Fire & Rescue Service
Effectiveness, efficiency and people
2018/19
An inspection of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
Contents

About this inspection 1
Service in numbers 2
Overview 4

Effectiveness 7
How effective is the service at keeping people safe and secure? 8
  Summary 8
  Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies 9
  Preventing fires and other risks 11
  Protecting the public through fire regulation 14
  Responding to fires and other emergencies 17
  Responding to national risks 20

Efficiency 22
How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure? 23
  Summary 23
  Making best use of resources 24
  Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future 26

People 29
How well does the service look after its people? 30
  Summary 30
  Promoting the right values and culture 31
  Getting the right people with the right skills 33
  Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity 35
  Managing performance and developing leaders 37

Annex A – About the data 39
Annex B – Fire and rescue authority governance 45
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 South Yorkshire 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>South Yorkshire</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived effectiveness of service</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public perceptions survey (June/July 2018)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>South Yorkshire</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incidents attended per 1,000 population</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months to 31 December 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home fire risk checks carried out by FRS per 1,000 population</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months to 31 March 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire safety audits per 100 known premises</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months to 31 March 2018</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Incidents attended in the 12 months to 31 December 2018

- Total Non-fire incidents: 22%
- Total Fires: 48%
- Total False Alarms: 30%

Total: 15,293
## Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>South Yorkshire</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firefighter cost per person per year</td>
<td>£20.47</td>
<td>£22.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months to 31 March 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Workforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>South Yorkshire</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of firefighters per 1,000 population</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As at 31 March 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-year change in workforce</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>-14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As at 31 March 2013 compared with 31 March 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of wholetime firefighters</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As at 31 March 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing fires and other risks</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the public through fire regulation</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to fires and other emergencies</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to national risks</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making best use of resources</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future</td>
<td>Requires improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoting the right values and culture</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting the right people with the right skills</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing performance and developing leaders</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall summary of inspection findings

We are pleased with the performance of South Yorkshire 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.

South Yorkshire FRS is good at providing an effective service to the public. It is good at:
- understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies;
- preventing fires and other risks;
- protecting the public through fire regulation;
- responding to fires and other emergencies; and
- responding to national risks.

It is good in the efficiency of its services. We found it to be good at making the best use of resources. But we judged that it requires improvement to the way it makes its services affordable now and in future.

South Yorkshire FRS is good at looking after its people. It is good at:
- promoting the right values and culture;
- getting the right people with the right skills;
- ensuring fairness and promoting diversity; and
- managing performance and developing leaders.

Overall, we commend South Yorkshire FRS 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

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. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service’s overall effectiveness is good.

South Yorkshire FRS has a good understanding of local and community risk. It has a three-year plan outlining how it will provide its services which is available to the public on its website. The plan uses a wide range of data to inform its response, prevention and protection activities.

The service’s prevention activity is based on working with partner organisations to identify those most at risk from fire. It prioritises its safe and well at home safety visits to those deemed most at risk. It also works closely with South Yorkshire Police to provide wider joint community safety advice, and with other agencies to improve public safety.

Its protection work prioritises buildings with a potential higher risk to life such as sleeping premises. It has a risk-based audit programme to focus this activity.

The service doesn’t have a set response standard to attend incidents, simply aiming to attend “as quickly as possible”. It has a wide range of vehicles, skills and specialist staff to enable it to deal with emergency incidents effectively.
The service provides effective information for crews to access building-specific risk information at incidents. It has recently expanded the amount of building risk information it holds. This has necessitated filtering out the information covering buildings that do not pose significant risks to crews. It is addressing this workload, but this has delayed the ability for crews to carry out protection work.

The service has two main duty systems, **wholetime** and **on call**. It needs to improve fire engine availability at some of its on-call stations.

The service has shown that it can respond to both local and national incidents when needed. It regularly tests its procedures jointly with other organisations, but it could improve how often it trains with its neighbouring services. It also needs to improve its crews’ access to cross-border risk information.

**Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies**

*Good*

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

*Areas for improvement*

- The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date 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**

South Yorkshire FRS has a good process for identifying the risks that the community may face. The service has built its risk profile using a wide range of data. This includes health and population data from local authorities and health partner organisations, previous incident information, and **local resilience forum** (LRF) and national risks. The data is updated before any new work begins on the **integrated risk management plan** (IRMP). Plans for future residential and industrial or commercial building work (such as High Speed Two) are also considered.

The service uses all the data it collects to conduct modelling to identify groups of people and geographical areas that are more at risk of fire and other emergencies.
This modelling is also used to test any potential impact of changes to locations or availability of its fire engines. The service uses this information to propose changes that meet its financial requirements while having the least effect on response times and service levels.

The service has a good understanding of the risks its communities are likely to face because of the wide range of historical, demographic and potential future needs data it uses. This analysis is used to inform the IRMP. The current version runs from 2017 to 2020.

The service consults with the public, community groups and local authorities on its plans. The service received 147 external and 28 internal responses to its 2013 IRMP consultation. During consultation, the service asked the public if it wanted a response standard or solely a commitment to respond as quickly as possible. As a result, the service doesn’t have a published response standard but works to arrive at any incident as quickly as it can. The service monitors its response time performance, and this is discussed in the response section of the report.

To improve its efficiency, the service’s last IRMP committed to introduce a new crewing system called close proximity crewing (CPC) at four stations. This arrangement sees firefighters working a combination of day shifts and on-call night shifts while at those fire stations. The system reduces staffing costs since fewer firefighters are needed at those stations, and it has a lesser effect on response times than other on-call crewing systems might. Last year, the service lost a legal challenge which ruled this system unlawful. As a result, the service is publicly consulting on its IRMP to agree an approach that meets the financial pressures it faces.

**Having an effective risk management plan**

The service has a current IRMP that outlines the main risks that the community may face and is consulting on a new one. Its risks determine how the service will carry out its response, prevention and protection activity.

The service’s IRMP is produced in line with the requirements of the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) and links to national and community risk registers. It clearly explains to the public how it links to functional, departmental and local station plans.

Station-based staff have a community handbook which details the population diversity for their area. This gives them information to support their prevention activities. The University of Sheffield has validated the service’s risk management process so that it meets the needs of the community, and any new plans are as effective as possible.

The service is working in a difficult financial environment, which has prompted it to consider several new ways to reduce costs. Finding efficiencies has been a major driver for the proposals in the current and future IRMPs. The service is identifying how to reduce costs and is considering different response arrangements, including reducing the number of firefighters on an engine from five to four. The service is acutely aware that any reductions in frontline cover could have an adverse effect on response times. As a result, it is exploring options that won’t affect response times.
But opposition from some local politicians and the Fire Brigades Union, make implementing change a challenge for the service.

**Maintaining risk information**

The service has effective systems in place to collect and share risk-critical information with its staff. But it needs to make sure it reviews this information frequently to keep it reliable and valid.

Any safety-critical information is sent to all relevant staff via a Red, Amber or Green (RAG) memo. Staff must acknowledge receipt and confirm understanding of the information. For high-level risk or more complex information, such as new operational procedures, the service also creates accessible e-learning packages on its learning platform that staff have to complete. Managers can run reports to check staff have reviewed information.

Arrangements for communicating information across the service are effective. For example, staff undertaking prevention or protection activity can use a form to share operational risks such as hoarding or dangerous materials. Fire control holds and reviews this information before it is sent to responding crews via the mobile data terminal (MDT) on each fire engine or as part of the initial incident information.

Firefighters can access risk information, including for temporary events, via the MDT. Staff showed they could access this information quickly and effectively. Information on building hazards and construction is kept on a central database, called Operational Risk Information (ORI), which feeds information to the MDTs.

As at 31 December 2018, the service had 2,539 risk sites and in the 9 months to 31 December 2018, it had made 978 visits.

The service has updated its ORI data to include some lower-level risk premises. This means it now includes buildings that aren’t relevant as they don’t pose significant or unusual risks for firefighters. At the time of our inspection, fire crews were reviewing new and existing information, which has affected capacity to carry out other duties such as fire protection work. The service must prioritise training, oversight and project management of this risk-critical function so that all information available to operational staff is current, accurate and reliable.

**Preventing fires and other risks**

![Rating](https://example.com/rating.png)

**Good**

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 has an effective prevention strategy and processes for directing prevention work to the most vulnerable people. It uses partner organisation referrals and data to focus its statutory duties. Fire safety in the home is a clear priority, and the service is also involved in non-statutory activities such as road safety, child safety and other wider social issues that affect the diverse needs of its community. This work complements its statutory functions.

Prevention activity is driven by a central team and provided by specialist staff and operational fire crews. The service plans annual campaigns in line with local needs and nationally-driven safety campaigns. A central communications team supports these campaigns using a range of social and traditional media channels.

By using its own and other agencies’ data, the service effectively targets people and geographical areas that are more likely to suffer harm because of fire. It then uses a network of over 200 partner organisations to refer people who fit the at-risk profile for intervention from fire service staff. This profiling links to common fire risks such as smoking and mobility, and other factors such as social deprivation. For example, the service has just entered a data sharing agreement with Barnsley Council to access addresses that have assisted bin collections. Alongside referrals, staff also target addresses to prioritise their activity. Although not everyone visited fits the individual priority risk profile, they do live in an area identified as being at higher risk.

The service has moved away from offering a home fire safety visit to any member of the community. Instead, anyone who requests a visit goes through a risk scoring process to determine if they need a visit or whether fire safety advice would be more suitable. This means that only those at a higher risk are the priority for home safety, and safe and well visits. Staff have targets for prevention work in line with the risk rating which is monitored as part of the service’s performance management framework.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service made 20,578 home fire safety visits. This equates to 14.8 home safety checks per 1,000 population, compared with an England rate of 10.4.

Visits address identifying and reducing fire risks and fitting smoke alarms, and welfare-related activities, such as health screening, preventing ill health, social welfare and how to avoid slips, trips and falls.

Of the 20,578 visits, 34 percent were to households occupied by an elderly person and 20 percent to households occupied by a person with a disability. These are lower than the England average but have remained stable since 2010/11.

All partner referrals receive either a home fire safety visit or a safe and well visit. Safe and well visits are for more complex cases and are made by specialist prevention staff. Home fire safety visits, made by operational fire crews, focus on traditional fire prevention and checking smoke alarms. Fire crews in the Doncaster district are piloting the more comprehensive safe and well visits. Partner organisation referrals are the most effective way of directing prevention work to the most vulnerable. But sometimes there are too few referrals to satisfy the activity levels set for each station.
Staff at stations have access to incident heat maps and community profiling handbooks which allow them to target their prevention work. However, these recently-introduced methods aren’t being used to their full effect.

**Promoting community safety**

The service has a range of effective partnerships to promote wider community safety. There is a joint community safety team with South Yorkshire Police. This team runs several activities aimed at making the whole community safer, such as an interactive safety centre called ‘Lifewise’. This impressive facility educates school children – predominantly in year six – about fire, road, water and online safety, and first aid and other activities. The service told us that 372 schools attended the centre and it engaged with nearly 15,500 pupils in the 2018/19 academic year.

The joint police and fire team also runs other activities for young people such as the Prince’s Trust, which operates from fire stations.

Young people who are at a high risk of fire or fire setting behaviour can be referred to specialist fire service staff who work to educate them on the possible consequences of their actions. The service received 67 referrals in 2018/19. They also run proactive seasonal campaigns aimed at reducing deliberate fire setting. When proactive or educational interventions fail, the service works with the police to prosecute arsonists.

Staff on-call stations are allocated paid time so they can support local events such as school visits and fetes. The service recognises that it needs to do more targeted prevention work in rural areas that have an on-call crewed fire station. These areas tend to have longer response times to an incident than areas with wholetime fire crews.

The service has designed its prevention activities to benefit the wider community rather than just focusing on the fire service’s priorities. An external evaluation of the service’s prevention work concluded that campaigns focusing on specific risk groups return a higher value than wider generic prevention work.

The service has allocated funding for a Safer Stronger Communities Reserve. This is designed to fund specific projects such as: providing smoke alarms for deaf people; local community projects for people living with dementia; projects aimed at people with disabilities; and prevention work with seldom-heard groups such as communities from minority backgrounds.

Prevention staff are trained in how to identify vulnerability and **safeguarding** issues. We heard many positive examples of concerns being identified and processed through the correct referral channels.
Road safety

The service is part of a safer roads partnership along with local authorities, other emergency services and public sector organisations in the county. Specialist prevention staff carry out education work with colleagues from South Yorkshire Police. The work at Lifewise focuses on road safety for younger children, identifying issues such as safe road crossing and behaviour on public transport. The service also offers bespoke education packages to year 10 children about mopeds and cycling safety and how to be a safe passenger. Staff at fire stations don’t do any road safety education unless they are asked to support a specialist advocate with a practical demonstration.

Protecting the public through fire regulation

Good

South Yorkshire 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 it addresses effectively the burden of false alarms.
- The service should ensure it has effective arrangements for providing specialist protection advice out of hours.

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 has developed and implemented a fire safety enforcement strategy and risk-based audit programme which is informed by local risk and complies with its statutory requirements. South Yorkshire FRS has recently reviewed its risk based audit programme (RBAP) to focus on the buildings that pose the greatest risk to life. The service uses data to enable it to classify commercial properties in line with a previous fire service classification system called Fire Service Emergency Cover.

The service defines four classes of premises: A, B, C and D. Class A are the highest risk and are usually made up of various sleeping risks from houses in multiple occupation, sleeping above commercial premises, hotels and health establishments. As at 31 December 2018, the service had identified 7,184 class A property types and in the year to 31 December 2018 had audited 243 of them. The service aims to audit 955 of these premises in the year to 31 March 2020.
The overall number of audits has decreased from 2,632 in the year to 31 March 2016 to 1,454 in the year to 31 March 2018. This equates to 3.8 audits per 100 known premises, which is higher than the average England rate of 3.0.

Several years ago, the staff who carry out protection work changed from uniformed fire officers to civilian fire protection staff. This reduced costs but affected the team’s capacity because this technical area requires two years’ development to become fully competent. As at 31 December 2018, 20 of its 28 staff are fully qualified to level 4 diploma, with the remaining 8 staff nearing completion. The service has assured us that now staff levels are back to full strength they will have capacity to achieve the required numbers of audits.

The service uses a nationally agreed template when it conducts a full premises fire safety audit to provide consistency. It doesn’t use short audits, which are smaller and therefore quicker and more efficient than long audits. Short audits may be more appropriate at some premises. Protection work is quality assured by the district fire protection manager.

As well as pre-planned audits under the RBAP, the service also carries out reactive protection audits. For example, it follows up complaints and audits non-domestic premises that have had a fire.

The service has plans for operational fire crews to carry out lower-level protection work but the ongoing work to review the ORI data has meant the rollout of this activity has been postponed.

The service received 789 building regulation consultations in the 9 months to 31 December 2018. Of these, 96.8 percent were completed on time. This level has remained broadly stable over the last three years.

**Enforcement**

South Yorkshire FRS is well prepared to take appropriate enforcement action. The service’s policy is based on a principle of better regulation. It considers the level of engagement and alternative options before taking formal action.

The service works with businesses to help them comply with fire safety regulations, either by giving advice or issuing informal notices. In the year to 31 March 2018, the service issued 876 informal notifications.

When this approach isn’t suitable, the service is able and willing to take enforcement action. Protection staff are trained, able and equipped to issue formal prohibition notices immediately.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service issued 31 enforcement notices and 17 notices to prohibit use of premises that were in breach of legislation.

For serious breaches, the service will consider prosecution. It takes legal advice and considers the public interest test before deciding whether prosecution is the right course of action.
Some fire services have agreements with large businesses or organisations to provide fire safety advice. These arrangements are called primary authority schemes. South Yorkshire FRS has one such scheme in place with a large DIY company.

Since protection staff work normal office hours, any dangerous situation arising outside these times is dealt with by the service’s duty manager, who may not be a protection specialist. Although these managers have had some basic protection training, they don’t maintain their competence in this area. The service is looking at a regional approach so that out-of-hours specialist advice is always available.

However, the service should consider if its current arrangements provide effective protection for people outside office hours. We don’t believe the current arrangement is suitably reliable. We expect all services, especially metropolitan ones such as South Yorkshire, to have capability to respond appropriately to fire safety concerns at all times.

**Working with others**

South Yorkshire FRS has made some progress in reducing the number of false alarms its crews attend. Fire control will only send a fire engine if it believes there is a fire, or to premises where there is a known risk. Data provided after inspection shows that, in the year to the 31 March 2019, the service received 3,775 calls to automatic fire alarms and sent an engine to 84 percent (3,171) of these calls.

When a fire crew attends a false alarm, it records details of the cause and some possible solutions to the building owner to prevent re-occurrence. A copy of the record is left with the responsible person and another copy sent to a central specialist protection officer to decide if follow-up action is needed. The follow-up may be in the form of a letter or a full audit of the premises. The service is also exploring other measures such as charging repeat offenders.

There is more work that could be done to reduce this type of call. The central function ensures consistency, but we found it removes a sense of local ownership by station-based staff.

The service works well with several other enforcement agencies such as environmental health, trading standards, the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive in compliance and supporting prosecutions. The service made a joint prosecution with the Environment Agency last year after a large fire at a waste recycling site.

The service has a dedicated business engagement officer who works with organisations such as the chamber of commerce or specific groups such as the local Chinese community to promote fire safety compliance.

The service is a strong advocate of installing sprinklers in buildings. The service previously funded a project to retrofit sprinklers in a high-rise building which persuaded other organisations, like Doncaster Council, to fit sprinklers in its own housing stock.
Responding to fires and other emergencies

Good

South Yorkshire 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 understands what it needs to do to adopt national operational guidance, including joint and national learning. It should then put in place a plan to do so.
- The service should ensure it has an effective system in place to capture operational learning so as to improve its operational response.

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

Managing assets and resources

The service manages its assets and resources well, although its average response time has increased.

The service has fire engines, specialist vehicles and other equipment to respond to a wide range of incidents that may occur in its service area. It has 27 fire engines that operate from 21 stations (14 wholetime stations, 3 mixed fire stations and 4 on-call). To help maintain fire cover at its wholetime stations, fire control can temporarily move engines from other stations that have two available engines.

In the year to 31 December 2018, the service attended 11.0 incidents per 1,000 population, slightly above the average England rate of 10.4 over the same period.

Unlike many other services, South Yorkshire FRS doesn’t have a set response standard. Instead, it has simply told its local community that it aims to arrive at any incident as quickly as possible. In our view this is undesirable as it is not a measurable standard against which the public can hold the service to account.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on response times by measuring the time between the call being made and the first fire engine arriving at the scene. This provides consistent data across all 45 services. This shows that the service’s average response time to primary fires has increased from 7 minutes 57 seconds in the year to 31 March 2013, to 8 minutes 55 seconds in the year to 31 March 2018. This is higher than the average for other predominantly urban areas.

While attendance times are monitored and senior managers are aware of the increases, action should be taken to ensure further increases are mitigated.
Control room staff handle calls and dispatch resources effectively. The number of staff in fire control was reduced in 2017 after a review. There is a reciprocal arrangement with West Yorkshire FRS so that staff there can take calls on behalf of South Yorkshire. This might happen if the control function reaches capacity or becomes unavailable.

ICT systems in control could be more effective. The mobilising and on-call availability systems aren’t linked, so the service can’t be sure that enough staff with the right skills can deploy as a crew. For example, if there are four staff available but none is qualified to be the incident commander, the system will still show the engine as being available to be mobilised. This could result in delays mobilising a fully competent crew.

There is good availability of wholetime fire engines. Staff from the operational resourcing team (ORT) are used to supplement any staff shortages on wholetime fire stations. If there aren’t enough ORT staff available, overtime is used. This arrangement only applies to wholetime stations. As a result, in some instances availability at some on-call stations is very low. For example, at Dearne fire station, the average availability for the year to 31 December 2018 was 14.7 percent.

Overall, in the year to 31 December 2018, the total fire engine availability was 87.2 percent which is in line with most services. The average monthly availability ranged from 84.1 percent to 89.2 percent.

The requirements for operational staff to participate in operational training scenarios aren’t being met. Every station’s action plan has an annual requirement for staff to participate in training exercises. This requirement isn’t effectively managed, and the exercises aren’t consistent across all operational staff. Some staff hadn’t participated in such an exercise for over two years. The service would benefit from placing greater corporate oversight in this area.

Response

The service has decided to fully adopt national operational guidance (NOG). It is part of a regional group which makes sure guidance is implemented consistently, and which shares workloads across services to ease the burden.

South Yorkshire FRS has completed a gap analysis and knows what it needs to do to bring its policies, procedures and training in line with NOG. So far, only incident command guidance has been adopted. It doesn’t have a clear rationale for the order in which it adopts NOG. The service can mobilise the right number and type of fire engines in line with its plans for the incident it faces. It has pre-determined attendance plans for different incidents, so that the appropriate resources can be sent.

Lessons learned from other incidents – local and national – are used to revise its pre-determined attendances. For example, it increased the number of fire engines sent to fires in car parks following a large fire in Merseyside FRS. But, at the time of our inspection, there was no formal review process for the number of fire engines being sent to various incident types. Control operators can use their professional judgment to increase or decrease the pre-determined attendances according to the incident information they receive. Duty managers are available to support any response decisions.
An agreement is also in place with its other emergency service partners to assist them in gaining entry to premises for medical emergencies.

Staff we met were well trained for their roles. We tested how they use MDTs on fire engines and saw that staff confidently access risk information about premises and incidents. Breathing apparatus checks were completed to the expected standard. We also found control staff had a programmed training schedule to maintain competence.

Command

Operational staff with expected incident command duties have clear training and assessment standards. All staff up to group manager have qualifications for the role and are assessed every two years at the service’s incident command suite. We reality tested staff from all the four levels of command and found the expected level of knowledge and understanding.

Each incident has an allocated operational assurance officer who supports the incident commander. Their role is to give advice or assume command if needed. If they assume command, an extra assurance officer will be deployed.

A range of materials is available to help commanders manage incidents, such as decision logs and incident risk assessments. There are also operational aide-memoires on the MDTs to help deal with different incident scenarios. Some incidents aren’t covered by standard procedures. When this happens, commanders may have to use operational discretion. The commanders we spoke to felt well prepared to use their discretion and were confident that the service would support their judgment. As part of our inspection, we also undertook a staff survey (please see Annex A for more details). Of the 46 firefighters who had incident command responsibility, 78 percent were confident that the service would support them in using unauthorised tactics, or tactics in a novel way if the incident required it.

Keeping the public informed

The service uses a range of communication methods during incidents. There is an on-call communications officer and all station managers receive media training. This means that the public is kept informed by traditional and social media channels during incidents or other events that occur.

Staff we interviewed are confident in being able to spot safeguarding problems and make referrals for support. Reviewing case files, we saw appropriate safeguarding referrals had been made.

Fire control staff can also identify potential vulnerability when taking emergency calls. They have access to digital and paper aide-memoire to prompt them in dealing with unusual circumstances. These prompts covered a wide range of situations such as safeguarding procedures and fire survival guidance. But some of the information was out of date and should be reviewed.
Evaluating operational performance

This is an area the service needs to improve. The service has a system for collecting learning from incidents. We found that hot debriefs are completed after most incidents and attending staff hear what lessons were learned. Although staff can upload this local learning onto a database, staff told us in most instances this didn’t happen and learning wasn’t passed on. As part of our staff survey, we had 120 responses from firefighters and specialist support staff. Only 51 percent of them were confident that action would be taken as a result of learning from operational incidents.

The system for formally collecting these lessons and making sure staff learn from them isn’t working effectively. While some learning is shared, it isn’t being collated, and trends that could influence future training and procedures aren’t being analysed. This limits what the service can contribute to its own organisational and national operational learning.

The service was one of six to pilot the national operational learning (NOL) system and, as such, sees itself as being at the forefront of NOL. We saw examples of how learning from other services has been incorporated into its procedures. But we didn’t see an effective process to enable the service to collect and share its learning with other services through NOL. Simply put, the current process is not collecting enough data to share. To be able to collect and share best practice and required improvements, the service needs to refresh its informal and formal incident debrief procedures.

Responding to national risks

Good

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at responding to national risks. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

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

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

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

The service has good plans and is well prepared to attend incidents at its high-risk premises. It has arrangements with other neighbouring services to request support if needed. Fire control can co-ordinate a response into or out of the service area.

As part of the LRF, the service has good relationships with all emergency and non-emergency responders in the county. Through this forum, the service contributes to plans for dealing with high-level local and national risks, such as flooding, pandemic flu and terror-related incidents.

Working with other services

The service responds well to incidents in neighbouring services. MDTs on fire engines hold risk information extending 10 km over the border of some of its neighbouring services. But not all services share the information; for example, we saw risk information for North Yorkshire FRS but none for West Yorkshire FRS.

Some stations participated in joint training exercises with neighbouring fire services at risk sites. These are organised informally rather than as part of a co-ordinated programme. The service would benefit from a structured programme of cross-border training so that all staff can take part. Our staff survey found that only 20 percent of the 120 firefighters who responded, regularly trained or carried out exercises with neighbouring fire and rescue services.

Fire control works closely with its West Yorkshire FRS counterpart. They support each other in times of high-call volume or loss of control function and this arrangement is tested and exercised regularly.

The service has several specialist fire engines and teams that are available for local or national deployment. Fire control updates the availability of these assets on a national register daily.

Working with other agencies

Senior managers attend the multi-agency gold incident command (MAGIC) training and participate in multi-agency exercises as part of the LRF exercise plan. In 2019, there were multi-agency exercises at Sheffield Arena and Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

Some managers are specially trained for working with other agencies. Group managers are trained to be national inter-agency liaison officers.

The service is funded by the Home Office to have a team of specially trained firefighters to support a response to terrorist-related incidents, especially marauding terrorist firearms attacks. The service has completed joint training with other fire and emergency services so this arrangement is fully operational.
Efficiency
How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure?

Good

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. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service’s overall efficiency is good.

The service is good at making the best use of its resources and has a track record of introducing efficient ways of working. But it needs to improve how it makes itself affordable in the future and has to agree a plan that meets both the anticipated budget shortfalls and public expectations.

The service’s medium-term financial plan is based on prudent assumptions. The service was ambitious in introducing new shift systems that saved money and maintained response standards. This system, however, has since been ruled unlawful and now the service needs to determine how it will meet this funding gap and maintain the best possible response resources for the community.

Staffing needs to be increased at the stations affected by the legal ruling. As a result, it can’t meet all the response expectations in its IRMP although we consider its core prevention, protection and response functions appropriately resourced.

There have been some good improvements to ICT systems to manage working time and productivity. However, the service is still digitising some systems to improve efficiency.

The service collaborates with others but isn’t always aware of all the potential benefits. It already shares estates and departments with South Yorkshire Police. Other opportunities to collaboration will be pursued.

The service has good business continuity plans in place that are tested effectively.
Making best use of resources

Good

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making best use of resources. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration.

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

How plans support objectives

South Yorkshire FRS has seen its funding from central government reduced by about 34 percent since 2010. It has offset some of this reduction by an increase in council tax. This has cut the overall reduction in revenue budget from approximately £60m in 2010/11 to around £50m in 2018/19. In the year to 31 March 2018, the firefighter cost per head of population was £20.47 compared with the England rate of £22.38.

We found that the service’s budget and resource allocation supports the activity set out in its IRMP and it has a balanced budget for 2019/20.

The service has allocated enough resources to prevention, protection and response activity, which links to its IRMP priorities.

Although there is evidence of workforce planning and resourcing to meet strategic priorities, the forced changes to the new shift system have affected the number of staff available to cover fire engines. The result is that the service can’t consistently provide what it has committed to. The current IRMP commits to five firefighters on every fire engine, yet around one-third of the time there are only four. As a result, the service is consulting on a new IRMP that meets the local risk and the current funding challenges.

The service agreed an efficiency plan in 2016 running to 2020. Efficiencies have been made as a result of that plan. But funding from local and national income streams has changed and the service doesn’t yet have an agreed plan for reducing costs after 2020. Its efficiency plan needs updating. The efficiency plan proposed making greater use of on-call firefighters and increased collaboration with other emergency services. Collaboration is moving forward but there is limited evidence of on-call firefighters being used more effectively.
Productivity and ways of working

The service has sought different crewing arrangements to improve its efficiency. As long ago as 2010, it proposed a new approach at stations with generally low demand, namely, close proximity crewing. This system was implemented at Lowedges and Aston Park fire stations in 2014 and at Edlington and Tankersley fire stations in 2015, with estimated savings of £1.4m per year. The basis of this system is that firefighters provide 96 hours of continuous duty, split between crewing a fire engine and being on call overnight, based at the fire station. The legality of the system was successfully challenged by the Fire Brigades Union with The High Court ruling it unlawful in 2018.

As a result of the High Court ruling, the service needs to find an estimated extra £1.4m per year to mitigate the savings it had anticipated from using close proximity crewing. It is consulting on proposals to make these savings, including reducing crewing levels from five to four firefighters per engine or reducing night-time fire cover.

Over recent years, the service has carried out two service support reviews and has reduced non-operational and managerial staffing costs. The service told us that the reviews led to £1.3m of savings. This work has been balanced against the requirements of core functions for the public and suitable support for operational staff.

The joint community safety collaboration with the police allows for critical services to be provided while reducing staffing costs, increasing resilience and giving better safety outcomes for the public.

The service uses a computer recording database called the Watch Performance System (WPS) to record staff time in various activities. This makes sure time is spent as productively as possible and allows the station manager to audit watch activity. The WPS was implemented in 2010 and monitors:

- monthly tasks against targets (site-specific risk visits and home safety visits);
- watch references (monthly station condition checks);
- watch logs (daily shift checks/vehicle checks);
- CCTV and MDT checks; and
- station audits.

Collaboration

The service is willing and able to collaborate with others, but collaborative arrangements that bring tangible efficiency benefits are at an early stage.

In the last year, the service has developed a joint community safety function with South Yorkshire Police which includes jointly-funded posts. Some non-financial benefits such as a safer community and reduced demand on the emergency services are anticipated.

Other collaborative work with police includes a shared station at Maltby, a joint estates and facilities management team and joint vehicle fleet management.
The service is looking for other collaboration opportunities with local fire services. The service is involved in a joint uniform procurement project, but at the time of the inspection there were no wider plans for other regional collaborations.

While the service monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of some of its collaboration activities, this is limited. More work is needed, not least to learn from what it has done.

This limited evaluation means that the service doesn’t clearly understand what outcomes and savings need to be factored into future financial planning.

We recognise that there are other non-cash benefits associated with the service’s collaborative activity, which are referenced in other sections of this report.

**Continuity arrangements**

The service has good business continuity plans in place for all its functions and buildings. The plans are produced in line with best practice guidance and are tested regularly. The service holds no-notice business continuity exercises for critical functions and stations.

Each station and department has its own business continuity plans that are reviewed annually. The testing regime is well documented, and any problems are highlighted on subsequent action plans.

**Fire control** has effective procedures and regularly tests its own continuity arrangements with West Yorkshire FRS.

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

Requires improvement

**Areas for improvement**

- The service should ensure it has sufficiently robust plans in place which consider the medium-term financial challenges beyond 2020 so it can prepare to secure the right level of savings.
- The service should assure itself it fully exploits external funding opportunities and options for generating income.

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

The service’s medium-term financial plan anticipates a budget deficit of £4.3m by the end of 2022, which it recognises isn’t sustainable. This deficit is primarily the result of changing the close proximity crewing arrangements and unanticipated pension liabilities. At the time of our inspection, the service didn’t have an agreed plan for balancing its budget.

The service’s new IRMP, being consulted on during our inspection, proposes reducing fire engine crew numbers from five to four. The service anticipates this will save more than £1.4m by 2022/23. This proposal isn’t supported by local representative bodies. It is also consulting on reducing staffing cover at some whole-time stations to day staffing and night-time on-call.

The service is at an early stage in developing a more consistent approach to benefits evaluation and realisation. But it doesn’t always understand the benefits expected from its change projects. For example, a joint fleet management strategy with South Yorkshire Police is in place. Despite this innovative arrangement, the potential benefits and savings for the fire service have yet to be determined. This is to be reviewed later in 2019 along with a review of fleet use and numbers.

In the meantime, the service plans to spend over £3m of capital funding between 2019 and 2021, acquiring replacement fire engines and other operational vehicles. It has kept the current fire engines for longer than usual and must now replace current engines and community safety vehicles at or near the end of their operational life.

The service has a joint estates manager with South Yorkshire Police. The service has an up-to-date estates strategy which refers to participating in the One Public Estate programme, exploring opportunities to share premises and collaborate. We look forward to seeing how this contributes to improving the efficiency of the service.

There have been some savings in non-staff costs, for example reducing tender costs and getting better value from suppliers has saved £360,000 over the past two years.

A small underspend was achieved in 2018/19, although the service overspent on its premises, supplies, and services and transport budgets. This was offset by savings arising from staff vacancies. While some savings are planned for 2019/20, they are limited in scope.

The service is alert to future financial risks, including the uncertainties in future funding arrangements. Its medium-term financial plan prudently assumes a 1.99 percent increase in council tax in future years and 2 percent for pay inflation, and hasn’t assumed a government pension grant will continue. The service is aware of risks from proposed changes in funding mechanisms, changes in pension related legislation, and the outcomes of future government spending reviews.

Nearly £8m of capital reserves are planned to be spent on the service’s estate between 2019 and 2021, mainly for demolishing and building a new fire station at its Barnsley site. The rest is earmarked for refurbishing fire stations that are no longer used for CPC, and other improvement works that had been placed on hold to save money.
The service will need to be confident that this expenditure is consistent with the priorities of its new IRMP, and should properly realise the benefits from these investments.

**Innovation**

There have been some changes in systems to use technology to improve efficiency and value for money. The service has some good ICT systems in place that have been developed by its own ICT team. For example, the accident recording database can send out automated safety alerts, and the systems for recording operational assurance reports are now online. This allows processes to be more efficient and effective, but not all the systems are interconnected. We also saw old fashioned and inefficient systems being used for everyday tasks.

The service has reserves available to ‘invest to save’ but it doesn’t have clear plans about how it could use this money in the future to improve its overall value for money.

**Future investment and working with others**

The service can’t yet show comprehensively how it will work with others in the future to improve efficiency. It has a joint community safety function with the police but can’t show how it has provided greater efficiency. Plans to work with the police for fleet and stores workshops are at an early stage. These are small-scale initiatives capable of generating efficiency improvements in the future. However, the service is not currently seeking to drive out cash and non-cash benefits.

The service still holds large general and earmarked reserves. As at 31 March 2019, its general reserves were £22.9m; this is over one-third of its annual budget for 2019/20.

The service has a reserves strategy and a plan for how it will be used. However, we did note that the reduction in earmarked reserves for capital investment in 2019/20 planned in the medium-term financial plan was £1m greater than the amount of the 2019/20 capital programme. This indicates that the timescales for using reserves aren’t realistic and don’t match the planned spending programme. Plans to use reserves are based largely on estates and transport capital spending, with only small amounts identified for innovation and to promote new ways of working. At the time of inspection, the service was relying on using reserves to meet its funding gaps in the absence of an agreed funding plan.

The service has in the past pursued opportunities to generate extra income. Unfortunately, to date it has not considered them to be successful or sustainable. We would encourage the service to continue considering exploring opportunities to generate extra income. For example, applying for grants, working together with local businesses, charging other emergency services to use its estates, etc.
People
How well does the service look after its people?

Good

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, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at looking after its people.

The service has clear health and safety policies that are supported by a specialist team. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and the procedures, and are able to report health and safety incidents easily.

The service has a new health and wellbeing strategy although it isn’t yet fully established. Staff who had used services spoke very positively about the support they received. There is some post-incident support available, but the service should improve the referral process.

There is a set of values and behaviours that are embedded into all the service’s activities. Staff see the senior leaders as role models who demonstrate the expected values.

Like most services, South Yorkshire FRS’s workforce doesn’t represent its diverse community. It recognises this and has done some work to increase interest, applications and recruitment of under-represented groups. But not all staff fully understand the need for increased diversity of the workforce.

There is a good individual performance review system in place and good staff development. Staff who aren’t involved in frontline operational response understand the importance of their roles and feel valued by the organisation.

The service has fair, open and accessible promotion processes for all staff, but could do more to identify and develop high-potential staff.
Promoting the right values and culture

Good

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

Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself that staff understand how to access wellbeing support.
- The service needs to ensure that staff involved in protracted operational incidents have adequate welfare facilities.

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 promotes the mental and physical health and wellbeing of its staff. It promotes wellbeing support on its intranet, on posters in prominent positions and on information screens. Services include employee counselling and links to Mind’s Blue Light Programme. Staff who have used wellbeing services spoke very positively about them. But not all staff understand what support is available or how to make a referral.

The system for instigating post-incident wellbeing support isn’t effective. There are processes for post-traumatic incident wellbeing support, but it isn’t yet part of routine practice. It is usually managed at local level. Some managers have received training in identifying mental health concerns, but not all managers have had this input. Staff in fire control have a mental health awareness aspect to their maintenance of competency training.

Incident welfare provisions such as toilet facilities and incident ground refreshments need improvement. The service relies on police welfare facilities which aren’t always available when needed at incidents. This means fire service staff can spend long periods at incidents without access to suitable welfare facilities.

Health and safety

The service has effective health and safety arrangements. It has a dedicated health and safety team, which contributes to a well-managed, positive health and safety culture.

All operational staff attend the Institute of Safety and Health (IOSH) one-day working safely course as part of their induction, and managers study for further IOSH qualifications according to their role.
Management promotes a supportive and learning style of investigation into accidents, rather than a blame culture. All accidents, near misses and undesirable circumstances are reported on a user-friendly electronic system.

Learning from investigations is shared with staff on a RAG memo denoting its severity. Staff confirm and record understanding via the Learnpro system. During our inspection we saw an example of how an urgent red memo was used to reinforce safe practice, after a member of staff was injured.

**Culture and values**

The service promotes its expected values and behaviours in its organisational narrative (‘Our story’). It aims to be a great place to work, to put people first, and to work hard to be the best. It expects honesty, integrity and respect, and it clearly articulates what the expected behaviours are for all staff at all levels of the organisation.

These values are incorporated into all the service’s updated publications and are also part of the personal development review process. The values are clearly displayed in all work places and on computer home screens.

Staff told us that they had seen a marked improvement in communication between different staff groups in recent years. Non-operational staff feel valued and that their contribution to ‘one team’ is appreciated. These staff spoke positively about the Bridging the Gap initiative. This involves non-operational staff being encouraged to work alongside operational colleagues on stations and take part in hands on, operational activities. This initiative has helped staff to better understand and appreciate how different roles in the organisation contribute to the overall aim of keeping the people of South Yorkshire safe.

We encountered some lingering historical perceptions of barriers between staff and middle/senior managers. But it was clear to the inspection team that the service is aware of past problems and is trying to improve trust, communication and relationships between all staff groups. Staff supported this view by clearly demonstrating the expected values and behaviours. They see senior leaders as increasingly accessible and approachable, and as models of the service values and expected behaviours.

Of the 203 respondents to our staff survey, 23 percent reported feeling bullied or harassed and 24 percent reported feeling discriminated against at work in the last 12 months. This is in line with other services.
Getting the right people with the right skills

Good

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

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure its workforce plan addresses any gaps in capability which affect the availability of fire engines.
- The service needs to assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained for their role. It needs to ensure all staff keep their skills up to date and have a consistent method of recording when they 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 has a workforce strategy but hasn’t yet produced the supporting documents to implement its strategic workforce plan. Despite this, we found that the skills and capabilities of staff align with the needs of the service’s IRMP.

For example, specialist staff such as fire control, prevention and protection staff have bespoke development programmes which use e-learning and other methods to support competence.

The service uses future planning to identify operational staff who can retire, which informs planning for recruits’ courses and promotion processes. In spite of this planning, we found gaps in skills and capabilities, particularly at its on-call stations. For example, some on-call fire engines are regularly unavailable for use because the available firefighters lack essential skills such as a driver or incident command.

The service gives a high priority to risk-critical training. There are effective systems in place for staff to record ongoing and specialist training. These systems are used to plan courses. Staff up to the level of watch manager have to regularly maintain their skills such as wearing breathing apparatus, working at height or incident command.

A central system allows the central training team to see who needs risk-critical training and their expiry dates. Staff must book all essential courses before they can book any leave on the system. If staff don’t maintain their risk-critical skills they are removed from operational duties until they have done so. Data supplied by the service showed extremely high completion rates for central courses.

The service has introduced a programme which allows new on-call firefighters to complete more of their initial training at their home stations, rather than the central training centre. This means greater flexibility for trainees by reducing the need to travel but it has had unintended consequences. Training recruits in this way means colleagues and managers provide the training. These staff aren’t trained as trainers,
so training isn’t consistent or to the required standard. New firefighters need intensive supervision and guidance, while existing staff haven’t been able to address their own training and development needs.

Staff in support functions can access any development training either on an ongoing basis or as part of their personal development review. Managers then identify any suitable courses.

**Learning and improvement**

Staff are trained to be able to perform their jobs. Operational and control staff have to maintain competence against a set framework of practical and theoretical subjects appropriate to their role. All training is recorded electronically on to the WPS. This system allows all managers to quickly and accurately see what training has been completed and what is outstanding. This means that local managers can plan training for their staff depending on their specific needs.

This flexibility is essential as different stations have different equipment, risks and specialist vehicles. Managers in charge of shifts are responsible for most training at stations. Some are working towards an assessor’s qualification, but others haven’t been trained how to train and assess effectively. The service should consider how it assures the quality and consistency of on-watch training.

All posts in the service have a specific training needs analysis so that staff can carry out their expected roles. This includes equality, diversity and inclusion training and other softer skills such as conflict resolution. Newly promoted crew managers complete a training programme, which includes training in grievance, discipline and absence management procedures.

Any staff who have to command incidents have mandatory training and assessment. All of the records sampled for level 1 and 2 incident commanders were on time. But nearly half of level 3 commanders hadn’t completed the training. Level 4 commanders don’t have any formal qualifications for incident command duties. They attend a MAGIC course and develop through exercises as part of the LRF multi-agency exercise planner.

There is no formal training framework for any managers above watch manager level. Specialist staff such as hazardous materials advisers or fire investigators do an initial course and participate in continual professional development events. But there is no overall competency framework for this group of staff.
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Good

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- To identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity, and make its workforce more representative, the service should ensure the value of positive action is well-understood by staff.
- The service should assure itself that it has effective grievance procedures. It should identify and implement ways to improve staff confidence in the grievance process.

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

Seeking and acting on staff feedback

The service regularly seeks feedback from staff at all levels and monitors staff engagement. A staff wellbeing survey in 2018 led to a health and wellbeing strategy and action plan. The service continues to address concerns raised and is still working to improve staff wellbeing.

The service conducts a ‘pulse’ survey every two months. These short electronic surveys seek staff feedback on specific issues. The results are discussed at executive level and are available to staff on the service’s intranet.

Senior managers blog in the service’s weekly bulletin to communicate with staff. This provides an opportunity for staff to give feedback or ask direct questions. Other communication methods include workplace visits by senior managers, station video screens, intranet updates and a regular podcast called ‘Firecast’. Staff can also opt into a WhatsApp group to be kept up to date.

Staff are confident and willing to feed back to and challenge senior leaders. We were told that this is an area that has improved recently.

Community feedback is included in the bulletin. There is also a system for recommending staff for an award for exemplary work. This system wasn’t widely known about.

Our review of staff formal grievances showed the service follows its procedures, which are clear and unambiguous. But it doesn’t always meet its own timescales. Grievances are monitored by Human Resources to identify trends. The service has first-contact workplace advisers to help staff involved in grievance proceedings.
But many staff we spoke to didn’t know that this facility was still available or how to contact the advisers.

Not all staff have faith in the grievance procedures being effective, so would rather use representative bodies and raise a collective grievance to avoid being singled out. The service should address this perception and create a more harmonious working environment in which staff feel free to raise individual problems.

Diversity

The service doesn’t represent the community it serves and is working to increase workforce diversity through its equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy. In the year to 31 March 2018, 2.9 percent of firefighters were from a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background. This compares with a BAME residential population of 9.4 percent. Only 6.2 percent of firefighters were women.

There have been several positive action events and engagement with groups in the community to broaden the appeal of the service and break down traditional stereotypes.

These campaigns have seen some positive results with a marked increase in the number of people from minority groups registering an interest. Figures supplied by the service showed that, from November 2017 to May 2019, the number of women registering an interest in recruitment had risen from 166 to 1,034. Registers of interest from members of the BAME community rose from 60 to 325. This increase resulted in nearly 300 applications in 2018 from under-represented groups and the most recent recruits course had 50 percent representation from under-represented groups, which is impressive progress.

The service also monitors applications and progression through the recruitment process to identify barriers for different groups.

The service has an active women’s support network and mentoring scheme. Staff see senior leaders as positive role models for EDI. The service should consider the need for similar support networks to be available for all staff, including those with protected characteristics.

Many staff still don’t understand the benefits of workforce diversity and view legitimate positive action as discrimination. To promote greater understanding, the service should ensure that all staff have completed the mandatory EDI training.
Managing performance and developing leaders

Good

South Yorkshire 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

South Yorkshire FRS has good arrangements in place to assess and develop staff performance.

The service has recently refreshed its personal development and review process (PDRP) to make it more user friendly and accessible, and to increase its benefit to the individual. The service monitors staff completion rates, although the completion rates for PDRPs does vary across different staffing groups.

Data available after inspection shows that, as at 31 March 2019, the completion for wholetime firefighters was 91 percent, 75 percent for on-call firefighters, 45 percent for fire control personnel and 68 percent for support staff. Most staff we spoke to during our inspection spoke positively about the new process. However, there are still some staff who view a PDRP only as a tool for people who want to go for promotion.

Full reviews are carried out annually with a six-month review. But as the system is stored electronically, staff can request development at any time and update the review to show progress against set objectives. Managers can record staff performance against expectations and set clear objectives to improve performance or increase personal development. The service’s vision for PDRPs is for them to facilitate ongoing conversations about performance, rather than just an annual meeting. Staff feel that it is more relevant than the last system, but the system hasn’t yet realised its full potential.

The service has evaluated the new process focusing on the year 1 completion and use rates. Further evaluation to see how the objectives are being met is planned for year 2.
Developing leaders

The service doesn’t have a formal process for identifying and developing staff with high potential. It uses its appraisal process to help it identify staff who are interested in promotion. Senior managers told us that they will support staff so they can gain appropriate qualifications to aid development (such as the Executive Leadership Programme for senior leaders) and will offer project roles or other bespoke development for staff who are not able to access formal development courses.

All newly appointed managers are required to do mandatory training as part of the promotion.

We found that the promotion process was clear and well documented. Staff who wish to be considered for promotion have to get endorsement from their line manager before they can apply.

The promotion processes clearly set out role requirements. During our promotions review we identified that processes are fair and open, with candidates promoted on merit. Candidates receive feedback and development in conjunction with their line manager.
Annex A – About the data

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

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

Where we collected data directly from FRSs, we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with services and with other interested parties, such as the Home Office. This was primarily through our Technical Advisory Group, which brings together representatives from the fire sector and the Home Office to support the inspection’s design and development, including data collection.

We give services several opportunities to validate the data we collect to make sure the evidence presented is accurate. For instance, we asked all services to:

- check the data they submitted to us via an online application;
- check the final data used in each service report; and
- correct any errors they identified.

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

Methodology

Use of data in the reports and to form judgments

The data we cite in this report and use to form our judgments is the information that was available at the time of inspection. Due to the nature of data collection, there are often gaps between the timeframe the data covers, when it was collected, and when it becomes available to use.

If more recent data became available after inspection, showing a different trend or context, we have referred to this in the report. However, it was not used to form our judgments.

In a small number of cases, data available at the time of the inspection was later found to be incorrect. For example, a service might have identified an error in its original data return. When this is the case, we have corrected the data and used the more reliable data in the report.
Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use ONS mid-2017 population estimates. At the time of inspection this was the most recent data available.

2018 survey of public perception of the fire and rescue service

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

However, a minority of the interviews (757) were conducted face-to-face with trained interviewers in respondents’ homes. A small number of respondents were also interviewed online via postal invitations to the survey. These face-to-face interviews were specifically targeted at groups traditionally under-represented on online panels, and so ensure that survey respondents are as representative as possible of the total adult population of England. The sampling method used isn’t a statistical random sample. The sample size in each service area was small, varying between 400 and 446 individuals. So any results provided are only an indication of satisfaction rather than an absolute.

Survey findings are available on BMG’s website.

Staff survey

We conducted a staff survey open to all members of FRS workforces across England. We received 3,083 responses between 8 March and 9 August 2019 from across the 15 Tranche 3 services.

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

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

The results are not representative of the opinions and attitudes of a service’s whole workforce. The survey was self-selecting, and the response rate ranged from 7 percent to 40 percent of a service’s workforce. So any findings should be considered alongside the service’s overall response rate, which is cited in the report.

To protect respondents’ anonymity and allow completion on shared devices, it was not possible to limit responses to one per person. So it is possible that a single person could have completed the survey more than once.

Each service was provided with a unique access code to try to make sure that only those currently working in a service could complete the survey. However, it is possible that the survey and access code could have been shared and completed by people other than its intended respondents.
We have provided percentages when presenting the staff survey findings throughout the report. When a service has a low number of responses (less than 100), these figures should be treated with additional caution. Percentages may sum to more than 100 percent due to rounding.

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

**Service in numbers**

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

**Perceived effectiveness of service**

We took this data from the following question of the 2018 survey of public perceptions of the FRS:

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

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

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

**Incidents attended per 1,000 population**

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, ‘Incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England, by incident type and fire and rescue authority’ for the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2019.

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

- There are seven worksheets in this file. The ‘FIRE0102’ worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and fire and rescue authority (FRA) for each financial year. The ‘FIRE0102 Quarterly’ worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and FRA for each quarter. The worksheet ‘Data’ provides the raw data for the two main data tables (from 2009/10). The ‘Incidents chart - front page’, ‘Chart 1’ and ‘Chart 2’ worksheets provide the data for the corresponding charts in the statistical commentary. The ‘FRS geographical categories’ worksheet shows how FRAs are categorised.

- Fire data, covering all incidents that FRSs attend, is collected by the Incident Recording System (IRS). For several reasons some records take longer than others for services to upload to the IRS. Totals are constantly being amended (by relatively small numbers).

- We took data for Service in Numbers from the August 2019 incident publication. So, figures may not directly match more recent publications due to data updates.
Home fire safety checks per 1,000 population

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

Each FRS figure is based on the number of checks it carried out. It doesn’t include checks carried out by partners.

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

• Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire FRSs before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

• Figures for ‘Fire Risk Checks carried out by Elderly (65+)’, ‘Fire Risk Checks carried out by Disabled’ and ‘Number of Fire Risk Checks carried out by Partners’ don’t include imputed figures because a lot of services can’t supply these figures.

• The checks included in a home fire safety check can vary between services. You should consider this when making direct comparisons between services.

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

• After inspection, East Sussex FRS resubmitted data on its total number of home fire safety checks and the number of checks targeted at the elderly and disabled in the year to 31 March 2018. The latest data changes the percentage of checks that were targeted at the elderly (from 54.1 percent to 54.9 percent) and disabled (from 24.7 percent to 25.4 percent) in England. However, as noted above, in all reports we have used the original figures that were available at the time of inspection.

Fire safety audits per 100 known premises

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

We took this from the Home Office fire statistics, ‘Fire safety audits carried out by fire and rescue services, by fire and rescue authority’ for the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

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

• Berkshire FRS didn’t provide figures for premises known between 2014/15 and 2017/18.

• Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire FRSs before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.
Several FRAs report ‘Premises known to FRAs’ as estimates based on historical data.

**Firefighter cost per person per year**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, ‘Staff headcount by gender, fire and rescue authority and role’ and ‘Staff headcount by ethnicity, fire and rescue authority and role’ as at 31 March 2018.

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

- We calculate BAME residential population data from ONS 2011 census data. This figure is calculated by dividing the BAME residential population by the total population.
- We calculate female residential population data from ONS mid-2017 population estimates.
- The percentage of BAME firefighters does not include those who opted not to disclose their ethnic origin. There are large variations between services in the number of firefighters who did not state their ethnic origin.
• Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire FRSs before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.
Annex B – Fire and rescue authority governance

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