check can vary between services. You should consider this when making direct comparisons between services.

Home fire safety checks may also be referred to as home fire risk checks or safe and well visits by FRSs.

Fire safety audits per 100 known premises

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

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

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

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

Firefighter cost per person per year

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- We calculate BAME residential population data from ONS 2011 census data.
- We calculate female residential population data from ONS mid-2017 population estimates.
- The percentage of BAME firefighters does not include those who opted not to disclose their ethnic origin. There are large variations between services in the number of firefighters who did not state their ethnic origin.
- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset & Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

Annex B – Fire and rescue authority governance

These are the different models of fire and rescue authority (FRA) governance in England. Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service is a county FRA.

Metropolitan FRA

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

Combined FRA

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

County FRA

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

Unitary authorities

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

London

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

Mayoral Combined Authority

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

Police, fire and crime commissioner FRA

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

Isles of Scilly

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

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