

# Fire & Rescue Service

## Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19

An inspection of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service



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# About this inspection

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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 Royal Berkshire 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.

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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

Berkshire

England

### Perceived effectiveness of service

Public perceptions survey (June/July 2018)

89%

86%



## Response

Berkshire

England

### Incidents attended per 1,000 population

12 months to 30 September 2018

8.9

10.5

### Home fire risk checks carried out by FRS per 1,000 population

12 months to 31 March 2018

10.2

10.4

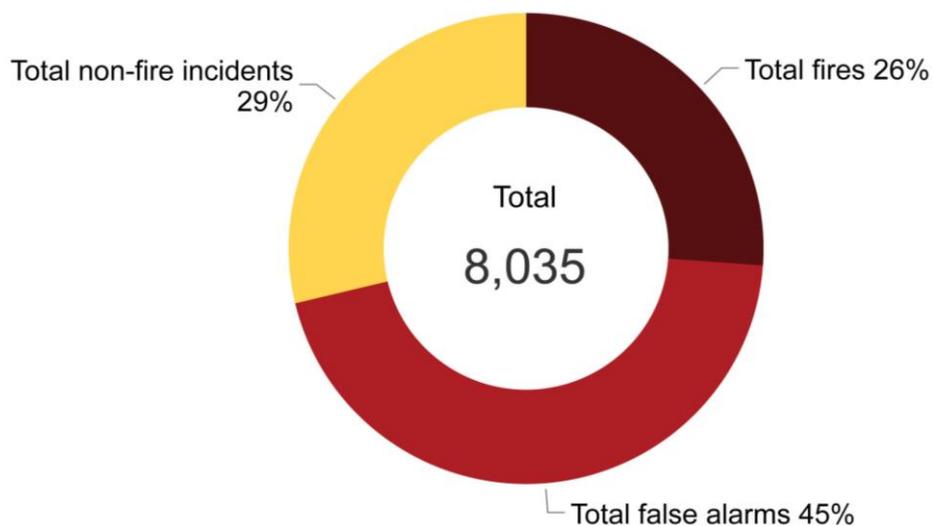
### Fire safety audits per 100 known premises

12 months to 31 March 2018

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3.0

## Incidents attended in the 12 months to 30 September 2018





## Cost

Berkshire

England

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

£19.84

£22.38



## Workforce

Berkshire

England

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

0.5

0.6

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

-2%

-14%

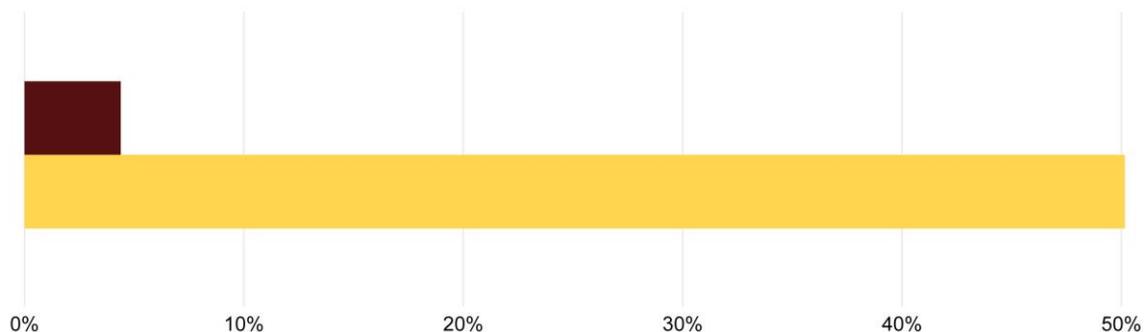
**Percentage of wholetime firefighters**  
As at 31 March 2018

88%

70%

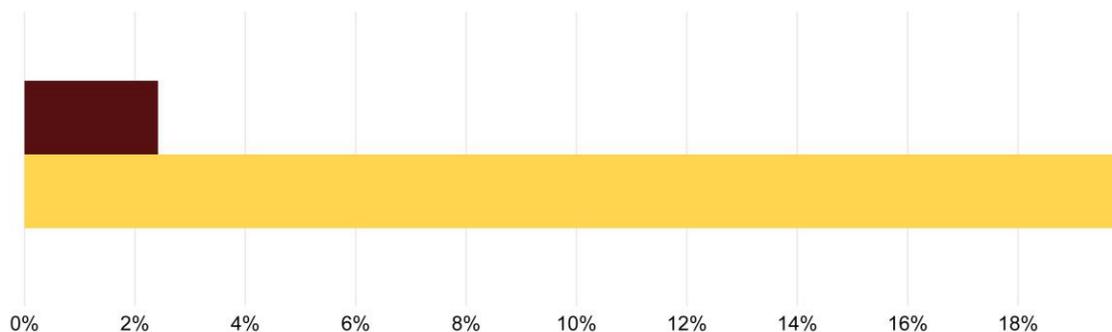
### Percentage of female firefighters as at 31 March 2018

● Female firefighters ● Female residential population



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

● BAME firefighters ● BAME residential population



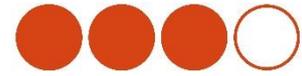
Please refer to annex A for full details on data used.

# Overview

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



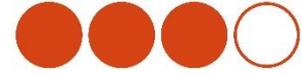
## People



**Good**

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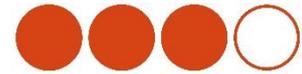
Promoting the right values and culture



Good

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Getting the right people with the right skills



Good

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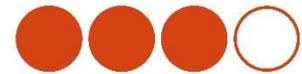
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement

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Managing performance and developing leaders



Good

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## Overall summary of inspection findings

We are pleased with the performance of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) in keeping people safe and secure. But it needs to improve in some areas to give a consistently good service.

The service is effective at keeping people safe. It is good at:

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

Royal Berkshire FRS is also good at providing an efficient service and at using resources. And it is good at providing a service that is affordable now and will be affordable in future.

It is good at looking after its people. We judged it to be good at:

- promoting the right values and culture;
- getting the right people with the right skills; and
- managing performance and developing leaders.

But the service should improve how it ensures fairness and promotes diversity.

Overall, we commend Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service for its performance. This provides a good foundation for improvement in the year ahead.

# Effectiveness



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



**Good**

## Summary

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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. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness is good.

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Royal Berkshire FRS has a good understanding of the risks to its local area and draws on a wide range of data. Its strategy for managing these risks is set out clearly in its corporate plan and [integrated risk management plan](#) (CPIRMP).

In terms of prevention, the service focuses on fires, road safety, water safety, and health and wellbeing. Its [safe and well visits](#) are targeted at the most [vulnerable people](#). However, it doesn't have a fully effective process for monitoring the standard of these visits. It should evaluate its prevention work and make sure the quality is consistent.

There is a good system of fire safety audits, which aims to enforce fire regulations. The service uses its enforcement powers proportionately and effectively, and shares information with other agencies. However, it needs to focus on reducing the number of false alarms.

The service responds well to fires and other emergencies. It has increased its wholtime fire engines from 13 to 14 and reduced its average total response times to [primary fires](#). It has made its response more efficient, with crews of four firefighters instead of five, and a new crewing model for its specialist vehicles. It hosts a joint [fire control](#) room managing emergency calls for Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

There is room for improvement in the way the service updates its staff about lessons learnt from incidents.

Royal Berkshire FRS is well placed to respond to national incidents. It has mutual aid agreements in place with its six neighbouring FRSs and carries out cross-border exercises with them.

## Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



### Good

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

Royal Berkshire FRS sets out its strategy for managing risk in its combined CPIRMP. Its 2015–2019 plan established four priority projects across prevention, protection and response. The service ran a public consultation on these projects during 2016/17, receiving more than 1,000 responses. This informed decision making – for example, the fire authority delayed the closure of Wargrave fire station in response to public opposition.

The service has a clear and accurate risk profile of its area, based on a wide range of data. This includes:

- six years of rolling incident data;
- census data from the indices of multiple deprivation;
- NHS age data;
- socio-economic data; and
- the Ordnance Survey property type database.

The service analyses this data using risk modelling software, building a picture of the areas and households most at risk. The model has been externally validated and can be used to assess both risk – the possibility of something happening – and demand, which is based on past incident data. This helps the service make decisions about the location of fire stations and fire engines. For example, it contributed to making a business case for the community fire station planned at Theale. It also helps it plan for the future.

The model is also used to identify vulnerable individuals and households for targeted prevention work. The service is working with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire FRSs to refine its risk modelling techniques.

To improve how it engages with the local community and identifies risk, the service implemented a hub model in 2017. Each hub is made up of four to nine fire stations. Prevention and protection programmes are now managed by the hubs, rather than the service's central headquarters. The aim is to provide a better-integrated service to the public in each area.

Staff told us they were starting to work more closely with local authorities, police, and health and probation services in community safety and [safeguarding](#) partnerships, to develop a common understanding of local risk and vulnerability.

### **Having an effective risk management plan**

Royal Berkshire FRS's current CPIRMP expires in April 2019. Following a public consultation, it has published a new plan for 2019–2023. This takes into account the service's statutory obligations, and the fire and rescue service national framework. It sets out how the service will manage the risks included in the Thames Valley [local resilience forum](#)'s community risk register. The service also keeps a comprehensive record of its corporate risks, which the senior leadership team regularly considers and discusses.

The service draws up an annual plan based on its CPIRMP. This identifies its main strategic objectives for that year and sets out how it plans to measure its success. Each department has its own service plan, and now each of the three hubs also has its own plan, which will be updated every year. Programme and performance boards monitor whether the service is meeting the objectives in each plan, and their reports are publicly available on its website.

### **Maintaining risk information**

The service makes regular visits to sites it has assessed as presenting a risk to the public or firefighters. The frequency of these visits depends on whether the site is categorised as very high, high, medium or low risk. During visits to higher-risk sites, a central operational policy and assurance team gathers information and prepares plans. Station staff gather information and prepare plans for medium and low risk sites, and also visit higher-risk sites, so they become familiar with them. The information and plans we saw were up to date, and firefighters can access them on the [mobile data terminal](#) installed in every fire engine.

The service has a robust process for identifying new risks and communicating them across the organisation. Its operational policy and assurance team works with partner organisations, including the police and local authority, to prepare tactical plans for temporary events. Over the last year, it has planned for two royal weddings and a presidential visit in its area.

We found that, although the service does have a system for handing over risk information at the start of shifts, it isn't implemented consistently in all its stations. There are also inconsistencies in how risk information is shared through health and safety and operational bulletins. Some stations rely on paper records, others use electronic versions, and not all the records we saw were complete. This could mean some staff don't get the necessary risk information.

## Preventing fires and other risks



### Good

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at preventing fires and other risks. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.
- The service should ensure its quality assures prevention work appropriately.

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

### Prevention strategy

Royal Berkshire FRS has a prevention strategy that focuses on fires, road and water safety, and health and wellbeing. Prevention work that doesn't complement its main functions, such as some of its programmes for young people, is carried out on a cost-recovery basis.

The service targets its [home fire safety checks](#) at households and individuals at greater risk of being injured or dying in a fire. These are identified using a wide range of data. As at 31 March 2018, these checks include fitting working smoke alarms, identifying potential fire risks, acting to reduce fire risks, ill-health prevention, and giving advice on social welfare and how to avoid slips, trips and falls. Members of the public who are considered to be less at risk can access advice on the service's website, which has content in more than 100 languages.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service carried out 10.2 home fire safety checks per 1,000 population. The focused targeting resulted in 71 percent of those checks being to the elderly (those aged 65 and over), compared with the England rate of 54 percent. The service refers to home fire safety checks as safe and well visits. The service monitors each wholetime station against a target of completing 56 visits per fire engine per month.

We found the service didn't have a properly effective process for monitoring the standards of safe and well visits. Staff told us that, as a result, standards vary. Even though the target for the number of safe and well visits is relatively modest, staff also told us they found it restricted their ability to carry out other prevention work, such as on road and water safety, tailored to their local area.

## Promoting community safety

Royal Berkshire FRS promotes prevention safety messages using a combination of traditional and social media. Its campaigns align with national ones by the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) (NFCC) and Fire Kills. Stations have their own Twitter accounts, but these aren't used consistently enough to support the service's planned approach.

The service's vision for community engagement is to put "fire stations at the heart of communities", so stations run activities such as open days, blood donor sessions, and coffee mornings to tackle loneliness. Four stations run the Young Firefighter scheme, an educational youth group for 12 to 16-year-olds.

The service offers all schools educational visits for Year 5 pupils on fire safety and for Year 7 pupils on road and water safety. However, according to data provided by the service, fewer than half of Berkshire schools take up this offer.

Staff are trained to recognise people who are vulnerable and to make referrals where necessary. The service has a target for all safeguarding referrals to be completed within 24 hours and we found staff are able to meet this.

Royal Berkshire FRS works closely with Thames Valley Police to investigate fires where arson is suspected. It told us that in the three years to December 2018, it has supported prosecutions leading to seven custodial sentences. It runs a programme targeted at children and young people who play with fire, and is piloting an adult fire-setter programme this year.

The service works with others to promote community safety. It has a volunteer programme and trains staff in the health and social care sectors to identify fire risk factors when they visit local people. They can refer those they consider to be at risk to the service, which will prioritise them for a safe and well visit. Referrals as a result of this programme are increasing.

The service doesn't routinely evaluate the effect of its prevention work, so it doesn't have a clear picture about how effective it is at reducing fires and other risks.

## Road safety

Royal Berkshire FRS is a member of the Thames Valley road safety forum, along with the police, local authorities and other fire and rescue services. Its forum partners told us they valued its contribution. The annual Safe Drive, Stay Alive event – a drama production exploring the circumstances and consequences of a road traffic collision – reaches around 6,000 young people in Berkshire each year.

The service works with Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire FRSs to offer Biker Down, a national motorbike safety programme. It aims to reduce road injuries and deaths by 20 percent over the next five years, but doesn't properly monitor progress against this target.

## Protecting the public through fire regulation



### Good

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at protecting the public through fire regulation. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure its quality assures protection work appropriately.
- The service should ensure it addresses effectively the burden of false alarms (termed 'unwanted fire signals').

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

Royal Berkshire FRS has an effective risk-based inspection programme and enforcement plan. The service adopted a new approach in May 2017, focusing on buildings assessed as presenting the greatest risk to life from fire. This includes houses in multiple occupation and premises where there is evidence of non-compliance with fire regulations. Specialist, qualified staff visit these premises to carry out fire safety audits.

The service also carries out reactive work. It replies to statutory consultations such as building regulations, audits businesses after a fire, and responds to fire safety complaints from other organisations and the public.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service carried out 943 fire safety audits. This year, its target is to complete 1,400 audits. At the time of inspection, the service was currently behind this target by six weeks but was confident of meeting it. It told us this lag was due to increased engagement activities following the Grenfell Tower fire.

Responding to increases in its workload over the last two years, the service has taken on more staff in its protection department. These new members of staff are currently completing fire safety qualifications, and once they are fully qualified the service will be able to do more audits.

We found some inconsistency in the way staff identify high-risk premises and record fire safety audits. There is limited quality assurance of the audits or audit records. Some other services increase their efficiency by training station staff so they can do protection work while they aren't attending incidents. But Royal Berkshire FRS doesn't do this.

## **Enforcement**

The service takes a proportional approach to the enforcement of fire safety legislation. It has an enforcement policy based on the Better Business for All agenda and the [Regulators' Code](#), and always has qualified staff available. It also has a contract with a legal case management unit. When complex enforcement activity is necessary, it uses external fire safety specialists.

In the year to 31 March 2018, of the 943 audits carried out, the service issued 257 informal notifications, 23 enforcement notices, four alteration notices, two prohibition notices and two prosecutions. Notably, it successfully prosecuted a landlord who was fined £177,000 for their fire safety breaches.

The service has targets for compliant versus non-compliant audits. Non-compliant audits are subject to informal and formal actions. Of the 943 fire safety audits the service carried out in the year to 31 March 2018, 40 percent of audits were found to be non-compliant compared with the England rate of 32 percent.

The service shares information with other agencies such as Border Force and the local authority. It has a memorandum of understanding with the six unitary authorities within Berkshire. This sets out how they will work collaboratively to carry out their legal duties under the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to ensure fire safety.

## **Working with others**

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, Royal Berkshire FRS worked closely with the local authority to prioritise auditing and inspecting high-rise premises. In the two months following the fire, it reported completing 157 inspections of high-rise premises and provided advice and support to residents in more than 4,700 flats. The service and the local authority also worked together to improve their joint enforcement protocol, which sets out how organisations will work together to enforce regulations, including those for high-rise premises.

The service operates three [primary authority schemes](#), which provide national companies with a single point of contact for fire safety. The hubs deal with local businesses and have organised events such as a drop-in at a local shopping centre. However, the service doesn't have a consistent approach to this engagement.

We saw some good examples of collaborative working. For example, the service worked with Wokingham council, which passed a motion to install sprinklers in newly built schools. In Reading, work is underway to fit domestic sprinklers in high-rise premises.

However, the service doesn't have a co-ordinated approach to working with local businesses to reduce the burden of unwanted fire signals. The number of false alarms it attends year on year has been consistently increasing since the year to 30 September 2014, when the service attended 2,720. In the year to 30 September 2018, it attended 3,625 false alarms – a 33.3 percent increase compared to the same timeframe in 2014. We would expect the service to work with building owners and managers to reduce this activity.

## Responding to fires and other emergencies



### Good

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at responding to fires and other emergencies. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it gives relevant information to the public about ongoing incidents to help keep the public safe during and after incidents.
- The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command.

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

### Managing assets and resources

In the year to 30 September 2018, Royal Berkshire FRS attended 8.9 incidents per 1,000 population. This compares to the England rate of 10.5 over the same period. The service's response model is based on three operational planning scenarios:

- one incident that requires ten fire engines for over 48 hours;
- two incidents that need six fire engines to be involved simultaneously or within 48 hours of each other; and
- one or more incidents with more than four fire engines deployed continuously for up to 96 hours.

As at 31 March 2018, Royal Berkshire FRS has 21 operational fire engines. Data provided by the service shows that since 2011, it has increased its wholetime fire engines from 13 to 14, and that fire engines now have crews of four firefighters instead of five. It has also implemented a new crewing model for its specialist vehicles, which involves firefighters switching vehicles.

The service plans to use its [on-call](#) stations to improve its response standard and provide support in its risk-based planning scenarios. The aim is to have 60 percent availability for all stations. But for the six months to 30 September 2018, it reported availability as low as 30 percent. The service hopes that some recent recruitment will improve its on-call availability. It should consider if it is maximising the effectiveness of its on-call stations.

Thames Valley Fire Control Service is a partnership for managing emergency calls across Royal Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The three services will respond across borders, irrespective of where the incident occurs. The control service is based at Royal Berkshire's headquarters and staff are employees of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The three services have agreed on standard pre-determined attendances (PDAs) for most incidents, including high-rise, confirmed and thatched-roof fires. Control staff have discretion to vary the PDAs based on the information given by the caller.

Operational staff we spoke to had a good understanding of how to use breathing apparatus, and we saw that the training of control room staff is well managed.

## **Response**

The service aims to respond to emergency incidents in ten minutes on 75 percent of occasions. This standard was introduced in April 2017. Between 1 April 2018 and 31 December 2018, the service attended 72 percent of emergency incidents within ten minutes, but this should improve when the new Theale fire station opens.

To improve response times, the service monitors its call handling time, crew turnout time and the drive time to the incident. It has reduced its average total response times to primary fires from ten minutes in the year ending 31 March 2016 to 8 minutes 52 seconds in the year to 31 March 2018. The reduction of the total average response time to primary fires was due to reductions in the call handling and crew turnout times.

With Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire FRSs, the service is part of a regional group that oversees the implementation of [national operational guidance](#). This involves analysing the gaps in each service, adopting the guidance and providing suitable staff training. At the time of our inspection, the group was reviewing arrangements for breathing apparatus and had produced a draft policy, which was subject to consultation and discussion between the services. The group will do further gap analysis of the remaining guidance in 2019.

Staff know how to use the mobile data terminals in fire engines to access information when they are responding to an incident. There are also mobile phones in every fire engine that provide information about vehicles for crews to access when attending road traffic collisions.

The service provides medical co-responding from three on-call fire stations, reimbursed by the ambulance service. Individual firefighters respond in an ambulance service car. This response is only available if it doesn't affect the availability of the on-call station's fire engine.

## Command

Incident commanders undergo regular training. They are assessed for command competence every two years and cannot command emergency incidents if they don't meet the minimum standard. Senior officers attend emergency incidents to mentor new commanders and help them develop.

When visiting fire stations, we found that level one incident commanders – who are generally fire officers in charge of a fire engine – didn't all have the level of understanding we would expect. Some didn't understand elements of command, such as the decision control process and [operational discretion](#). But staff were aware of the incident command pack held on fire engines and understood how it should be used.

## Keeping the public informed

Royal Berkshire FRS works with the local resilience forum (LRF), which includes representatives from other emergency services, to keep the public informed about major incidents. During officer hours, there is a dedicated communications team, and trained duty officers provide out-of-hours cover for media and press enquiries.

The service policy is for other incidents to be communicated to the public by station staff, who have access to a station social media account. However, many stations don't use their account, and even when they do, their communication will be delayed until they return to the fire station. Many other services expect their control room, where staff are available all day, to provide this function. Royal Berkshire FRS should consider if its provision for keeping the public informed of incidents is sufficient.

We saw good examples of response staff making safeguarding referrals to protect vulnerable people at incidents. Control staff are trained in giving guidance over the telephone to those trapped in a fire.

## Evaluating operational performance

Royal Berkshire FRS updated its system for assessing its operational response in June 2018. The usual practice is to hold a [hot debrief](#) immediately after an incident. Staff can share what they learnt from incidents using an electronic debrief form. All commanders we spoke to told us they knew how to use this.

The service's policy is to conduct a more formal debrief following incidents that warrant a more detailed and reflective review. It is usually the incident commander who decides whether a formal debrief is required. We found these formal debriefs are sometimes delayed.

We were impressed to find that, to prevent any conflicts of interest, formal debriefs are always led by a fire officer who wasn't involved in the incident. The service has issued guidance on how to structure these debriefs, but staff told us they weren't aware of it, and practice varies as a result. The service knows that control staff aren't routinely part of any debriefing process and has committed to change this in future.

We found that the operational debriefing process is inconsistent. We were shown bulletins that had been issued following incidents, but the service didn't know how many staff were reading them. Not all stations seemed to share information from

debriefs with staff. Many staff told us the current method of presenting operational assurance information on the intranet is ineffective. It is all recorded on a huge spreadsheet that is difficult to view.

According to service policy, all exercises and all incidents that have involved operational discretion should be assured, but this hasn't happened. The service has put measures in place to correct this, and senior leaders told us they were in the process of reviewing the current procedure. They intend to introduce a revised procedure in early 2019.

The service has a procedure for dealing with public feedback, and any complaints are investigated, but there is little central oversight of this. It reports the number of cases to the fire authority, but doesn't monitor for trends. The service should make sure it has an effective feedback procedure.

## Responding to national risks



### Good

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

Royal Berkshire FRS has plans in place for major events that will involve collaborating with other fire and rescue services. We found staff are aware of these arrangements and know how to implement them. The service hosts [national resilience assets](#) including a high-volume pump and mass decontamination unit. It has plans in place to allow these to be mobilised to other areas.

The service has a central operational policy and assurance team that gathers information and prepares tactical plans for high-risk sites. This includes eight sites designated by the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015. This information is available on the mobile data terminals in fire engines.

### Working with other services

The service has mutual aid agreements with its six neighbouring fire and rescue services. Through the Thames Valley Fire Control Service, which brings together Royal Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire FRSs, the closest Thames Valley fire engine and officer will be sent to an incident, regardless of which of the service area the incident is in. There are similar arrangements with other neighbouring fire and rescue services, although they are less integrated.

The service carries out cross-border exercises with all its neighbouring fire and rescue services. These arrangements are most effective within the Thames Valley

area, with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire FRSs. The three services have also jointly procured fire engines and equipment inventory, and sharing the same equipment makes for better cross-border working in Thames Valley. The services are basing the new fire engines at stations near the county borders.

The three services are aware that their breathing apparatus isn't compatible and have addressed this with a short-term fix. They are producing a joint specification and aim to purchase the same apparatus in 2020.

The service shares risk information with neighbouring services through a secure extranet called Resilience Direct, and uploads this onto mobile data terminals.

### **Working with other agencies**

Royal Berkshire FRS takes part in – and contributes financially to – the Thames Valley LRF, through which local agencies come together to plan for emergencies. The manager of the forum told us the service is an engaged and supportive member. The deputy chief fire officer is the vice-chair and the service oversees information-sharing on behalf of the forum. The service is responsible for 12 of the forum's high-risk plans, including adverse weather.

During our inspection, severe snow was forecast. We observed the service taking an active role in the LRF's preparation. The service put into action its internal major incident procedures for escalating weather conditions.

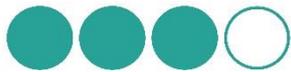
The service participates in multi-agency exercises with other partners in the forum. These include live exercises and office-based planning sessions simulating incidents at high-risk sites. It works closely with partners such as the police and health services during major events. Recently, it worked with a range of local and national organisations to plan for the royal weddings and the presidential visit.

Staff within the service are well prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to a terrorist attack. The service jointly provides a response team with Oxfordshire FRS to deal with the threat of such attacks.

# Efficiency



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



**Good**

## Summary

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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. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency is good.

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Royal Berkshire FRS makes good use of its resources. The service has a medium-term financial plan in place for the period to 2021, and its annual budget for 2018/19 is £33.5m. The plan is based on its CPIRMP and meets financial requirements.

The service told us it is on track to make a further £2.4m of savings by the end of 2019/20. It has introduced a new hub model to make savings and encourage better collaboration between different departments. It intends to evaluate this new model in 2019.

A strategic performance board monitors how well the service is meeting its performance targets. Its business continuity arrangements are robust.

The availability of on-call firefighters increases at night. However, the service's current wholetime shift pattern provides the same number of [wholetime firefighters](#) 24 hours a day. This means there are more firefighters available at night than there are during the day. Royal Berkshire FRS should make sure its current shift patterns provide the most efficient and productive service to the public.

The service works well with other organisations to get better value for money. It is a member of the Thames Valley Collaboration Steering Group, which includes representatives from the police, fire and ambulance service across Thames Valley. It jointly funds a procurement officer with Thames Valley Police. It has also procured services with the other emergency services in Thames Valley and the wider fire sector. Better use of technology would further improve its productivity and efficiency.

## Making best use of resources



### Good

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

Royal Berkshire FRS has a set of strategic objectives. These are based on the vision set out in its CPIRMP and focus on improving its prevention, protection and response work. The strategic objectives form the basis of several projects managed by a programme office. The office makes sure there is a business case for any new work and monitors budgets and reporting processes.

The service's CPIRMP also includes performance targets, which are passed on to local staff in hubs and stations. Each station has its own plan, which is produced in a brief and accessible format. But we found that not all staff know about it.

The service has a medium-term financial plan in place for the period to 2021, and its annual budget for 2018/19 is £33.5m. The plan is based on its CPIRMP and meets financial requirements. In the four years following the start of the government's austerity measures in 2010/11, the service told us that it saved £5m from its operating costs. As part of its current efficiency plan, the service told us it is on track to make a further £2.4m of savings by the end of 2019/20. £1.1m of these savings have been achieved through restructuring, including the introduction of the hub model, which saved on management costs. The service has identified the remaining £1.3m of these savings as part of its CPIRMP planning cycle. It plans to close some fire stations, remove a support unit for on-call firefighters by embedding support within the hub model, and introduce more efficient ways of responding to incidents.

#### Productivity and ways of working

Royal Berkshire FRS designed its new hub model to make savings and encourage better collaboration between different departments. We saw some evidence of better integration and communication between prevention, protection and response teams. However, some staff told us they didn't fully understand the new approach. The service intends to evaluate this new model in 2019.

A strategic performance board monitors how well the service is meeting its targets. It looks at four main areas:

- service provision – how well it is meeting its prevention, protection and response targets;
- corporate health – how well it is managing its staff and its finances;
- priority programmes – how effectively the various improvement programmes and projects are meeting its strategic commitments; and
- corporate risk – an assessment of corporate risks that may affect the service.

Royal Berkshire FRS has made some positive improvements as a result of this monitoring. For example, by examining and improving the time it takes to attend emergencies, it has reduced its average total response time to primary fires from ten minutes in the year ending 31 March 2016 to 8 minutes 52 seconds in the year to 31 March 2018.

The strategic performance board also monitors how well the service is delivering its prevention and protection activities. In this area, some staff told us the focus on output targets is having a negative effect. For example, safe and well visits may be rushed to meet the monthly quota. This focus on targets without quality control may be having an adverse effect on the quality of the prevention and protection activities being provided to the public.

As at 31 March 2018, the service had 11 [wholetime fire stations](#), six on-call fire stations and one mixed fire station. Data provided by the service indicates that it has increased the number of wholetime fire engines from 13 to 14 since 2011, while reducing the number of station-based staff from 364 to 328. The service has done this by introducing a different crewing model for specialist vehicles, and crewing fire engines with four firefighters instead of five.

The availability of on-call firefighters increases at night. However, the service's current wholetime shift pattern provides the same number of wholetime firefighters 24 hours a day. This means there are more firefighters available at night than there are during the day. Royal Berkshire FRS should make sure its current shift patterns provide the most efficient and productive service to the public.

In May 2019, the service is introducing a new approach to managing its fire stations, which it believes will be more efficient. By setting up remotely managed stations and changing its approach to incident command, it expects to save £550,000 a year. The approach was co-designed with the Fire Brigades Union, and staff have been fully consulted. The service believes that the benefits of the new approach will be:

- a greater number of level two incident commanders;
- increased office-hour availability of managers;
- new progression routes for station-based staff; and
- new opportunities for management professionals both within the service and outside it.

We look forward to the evaluation of this new approach.

## Collaboration

Royal Berkshire FRS proactively meets its statutory duty to consider emergency service collaboration. It is a member of the Thames Valley Collaboration Steering Group, which includes representatives from the police, fire and ambulance service across Thames Valley. The group's objective is to make savings and increase efficiency across local public sector bodies. The partnership's programme manager co-ordinates operational alignment (harmonising operational procedures with other fire services), procurement, protection, estates, risk modelling, recruitment, apprenticeships and rota alignment.

The service makes discerning choices about collaborative projects. It has identified several worthwhile joint ventures and has rejected some proposals if the benefits weren't clear. For example, it decided the costs of a joint facility with Thames Valley Police were too high.

As a result of its collaborations, Royal Berkshire FRS has been able to maintain standards while also making savings. According to the service, successful projects include:

- the Thames Valley Fire Control Service, which brings together Royal Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire FRSs. This has secured £1m of annual saving for the three fire services;
- joint procurement of 47 fire engines and equipment with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire FRSs, which is expected to save £720,000 collectively over four years;
- the service's site at Hungerford, which brings the fire service together with Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service. This has delivered a better service to the community and a 40 percent saving on premises costs; and
- joint procurement with Oxfordshire and Staffordshire FRSs of a new aerial ladder platform, saving approximately 7 percent of the total cost.

## Continuity arrangements

The service has robust and up-to-date business continuity arrangements. This includes critical areas such as a cyber attack or loss of fire control. We saw evidence of the success of its approach when it was subject to a 'ransomware' attack in 2017.

We also saw that the service routinely tests its business continuity plans. Operation Fall Back was a relocation of Thames Valley Fire Control Service from its Theale headquarters to a back-up facility in Kidlington, Oxfordshire. The LRF also tests continuity plans based on scenarios including avian flu, industrial action and terrorist attacks.

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



### Good

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making itself affordable now and in the future. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it makes the best use of available technology to improve operational effectiveness and efficiency.

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

In the year to 31 March 2018, Royal Berkshire FRS's firefighter cost per head of population was £19.84. This compares to the England rate of £22.38 over the same time period. However, many factors influence this cost – for example, the ratio of wholetime to on-call staff.

Royal Berkshire FRS has a good track record of making savings. Its financial planning extends to 2028/29 and includes projections based on a wide range of scenarios. These include the effect of future pay awards, the additional expenditure if the fire authority doesn't sanction the closure of Wargrave fire station, and the uncertainty surrounding the cost of public sector pensions.

The service's capital programme sets out £75m of proposed expenditure over the next ten years, in line with the service's vision for the future. This includes disposing of obsolete building stock to fund the new fire station at Theale, redeveloping the station at Crowthorne, replacing the fleet and updating the service's technology.

Royal Berkshire FRS works with other organisations to get better value for money. It jointly funds a procurement officer with Thames Valley Police, and has procured services with the other emergency services in Thames Valley and the wider fire sector. According to the service, over 90 percent of its non-salary spend is subject to competition through tendering, and over a quarter of the resultant contracts are jointly procured with other organisations.

The service regularly uses business improvement processes to work out how it could do things better. It could benefit from using [benchmarking](#) – that is, comparing its processes to those of similar organisations. This might also help to increase its productivity and efficiency.

## Innovation

Better use of technology would improve the service's productivity and efficiency. Many prevention and protection activities are still dependent on paper records, and many station-based staff expressed dissatisfaction about its information communication technology (ICT) systems.

Through its current ICT strategy, the service has made recent improvements, including upgrading Microsoft Office, Windows 10 and its mobile data terminals. At the time of our inspection, it was due to publish its 2019–2024 ICT strategy, and it has plans to fund an ICT improvement programme with £7.5m over a ten-year period. The new strategy of 'simplification, collaboration and virtualisation' should mean the service is less reliant on physical servers and workstations and will allow new, more efficient ways of working.

## Future investment and working with others

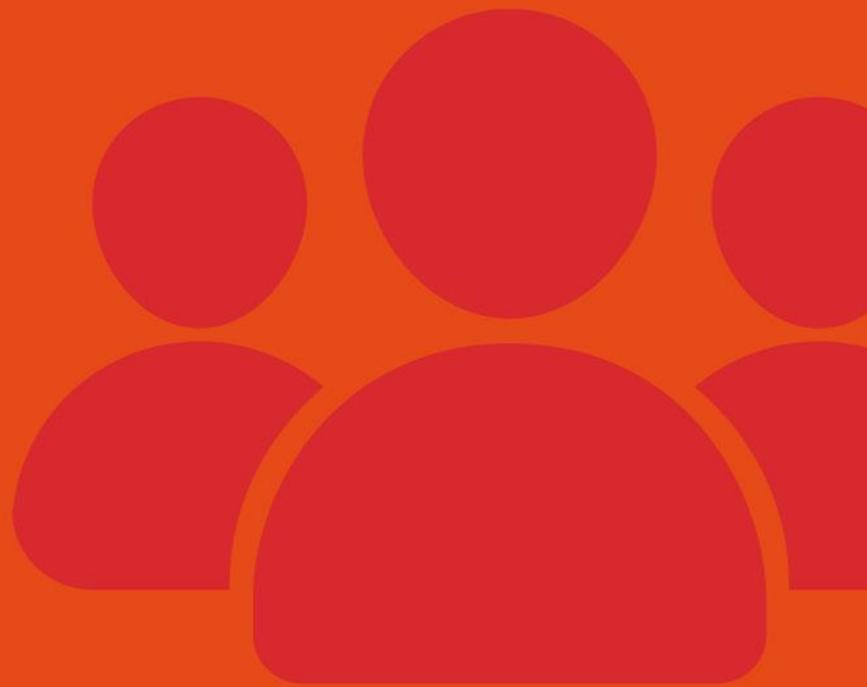
The service's [reserves](#) are due to reduce from £14m at 31 March 2018 to approximately £4.6m at 31 March 2021. This is mainly through supporting the capital programme. There are £0.9m of reserves in the transition fund, which will support further restructuring, and £1m remains as a development fund for future 'spend to save' projects. The service assigns £2.3m – 7 percent of its revenue budget – to general reserves. This is to offset the effect of uneven cash flow and unexpected events such as industrial action.

The service continues to make savings through collaborating with other organisations. It plans to develop this through the Thames Valley Collaboration Steering Group and working with other FRSs.

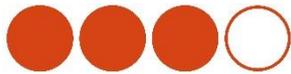
Royal Berkshire FRS is a founder member of the Fire and Rescue Services Indemnity Company. This brings nine fire and rescue services together to indemnify liability against certain risks. The nine members also work together to reduce risk and share best practice. Allocations for indemnities are made by each service. Royal Berkshire FRS has estimated this approach is saving 1.4 percent in premiums. Due to a lower level of claims than expected, there are plans to return a proportion of the accumulated surpluses to members.

The service generates additional annual income of £265,000 by renting out office space in its properties and allowing telecoms masts to be sited on several of its fire stations.

# People



# How well does the service look after its people?



**Good**

## Summary

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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, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at looking after its people.

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The service takes the wellbeing of its workforce seriously. It offers staff a wide range of services, including counselling and trauma support, and funds a private healthcare scheme for its staff.

Its health and safety policy defines the responsibilities of staff at all levels, and it works closely with representative bodies to reduce accidents.

In 2014, a review highlighted a culture of bullying in the service. The current senior leaders told us they have been working to create a positive and inclusive culture across the organisation. Staff told us they see senior leaders as positive role models and respect them for improving the culture within the service. But during our inspection, we witnessed examples of some operational staff using language not consistent with an inclusive workplace. The service should make sure all staff understand its values and behave accordingly.

The service has a strong culture of learning and improvement. In December 2018, it introduced a revised performance regime to monitor staff competence, which aims to simplify its planning and recording. But we found that some staff are still not aware of this.

As part of our inspection, we reviewed a small number of recent grievance cases. Based on these we found the service's handling of such cases is inconsistent.

The service understands it faces a challenge to change its workforce diversity to be more representative of its community. It has a new action plan to increase diversity, and has set up a staff group to support this. This work is at an early stage.

The service has good arrangements in place to assess and develop staff performance. However, it could do more to identify and develop those who have leadership potential.

## Promoting the right values and culture



### Good

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at promoting the right values and culture. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure its values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated by all staff.

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

### Workforce wellbeing

Royal Berkshire FRS takes the wellbeing of its workforce seriously. It offers staff a wide range of services to support their wellbeing, including counselling, health and wellbeing advice, and health screening. It also provides support for non-work-related problems that can affect performance in the workplace.

The service monitors sickness absence of its staff and reports it to the fire authority. Following staff feedback, it introduced an innovative private medical healthcare scheme in March 2017. It reported a financial saving of over £150,000 in the first year, due to reduced sickness absence. It has also introduced a fitness movement specialist, as it had identified musculoskeletal injuries were the primary cause of sickness absence.

The service has an effective trauma support process, with trained staff to support colleagues. It has signed the Mind Blue Light pledge, and data it provided shows it has more than 40 blue light champions, who provide mental health support to staff across the service. Mind Blue Light is a charity programme that gives mental health support to emergency service staff.

Some staff reported delays in accessing occupational health services, but feedback on the service's wellbeing provision was almost universally positive.

## Health and safety

Royal Berkshire FRS's health and safety policy clearly defines the responsibilities of staff at all levels. The service provides additional health and safety training for specialist roles. As part of our inspection, we carried out a survey of FRS staff to get their views of their service (please see Annex A for more details). Of the 105 staff (16 percent of the service's workforce) who responded to our staff survey, 94 percent agreed that they were satisfied their personal safety and welfare is treated seriously at work.

The health, safety and wellbeing committee assesses health and safety across the service. It is chaired alternately by the assistant chief fire officer and the Fire Brigades Union. The service monitors the number of accidents and reports this to the senior leadership team and fire authority. Of the 105 staff who responded to our survey, 98 percent agreed that they knew how to report all accidents, [near misses](#) and dangerous occurrences.

The service has recently upgraded the gym facilities in its stations. It has more than 100 qualified physical education supervisors, and its firefighters are subject to a six-monthly fitness test. In the year to 31 March 2018, of the 418 staff who took a fitness test, 411 (98 percent) passed first time.

## Culture and values

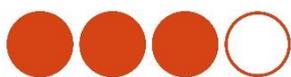
In 2014, a review highlighted a culture of bullying in the service. The current senior leaders told us they had been working to create a positive and inclusive culture across the organisation. Of the 105 respondents to our staff survey, 14 percent reported feeling bullied or harassed and 10 percent reported feeling discriminated against at work 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. However, staff told us they see senior leaders as positive role models and respect them for improving the culture within the service.

There is a behaviour charter for staff, based on the four pillars of ability, predictability, benevolence and integrity. The service's people strategy found that not all staff were aware of this charter and our interviews confirmed that. Of the 105 respondents to our staff survey, 90 percent agreed they are treated with dignity and respect. But during our inspection, we witnessed examples of some operational staff using language not consistent with an inclusive workplace.

The service has launched a new 2018–2021 people strategy, which sets out its commitment to its workforce. It is aligned to the NFCC's people strategy. At the time of our inspection, the service was developing a new behavioural competency framework, setting out expected behaviours for staff at all levels. It was piloting this with a section of its workforce during their annual appraisal. We will monitor the outcome of the pilot.

Most staff told us that they feel positive about working for the service, but several on-call staff told us they feel undervalued. The service hosts an annual sponsored staff awards event, and several staff highlighted this as a good way of rewarding positive behaviour and performance.

## Getting the right people with the right skills



### Good

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at getting the right people with the right skills. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure staff and managers use its competence recording system effectively.

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

### Workforce planning

Royal Berkshire FRS's workforce plan covers the period up to 2025/26. It sets out how the service will make sure it has the right number of operational staff with the right skills to meet the requirements of its CPIRMP. A planning group with representation from across the service meets regularly to map out the skills of the workforce.

There is a robust planning process to identify future training requirements for operational, leadership and management skills. These are identified through the workforce plan, reports from the heads of service and the appraisal process. Training is planned on a three-year rolling cycle.

There is a high standard of training for new protection and response staff. However, the training is more informal for prevention staff and relies mainly on peer-to-peer learning without quality assurance.

According to the service's data, it is failing to meet its target of having 60 percent availability for on-call fire engines. Its on-call working group aims to improve this. It has had recent success with recruitment and has identified other areas for improvement – for example, reducing the time spent on the initial training of new firefighters by collaborating with Oxfordshire FRS.

There is an ICT system to monitor the number of firefighters available, including their mix of skills and capabilities. Local managers are responsible for making sure enough staff are available to crew the fire engines, but each manager takes a different approach to doing this. This lack of central planning means stations may be left with insufficient staff and raises a risk of managers offering overtime preferentially.

### Learning and improvement

Royal Berkshire FRS has a strong culture of learning and improvement. In the service's staff survey in December 2018, 96 percent of those who responded said they were fully engaged in the training and development they needed to do their job well.

The service has a good process for making sure its staff are adequately trained in risk-critical response skills, such as breathing apparatus and incident command. This training is aligned to the national fire professional framework. Staff take an initial course, then refresher courses at set time periods, and these courses are assessed according to national standards. Those who fail a particular skill are taken off the operational response and the service supports them in reaching the required standard.

Of the 105 staff who responded to our survey, 80 percent agreed they had received sufficient training to enable them to do their jobs. Additionally, 79 percent agreed they were satisfied with their current level of learning and development.

In December 2018, the service introduced a revised performance regime to monitor how well it is maintaining staff competence. This new approach aims to simplify planning and recording. It includes new training modules, which are designed to fit with the three hour on-call training sessions. Staff were informed about it through emails, bulletins, intranet notices and videos, but many we spoke to weren't aware of it. Managers who could access the system told us it was more user-friendly, but we can't assess it until it is fully embedded.

The service has qualified supervisory managers who plan and monitor the quality of training in stations. On-call stations train monthly with wholetime stations, and new on-call firefighters can improve their knowledge by riding wholetime fire engines as an extra member of the crew. Wholetime and on-call staff told us this was working well. However, on-call firefighters told us that they didn't have remote access to the service's systems and that this restricts their learning opportunities. The service has introduced a bursary scheme, which allows staff to apply for financial support for training. We observed firefighters confidently and effectively testing equipment, including breathing apparatus.

## Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



### Requires improvement

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself that it has effective grievance procedures.
- The service should assure itself that staff are confident using its feedback mechanisms.

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

Royal Berkshire FRS has a good relationship with trade unions. It has also formed a joint consultative committee – a group for staff who aren't members of a union. A member from the Fire Brigades Union alternately chairs the health, safety and wellbeing committee, and the union has been involved in designing the remotely managed stations / flexible duty officers project.

Staff are consulted on service changes and told us the current management is more open than the previous leadership. Staff are invited to observe strategic meetings, and senior leaders have an annual programme of station visits. Staff appreciate these, although some told us they didn't always receive responses to their feedback. The service has changed its exit interview process from an online survey to a face-to-face interview.

The service has many communication channels, including the fortnightly Cascade bulletin and monthly Shout magazine. Staff seemed aware of these and the service tracks the number of staff who access it electronically. The intranet also provides information. However, on-call staff can only access the bulletins and intranet at work.

The service told us it had made changes as a result of staff feedback, such as introducing the private healthcare scheme. However, most staff weren't aware of the service responding to their feedback. Of the 105 staff who responded to our staff survey, just 58 percent agreed that they were confident their ideas and suggestions would be listened to.

The service has committed to holding an annual staff survey and, in 2018, over 55 percent of staff responded. However, many seemed unaware of the results and doubtful that any action would be taken as a result.

As part of our inspection, we reviewed a small number of recent grievance cases. Based on this, we found the service's handling of such cases is inconsistent. It encourages managers to resolve low-level grievances locally and informally, but there is no oversight to assure fairness and consistency. This prevents it from identifying trends that could be used to make improvements.

Staff told us they were confident about raising concerns to the service. The service also has an independent confidential reporting line.

## Diversity

As at 31 March 2018, 2.4 percent of firefighters were from a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background. This compares with a BAME residential population of 20 percent. And as at 31 March 2018, 4.4 percent of firefighters were female. Wholtime firefighter recruitment in 2018 has failed to improve these statistics. As at 31 March 2018, 88.2 percent of full-time equivalent (FTE) firefighters were wholtime. Recent on-call recruitment has achieved a small increase in female firefighters. The campaign included have-a-go sessions and targeted mothers of school-aged children.

The service's people strategy sets out its commitment to achieving greater workforce diversity. In terms of the wider workforce, it has made some progress. For example, as at 31 March 2018, four of its 32 protection staff were from a BAME background, 14 of its 20 prevention staff were female, and women are well represented in senior positions.

The service has a new action plan to increase diversity and has set up a staff group to support this. This work is at an early stage and the service should continue to give this its full attention. The service implemented mandatory online equality, diversity and inclusion training in May 2018 and its data showed 80 percent of staff had completed this.

The service has also set up an equality, diversity and inclusion forum, which helped develop its new equality, diversity and inclusion objectives. These objectives were subject to public and staff consultation before being finalised. We found the service's use of the forum had been limited since this initial work. So it should consider how it might use the forum more effectively.

The service works with Leonard Cheshire Change 100, which is an internship programme placing graduates with disabilities in the workplace. The service has worked with seven interns in the last two years and two have become members of staff.

## Managing performance and developing leaders



### Good

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at managing performance and developing leaders. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

#### Areas for improvement

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

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

### Managing performance

Royal Berkshire FRS has good arrangements in place to assess and develop staff performance. Every member of staff has an annual performance appraisal with their manager, to review the previous year's performance and set targets and objectives for the next. Staff generally spoke positively about this process. The service is piloting a new type of appraisal called a behavioural competency framework.

The number of staff who have completed their appraisal is a corporate target and reported quarterly to the strategic performance board and fire authority. As at 31 March 2018, the service had 609 FTE staff. Some 93 percent of wholetime firefighters, 96 percent of on-call staff, 96 percent of control room staff and 89 percent of staff had completed an appraisal.

Through the appraisal process, all staff can access courses focusing on personal development including areas such as time management, personal resilience and managerial skills. Support staff were positive about the career development opportunities available to them. The service believes the new remotely managed stations / flexible duty officers project will increase opportunities for all staff.

### **Developing leaders**

The service relies on its appraisal process to identify staff who are interested in promotion. It doesn't have a formal system in place to identify and develop those with high potential. Service leaders told us they are looking into this and have supported a member of staff to research talent management as part of a master's course.

We found the promotion process to be clear and well documented. Staff told us they trusted it to be fair.

The service has developed a leadership development programme for middle managers, focused on leading self, leading others and leading the business. It is doing the same for supervisory managers. Senior leaders have been working with coaches, both individually and as a group, to help with self-development and working as a team.

# 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. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is a combined 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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