

Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service



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About this inspection

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

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

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

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

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

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

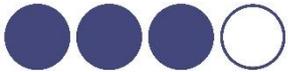
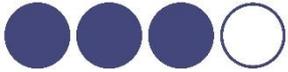
Good is our expected graded judgment for all fire and rescue services. It is based on policy, practice or performance that meet pre-defined grading criteria, which are informed by any relevant [national operational guidance](#) or standards.

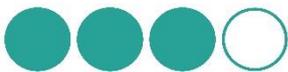
If the service exceeds what we expect for good, we will judge it as outstanding.

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

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

Overview

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

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

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

HM Inspector's summary

It was a pleasure to revisit South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way that the service engaged with our inspection.

I am satisfied with some aspects of the performance of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks, but the service needs to improve performance in some areas as these have deteriorated since our 2019 inspection.

My principal findings from our assessments of the service over the past year are as follows.

The service is good at identifying risks in its communities and puts appropriate measures in place to mitigate those risks. It is good at identifying those people in its communities who are most at risk from fire and working with its partner organisations to good effect to reduce this risk.

The service displays some sound financial management. And its medium-term financial plan takes a prudent approach to government funding. But the service still needs to improve its use of resources. It is financially secure but could do more to plan for future financial challenges.

The service has introduced new response standards for attending emergencies. But we were disappointed to see that it hasn't made the progress we expected in addressing the other areas for improvement concerning response in our 2019 inspection. And the service's risk-based audit programme (RBAP) is not effectively prioritising high-risk premises.

Values are well established in the service, and it is good at promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). But improvements are required to make sure staff have access to services to support both their mental and physical health.

Overall, while there are some good aspects to the performance of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, there are several areas where performance has declined since the 2019 inspection, and I expect to see progress made against these. We will continue to monitor progress through our usual monitoring arrangements.



Roy Wilsher

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Response

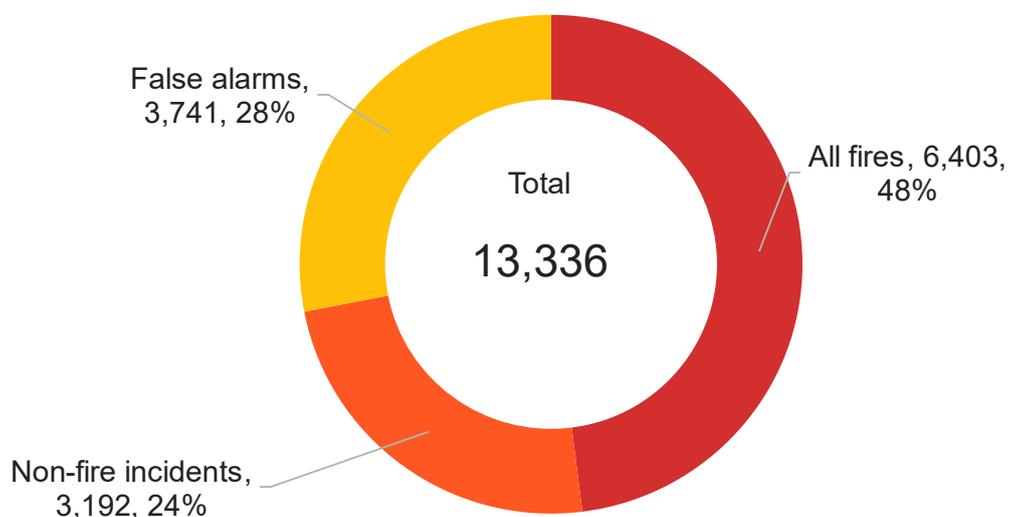
	South Yorkshire	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 31 December 2021	9.42	9.82
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	4.18	4.47
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2021	1.71	1.70
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2021	85.9%	86.4%



Cost

Firefighter cost per person Year ending 31 March 2021	£21.69	£25.02
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Incidents attended in the year to 31 December 2021





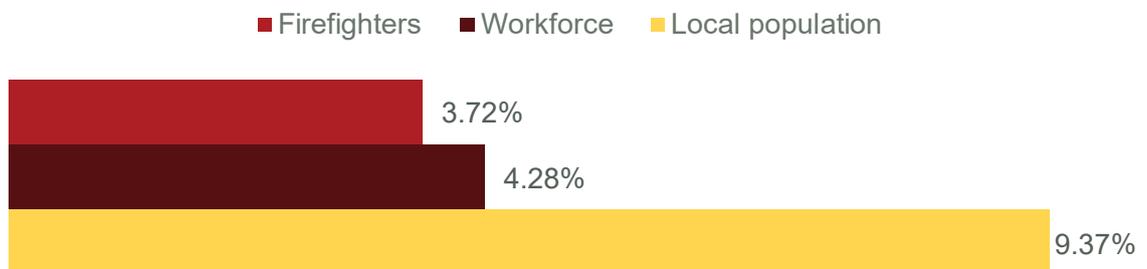
Workforce

	South Yorkshire	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2016 to 2021	0.88%	-1.60%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	0.46	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2021	83.3%	64.4%

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



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



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

Effectiveness



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



Requires improvement

Summary

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

We found the service is good at identifying and assessing the fire and rescue-related risks to its communities. It has used a range of information, and consulted widely, to produce a comprehensive community risk management plan (CRMP). The information in the plan has helped the service to review its response standards to better serve its communities.

We also found the service to be good at how it identifies those people in its communities who are most at risk from fire and works with its partners to good effect to reduce this risk. But the number of [home fire safety checks \(HFSCs\)](#) it carried out during the pandemic decreased, and it still has many HFSCs identified and awaiting a visit.

We were disappointed to find that the service's RBAP is not effectively targeting high-risk premises and that it is not carrying out enough audits compared to its own annual target. But since our 2019 inspection it has improved its arrangements in tackling false alarms.

We were also disappointed to see that the service had made limited progress since our 2019 inspection in introducing national operational guidance and obtaining operational learning. But we did find that the service is well prepared to respond to major and multi-agency incidents.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Good (2019: Good)

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at understanding risk.

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

Area for improvement

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

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

Working with the community to build a comprehensive risk profile is good

The service has assessed an appropriate range of risks and threats after a thorough community risk management planning process. When assessing risk, it has considered relevant information collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and datasets. These include emergency incident data and socio-economic information from the [indices of multiple deprivation](#) and information on population from health authorities in England, known as [Exeter data](#).

In developing its CRMP, published 1 April 2021, the service consulted its communities constructively. It held focus groups across South Yorkshire. It also sent a residents' survey to 1,100 people who proportionally represented the population of the community. And it published a public survey that anyone could respond to. The service received over 3,000 responses to help inform its understanding of risk and how it might mitigate it.

The service has an effective CRMP

After assessing relevant risks, the service has recorded its findings in an easily understood CRMP. This plan describes how prevention, protection and response activity should be effectively resourced to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces, both now and in the future. For example, it sets out how the service will invest resources in the protection team and how it has implemented a new emergency response standard based on incident data analysis. To validate the data review and risk profiling carried out in determining the new response standard, the service used external consultants.

The service has an effective governance board to drive performance of the CRMP and a structured approach to updating the CRMP annually. However, the service would benefit from more robust links between the CRMP and the associated annual plan.

The service needs to improve how it gathers, maintains and shares risk information about people, places and threats

The service collects some information about the people, places and threats it has identified as being at greatest risk, but the information we reviewed was limited, inaccurate or not up to date. From the records reviewed we found that operational risk information visits aren't always carried out within the time frames set by the service. Our inspection also highlighted ineffective quality assurance of the risk information. For example, we found records of premises with incorrect risk classifications (medium instead of very high risk) and an absence of important information such as the presence of flammable cladding or conflicting information such as differences in premises' evacuation strategies. The service should make sure that all risk information is accurately recorded so it is relevant for staff who need it. This was identified as an area for improvement in the first round of inspections in 2019 and the service has made limited progress.

However, the service does have robust systems in place to make staff aware of any significant changes to risk information. The service uses red, amber and green memos that must be read and understood by staff. This means that staff get urgent risk information related to their role.

But we found that the service doesn't use a co-ordinated system to collect and update temporary risk information (such as information about occupiers in premises or sporting events and festivals). This system needs better control and scrutiny. Some risk information is missing, outdated or very limited, which won't help fire crews responding to an incident at these locations. The service has recognised improvements are required in the management of temporary risk information and is developing a computer recording system to address this.

The service uses the outcomes from operational activity well to build its understanding of risk

The service records and communicates risk information effectively. It also routinely updates [risk assessments](#) and uses feedback from local and national operational activity to inform its planning assumptions. For example, following information received from West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service on emollient creams and the risk of fire, the service has increased awareness among staff, updated its training and amended its HFSC programme.

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

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

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

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

At the time of this inspection, the service was making good progress with its Grenfell action plan.

Preventing fires and other risks



Good (2019: Good)

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

Fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, including giving fire safety advice. To identify people at greatest risk from fire, services should work closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary sector, and with the police and ambulance services. They should provide [intelligence](#) and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it puts in place measures so it can catch up on the home fire safety checks identified and awaiting a visit that have built up during the pandemic.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity, so staff carry out home fire safety checks to an appropriate standard.

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

The service has an integrated prevention strategy

The service's prevention strategy 2022–24 is clearly linked to the risks identified in its CRMP. The CRMP states that analysis of incident data and studies of what makes a fire more likely show that there is a very strong link between locations of fires and locations of people living in poverty. The prevention strategy in turn uses locations of fires and indices of multiple deprivation as risk indicators to target home fire safety activity. Prevention activity is also co-ordinated with CRMP risk profiling and the service's revised emergency response standard. The service has targeted HFSCs for around 7,000 households that are situated beyond the 15-minute response time.

The service's teams work well together and with other relevant organisations on prevention, and it shares relevant information when needed. Information is used to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between the service's prevention, protection and response functions. For example, referrals into the service from partners, such as adult social care services, for people they have identified as being [vulnerable](#) are prioritised. Firefighters and community safety staff aim to conduct HFSCs at these premises as a priority.

The service has many prevention visits that have built up due to the pandemic

We considered how the service had adapted its prevention work during our COVID-19-specific inspection in September 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its public prevention work appropriately. Since then, however, the service hasn't addressed the many HFSCs identified and awaiting a visit.

On 31 March 2021, the service had 1,385 checks identified. At the time of the inspection (June 2022) we found that this figure had remained relatively static. The service should put measures in place to effectively address those visits and make sure that it is prioritising those people who are most vulnerable and at risk of fire.

Prevention activity is targeted

Prevention activity is clearly prioritised using a risk-based approach towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. The service uses an online portal for partner organisations to provide relevant details of the persons they are referring and to help the service to risk assess them. The service recognises the need to update the risk assessment methodology and is looking to introduce the National Fire Chiefs Council online HFSC system.

The service takes account of a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable individuals and groups. This includes health and social data, and referrals from the organisations it works with. The service is improving its targeting using improved data collection and distribution throughout the service. It has developed risk cluster maps using demographic and accidental dwelling fire data on non-deliberate fires in the home. Training has been provided to station staff in the use of this information to support prevention activity. We look forward to seeing how it is used to enhance prevention activity in the future.

It provides a range of interventions that it adapts to the level of risk in its communities. These include HFSCs and [safe and well visits](#) to members of the community, based on an assessment of their needs. Safe and well visits build on the advice provided at HFSCs and cover additional support to the individual on topics such as crime and fall prevention, and healthy ageing. Community safety staff, [wholetime](#) and [on-call](#) firefighters, and volunteers all carry out prevention work.

Safe and well visits and quality assurance of prevention activity are limited

Staff told us they have the right skills and confidence to carry out HFSCs. These checks cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put [vulnerable people](#) at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. Firefighters carry out most HFSCs across South Yorkshire and training is provided for them by a specialist prevention team. When additional vulnerabilities are identified, or the check is likely to be more complex, the check is allocated to a dedicated prevention officer who has a greater level of training.

However, it was evident from the inspection that there is limited quality assurance of prevention activity. So, the service doesn't know whether staff consistently work in line with service standards.

Furthermore, it was disappointing to note that firefighters carry out safe and well visits only in the Doncaster district. This follows an approach that was piloted in Doncaster over two years ago but hasn't yet been expanded to the other three districts in South Yorkshire: Sheffield, Barnsley and Rotherham. This means that only prevention staff, instead of firefighters, complete safe and well visits in these districts. Consequently, numbers of visits are reduced there.

Staff understand how to identify vulnerable people and take action to safeguard them

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified [safeguarding](#) problems, such as hoarding and people who seemed to be vulnerable. They told us they felt confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. Staff must complete training in adult and [child](#) safeguarding protocols and there is online refresher training scheduled every two years. The service safeguarding team or duty [senior officer](#) provide more support to staff when needed.

The service collaborates well with other organisations

The service works with a wide range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. A large focus of the prevention work is the joint community safety department (JCSD). This is an effective partnership with South Yorkshire Police. The JCSD carries out an extensive range of prevention activities in the community, such as:

- road safety work through the South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership;
- water safety through the Local Water Safety Forum, which works in line with the National Fire Chiefs Council's National Drowning Prevention Strategy;
- fire cadet programmes for young people; and
- the co-ordination of fire and police volunteer schemes.

We found good evidence that it routinely refers people at greatest risk to other organisations which may be better able to meet their needs. These organisations include adult social care departments in the four local authorities in South Yorkshire.

Arrangements are in place to receive referrals from others. The service has over 400 partner agencies that refer people to the service that they believe will benefit from a HFSC. This increases the effectiveness and efficiency of the service's prevention work. The service acts appropriately on the referrals it receives by assessing the risk and prioritising the referral appropriately.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses the information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention activity. For example, the service uses a range of data and information from partner agencies to target those most at risk from fire, such as assisted bin collection data from councils, which can identify vulnerable people.

The service has effective processes to tackle fire-setting behaviour

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people of different ages who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. The service has an extensive educational programme, including the Lifewise Centre where schoolchildren attend to learn about the dangers of fire and other risks.

The service gets referrals from the police, schools and local authorities and has a team of specially trained staff to deal with young fire setters. The service received 25 such referrals in 2021/22.

When appropriate, it routinely shares information with other relevant organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists. The service investigates fires where the cause is deliberate, and it contributes to the coroner's court process in cases where there is a death or serious injury.

The service is good at evaluating its prevention work

The service has good evaluation tools in place. These tools measure how effective its work is so that it knows what works and its communities get prevention activity that meets their needs. The service carries out good performance management of JCSD partnership activities linked to incident data. It can also focus on specific prevention interventions, for example if there are increases in arson, [anti-social behaviour](#) or water-related incidents.

Prevention activities take account of feedback from the public, other organisations and other parts of the service. The service has commissioned an external evaluation of the effectiveness of its partnership with South Yorkshire Police. In addition, the prevention team works closely with the communications department to evaluate the effectiveness and value for money of the service's safety campaigns.

Feedback is used by the service to inform its planning assumptions and amend future activity, so it is focused on what the community needs and what works.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

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

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

Area for improvement

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

Area for improvement

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

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it works with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations.

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

The intentions in the CRMP aren't effectively put into practice

The service's protection strategy and associated RBAP are clearly linked to the risk it has identified in its CRMP.

But we found that the service's implementation of the RBAP was not effectively addressing the risks. The RBAP states that it will target high-risk premises, that each inspection officer will dedicate 75 percent of their auditing time to this activity and that the service aims to audit high-risk premises about once every 5 years. However, we found that this was not being fulfilled.

The service's protection work has supported businesses as pandemic restrictions were lifted

We considered how the service had adapted its protection activity during our COVID-19-specific inspection in September 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its protection work well. Since then, we are encouraged to find that the service has resumed audits and on-site protection activity. The service has also communicated effectively with business owners, giving advice about how their businesses can operate in a safe way as they re-opened when the restrictions were lifted.

The service's protection activity doesn't align with its strategy to target risk

The service's RBAP is focused on the service's highest-risk buildings. The service has targeted sleeping accommodation – for example, hospitals, hotels and hostels – and licensed premises as its highest risks. In 2020/21 it had identified 10,468 high-risk premises in South Yorkshire. It decided that high-risk premises will be inspected every 5 years with an annual target of 2,160 premises. This is based on the establishment of 24 competent business fire service inspection officers.

But we found that the service isn't consistently auditing the buildings it has targeted in the timescales it has set. In 2020/21 the service carried out 766 audits of which only 334 were high risk. This means that the service was considerably below the 2,160 annual high-risk audit target it had set itself. At that rate it will fall substantially short of the aim of inspecting every high-risk premises every five years.

Analysis of high-risk audit numbers for previous years showed that the service was always well below the identified target amount, which has been 2,160 since 2018. From 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2021, a total of 2,210 high-risk audits were carried out, just above the service's yearly target.

The service should review its resourcing and performance management standards

The service has developed performance standards for inspection officers and designed the RBAP based on the capacity of 24 competent inspection officers. In 2020/21 the service had 25 competent officers and 3 in development within the National Fire Chiefs Council's Competency Framework. So, in theory the service has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of the service's RBAP. However, as identified in the section above the service hasn't met inspection targets.

Nevertheless, it was pleasing to note that the service has improved the resilience of its 24/7 fire safety cover. In our 2019 inspection, one area for improvement was the service's arrangements for providing specialist protection advice out of hours.

We are encouraged to see the service now has robust arrangements in place to provide technical support at all times of the day (24/7). Seven inspection officers support the cover arrangements on a rotational basis.

Audits of all high-rise buildings have been completed

Audits have been carried out at all high-rise buildings the service has identified as using cladding that is similar to the cladding installed on Grenfell Tower. Information gathered during these audits is made available to response teams and [control](#) operators, enabling them to respond more effectively in an emergency.

The service has visited all the high-rise, high-risk buildings it has identified in its service area.

The quality of audits is inconsistent

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

Not all the audits we reviewed were completed in a consistent, systematic way, or in line with the service's policies. It was evident that the service doesn't always complete audits at regulated premises after a fire. This means it misses opportunities to fully review the fire safety arrangements of premises that may have underlying deficiencies leading to outbreaks of fire.

Quality assurance isn't effective

Only limited quality assurance of its protection activity takes place. The service doesn't have robust processes in place to review the quality of work. This includes the monitoring of action plans or reviewing the decisions of an inspector who overrides automatically-generated audit outcomes based on their own opinion of an audit they have completed.

The service doesn't have good evaluation tools in place to measure its effectiveness or to make sure all sections of its communities get equal access to protection services that meet their needs.

The service is good at taking enforcement action when appropriate

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers and, when appropriate, prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations. We saw good evidence of the service taking enforcement action in response to those who fail to comply with fire safety regulations. This included the prosecution of a responsible person who failed to respond adequately to enquiries about cladding on a high-rise building.

In the year to 31 March 2021, the service issued:

- 3 alteration notices;
- 289 informal notifications;
- 7 enforcement notices;
- 5 prohibition notices; and
- undertook 1 prosecution.

It has made 5 prosecutions in the last 5 years from 2016/17 to 2020/21.

The service works well with other agencies in regulating fire safety

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and routinely exchanges risk information with them.

It has worked closely with the local authorities in South Yorkshire to share information on sports grounds and high-rise premises. The service worked with Sheffield City Council to secure funding for a temporary alarm system in a high-rise residential block. Previously, the residents had to pay for security guards to monitor communal areas of the block for any outbreaks of fire (known as a 'waking [watch](#)').

The service responds appropriately to building consultations

The service responds to most building consultations on time, so it usually meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. In the year ending 31 March 2021, it responded on time to 92 percent of consultations received.

The service needs to do more work with businesses to promote safety

The service could do more to engage with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation.

The service provides some safety information on its website, and it uses social media to promote safety messages, often aligned to national business safety campaigns. But it rarely works directly with businesses to explain the importance and benefits of complying with fire safety legislation, and it hasn't set up any [primary authority schemes](#). It is missing opportunities to improve fire safety by helping businesses understand the value of good compliance.

The service has an effective strategy that has reduced unwanted fire signals

The service has made effective progress in reducing the number of unwanted fire signals (false alarms), which we identified as an area for improvement in 2019. An effective risk-based approach is in place to manage the number of unwanted fire signals. The service works with businesses to provide training and information on reducing and investigating false alarms. Staff in the control room challenge the caller so that the service sends out fire engines only when needed. It doesn't attend properties that don't have a sleeping risk – where no-one sleeps – if there is a person on site who can inspect the premises for signs of fire. If a fire is confirmed or there are signs of smoke or fire, the service sends appropriate resources.

The service gets fewer calls because of this work. The number of false alarms due to apparatus has decreased over the last 3 years from 1,827 in 2018/19 to 1,201 in 2020/21. Fewer unwanted calls means that fire engines are available to respond to a genuine incident rather than responding to a false one. It also reduces the risk to the public if fewer fire engines travel at high speed on the roads.

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

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

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

Area for improvement

The service should improve the availability of its on-call crewed fire engines to respond to incidents in line with its community risk management plan.

Area for improvement

The service should ensure it understands everything it needs to do to adopt national operational guidance and it should ensure its plan is resourced to do so.

Area for improvement

The service should ensure it has an effective process in place to obtain 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.

The service aligns resources to the risks identified in its CRMP

The service's response strategy is linked to the risks identified in its CRMP. Its fire engines and response staff, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to help the service to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources.

The service has 27 fire engines and a range of specialist vehicles strategically situated around South Yorkshire, with effective measures in place to make sure there are enough staff to operate these. It uses a crewing [reserve](#) cohort (known as the Operational Resource Team) to fill gaps at stations where there are shortages of staff.

The service has improved its response standards

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. Furthermore, in our last inspection in 2019, we found that the service didn't have a set of response standards of its own but instead gave a commitment to get to emergencies as fast as they could.

In its CRMP for 2021–24, the service has developed its own response standards, which are based on 2 specific factors:

- the level of risk in different areas of South Yorkshire; and
- the severity of the incident the service is called to attend.

Using these factors, the service has determined risks across all the communities of South Yorkshire and categorised incident types. For example, a dwelling fire or an incident where someone's life is at risk would be classed as high risk, and an incident where life and property aren't at risk would be classed as low risk. This provides the service with a tailored set of response standards.

Monitoring and reporting of response through the service's Fire Standards Committee is still developing. Performance figures received from the service showed that in 2021/22 it met its response standards on 87 percent of occasions. However, it hasn't set itself a target to achieve these standards on a certain percentage of occasions. Home Office data shows that the service's average response time to [primary fires](#) has improved from 8 minutes 55 seconds in 2018/19 to 8 minutes 26 seconds in the year ending 31 December 2021. However, this is slower than the average for predominantly urban services, which was 7 minutes 30 seconds for the same year.

The service needs to improve its on-call availability

To support its response strategy, the service has set itself a challenging target to have all fire engines available on 100 percent of occasions. The service doesn't always meet this standard. In 2020/21 the service had an overall availability of 85.9 percent. This was broadly in line with the England average of 86.4 percent but below the levels of availability provided by predominantly urban services.

It is the service's on-call availability that is bringing its overall performance level down. In 2020/21 the wholetime availability was 99.6 percent whereas on-call availability was 39.4 percent, and only 4.29 percent at 1 station for a 6-month period. This is the second lowest on-call availability of all services in England.

We noted that the service is taking some action to try and improve the availability of its on-call stations. This includes using a team of wholetime staff to cover on-call staff shortages and recruiting more on-call staff. We look forward to seeing the improvements this will make.

Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely

The service has trained incident commanders who are assessed regularly and properly. Their competence is reassessed every two years and the service has introduced accreditation by an external company. This helps the service to safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents that it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

As part of our inspection, we interviewed incident commanders from across the service. The incident commanders we interviewed are familiar with risk assessing, decision-making and recording information at incidents in line with national best practice, as well as the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#).

Control staff aren't always involved in debriefing and operational learning

We are pleased to see the service's control staff are sometimes integrated into the service's command, training, exercise and assurance activity. [Fire control](#) staff gave examples of being involved in a multi-agency exercise incorporating a marauding terrorist attack.

But control staff aren't always involved in debriefs. This means they don't always have opportunities to learn from others or contribute to shared learning. It was also evident that lessons learned from incidents and exercises weren't always effectively communicated to control staff who weren't involved in them.

The service hasn't yet implemented its procedures to handle multiple fire survival guidance calls

The service has provided some training to control staff on fire survival guidance. But it hasn't tested its ability to provide fire survival guidance to many callers simultaneously, as we would have expected it to. This was identified as learning for fire services after the Grenfell Tower fire.

The service is currently reliant on passing fire survival information to an incident using radio communication and paper-based systems. It is in the process of introducing a new system that will help the exchange of live fire-survival information between control and the scene of the incident.

Risk information is easily accessible to staff, but quality assurance should be improved

We sampled a range of risk information at wholetime and on-call stations across South Yorkshire, including what is in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings and what information is held by fire control.

The information we reviewed was comprehensive and could be easily accessed and understood by staff. We did find, however, that there were some variations in the operational risk information and the associated tactical plans that are provided to

assist decision-making at operational incidents. The service should ensure that information is consistent and up to date.

The service needs to do more to improve operational incident debriefing

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included significant domestic and commercial fires, and road traffic collisions.

The service doesn't always act on learning it has, or should have, identified from incidents. This means it isn't routinely improving its service to the public. We found that the service's debrief process was ineffective and that there had been limited progress on this area for improvement identified in the 2019 inspection.

From our review of several significant incidents, we found that the service hadn't identified learning from them and hadn't carried out debriefs of them as fully as we would have expected. Moreover, the service isn't using structured debriefs for larger incidents or exercises. Staff are unclear on the criteria for deciding when structured debriefs should take place.

However, we are encouraged to see the service is contributing towards, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services or operational learning gathered from other emergency service partners. This includes [national operational learning](#) and [joint organisational learning](#) updates provided in the service's magazine, Snapshot.

There has been limited progress to introduce national operational guidance

The service needs to do more to implement national operational guidance and ensure it is understood by everyone. National operational guidance provides industry good practice for developing procedures and is important to aid consistency across fire and rescue services. This was identified as an area for improvement in our 2019 inspection and we found that there had been limited progress since then.

We found that the service's national operational guidance implementation plan and associated resourcing requirements were unclear. The service should put robust arrangements in place to progress this work.

The service is good at keeping the public informed

The service has good systems in place to inform the public about ongoing incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. This includes 24-hour communications officer coverage to liaise with the media and assist the incident commander with the provision of safety advice to the community.

Incident information is delivered to the public using social media for urgent messages and traditional media, such as local newspapers and radio. For large-scale incidents, such as the wide-area flooding in 2019, the service works with the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#) to warn and inform the public as required.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents



Good (2019: Good)

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

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

Area for improvement

The service should arrange a programme of cross-border exercises, sharing the learning from these exercises.

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

The service is well prepared for major and multi-agency incidents

The service has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. These risks are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its community risk management planning. The service is an active member of the LRF risk planning and management groups, in which members review the local risk register and apply national risk to the local area. The service has developed plans to deal with specific risks, such as [Control of Major Accident Hazards \(COMAH\) sites](#). It has also worked with LRF partners to create general plans for incidents such as floods, extreme weather, industrial action and health emergencies. Plans are stored on a safe and secure system called [Resilience Direct](#), which can be accessed by all multi-agency responders.

It is also familiar with the significant risks that could be faced by neighbouring fire and rescue services that it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. These include wide-area flooding and high-rise residential buildings. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. This was found to be unreliable in our 2019 inspection and has now been improved. The service has access to risk information up to 10 km into neighbouring service areas. But fire and rescue services in the region have more to do to improve the consistency of this information.

The service has the capability to respond to major and multi-agency incidents

We reviewed the arrangements the service has in place to respond to different major incidents, including fires in high-rise residential buildings and terrorist-related incidents.

The service has good arrangements in place, which are well understood by staff. There is a specialist response team to deal with marauding terrorist attacks and the service is providing practical high-rise evacuation training for all firefighters.

The service is well prepared to respond to local and national major incidents. Resources include a high-volume pump used for wide area flooding and specialist tactical advisors that can assist other services at a range of incidents.

The service works well with other fire services

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. For example, it regularly attends incidents in its four bordering service areas. It is intraoperable with these services and can form part of a multi-agency response.

The service has successfully deployed to other services and has used national assets. Incident commanders are clear on the processes for deploying or requesting additional assets.

Cross-border exercise plans are ineffective

In our 2019 inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should arrange a programme of cross-border exercises, sharing the lessons learned from these exercises. It has not made enough progress in this area.

The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services. This helps them to work more effectively together to keep the public safe. But the plan lacks detail and doesn't include the risks of major events at which the service could foreseeably provide support or request assistance from neighbouring services.

In our staff survey, 61 percent (112 out of 185) of respondents told us they haven't participated in training with neighbouring services in the past 12 months. The service is missing opportunities to learn and work more effectively together to keep the public safe.

Firefighters have a good understanding of JESIP

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with JESIP. This helps make sure they can work effectively with other emergency services.

The service could provide us with strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. This includes:

- staff knowledge and use of the joint decision-making model; and
- the use of nationally recognised messaging (that is, messages that all emergency services and related organisations understand).

The service is a valued partner in the local resilience forum

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with other partners that make up the South Yorkshire LRF. These arrangements include working with the service's partner organisations to prepare multi-agency response plans for high-risk sites.

The service is a valued partner in the LRF and is responsible for managing the LRF training and exercise programme and chairing the strategic group. The service takes part in regular training events with other members of the LRF and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents. The 2021 service exercise plan was comprehensive and included the following:

- multi-agency strategic and gold courses for senior officers;
- marauding terrorist attack exercises;
- business continuity exercises such as national power supply problems or cyberattacks; and
- training on the release into the environment of hazardous materials.

The service keeps up to date with national learning

The service keeps itself up to date with national operational learning updates from other fire services and joint operational learning from other organisations, such as the police service and ambulance trusts. This learning is used to inform planning assumptions that have been made with other partners.

Efficiency



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



Requires improvement

Summary

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

The service's efficiency has deteriorated in some areas and so has not improved as we would have expected since our 2019 inspection.

We found that the service does not demonstrate a clear rationale, linked to the CRMP, for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities. And it doesn't always exploit the opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness that are presented by changes in fleet and estate provision.

However, we are pleased to find that the service's financial planning, financial systems and audit arrangements are all satisfactory. And it collaborates well with the police in the joint delivery of community safety activity.

Since the 2019 inspection the service has improved its medium-term financial planning to consider future budgetary pressures.

But we were disappointed to find that the service isn't using its workforce in the most productive way. The service's response model relies on the use of overtime. At the time of our inspection, a high level of vacancies was affecting resource availability.

Making best use of resources



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at making best use of its resources.

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

The service's budget for 2022/23 is £57.865m. This is a 4.45 percent increase from the previous financial year.

Area for improvement

The service needs to make sure that it uses its resources across prevention, protection and response functions in a more joined up way to meet the priorities in its community risk management plan.

Area for improvement

The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and that their time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in its community risk management plan.

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

The service's plans don't effectively support its objectives

The service sometimes uses its resources well to manage risk. For example, it approved increased investment in the protection team at the annual workforce planning event. And it uses operational fire crews to carry out a large proportion of the service's HFSCs.

But there are several weaknesses that need addressing. Implementation of the service's plans, including allocating resources to prevention, protection and response activities, aren't consistent with the risks and priorities identified in the CRMP. For example, the service hasn't caught up on the HFSCs identified and awaiting a visit since the pandemic. Also, the service can't clearly explain how resources are allocated to protection work, including how firefighters are reducing risk with business safety visit activity.

However, financial plans are built on sound scenarios. They help make sure the service is sustainable and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. Financial planning, financial systems and audit arrangements are all satisfactory. Planning assumptions prudently consider the various funding uncertainties that the [fire and rescue authority](#) is facing over the next few years.

The service isn't using its workforce in the most productive way

The service has arrangements in place for managing performance, however, these could be improved. The service has re-introduced targets for firefighters, for the completion of HFSCs, business safety visits and operational risk information visits. Performance of firefighting crews is monitored through a computer dashboard and through station audits. But it is unclear how station-based activity is connected to service-wide prevention and protection strategies. The service carries out limited performance management of the specialist prevention and protection teams so it can't measure how well they are mitigating the risks identified in the CRMP.

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

The service has measures in place to assist firefighting crews to be as productive as possible, such as station plans with targets for each [watch](#) to achieve, tablet computers to speed up administrative work and a watch performance system to monitor training activity and maintenance of competence. But the service should do more to make sure its workforce is as productive as possible.

At the time of our inspection, we found the service was relying too much on overtime. In the year 2018/19 the service spent less than half as much on overtime as similar fire and rescue services. By 2020/21 overtime had risen over 3 times the expenditure in 2018/19 and the service spent significantly more on overtime per head of workforce than the England rate. The service also had a significant number of vacancies, particularly at crew manager level. This was affecting its ability to keep its fire engines available. But we did find that it has plans to fill these vacancies.

The service shares resources effectively as it collaborates with others

We are pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate, and routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. The joint community safety department (JCSD) partnership with South Yorkshire Police since 2017 is now well established. The JCSD is based at the Lifewise Centre. This is an impressive facility that contains a wide range of true-to-life simulations and offers a realistic learning environment. Bespoke educational programmes are provided for school pupils at primary and secondary levels. Prince's Trust courses are also provided to young adults to build confidence and improve their job prospects.

Collaborative work is aligned to the priorities in the service's CRMP. For example, the service has established a network of over 400 partner agencies that can refer people who they consider may need an HFSC. This helps the service to target their prevention work more effectively.

We found that the service comprehensively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. This was an area for improvement we identified in the 2019 inspection. The JCSD provides performance reports to an assurance board on a quarterly basis. The service also commissioned external consultants to evaluate the impact of the programme of collaboration between the service and South Yorkshire Police. The review concluded that the social return on investment for joint community safety work was £3.23 for every £1 spent.

The service has robust continuity arrangements

The service has good continuity arrangements in place for areas where threats and risks are considered high. These threats and risks are regularly reviewed and tested so that staff are aware of the arrangements and their associated responsibilities. The service has plans in place for the control room in the event of a failure of the system to mobilise fire engines or industrial action by service staff. These plans are tested regularly and learning points are identified and acted on.

The service shows sound financial management

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. And this scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money. For example, it has used external auditors to carry out a value-for-money review and it spends the fourth lowest amount on non-pay costs out of the 15 predominantly urban fire and rescue services.

The service has made savings and efficiencies, which haven't affected its operational performance and the service it provides to the public. Since our 2019 inspection procurement savings of around £1.3m have been obtained through joint purchasing with other services, reduced tendering costs and closer working with stakeholders, such as firefighters and support staff who will be using or maintaining the equipment purchased.

The service is taking steps to make sure important areas, including estate and fleet, are well placed to achieve efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. The service operates a joint vehicle fleet management department with South Yorkshire Police. Improvements have been made in the sharing of specialist skills and knowledge. Reviews of the financial benefits of the partnership are ongoing. An external evaluation of the joint vehicle fleet management department determined that a social return on investment of around £2.56 is being achieved for every £1 spent.

The estate function was also shared with the police but following an evaluation it was decided in early 2022 that each organisation will now operate independently. We will be interested to see how this progresses.

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



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making the service affordable now and in the future.

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

Area for improvement

The service needs to make sure that its fleet strategy is regularly reviewed and evaluated to maximise potential efficiencies.

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

The service understands the future financial challenges but could do more planning to address this risk

In our 2019 inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure it has sufficiently robust plans in place that consider the medium-term financial challenges, so it can secure the right level of savings. We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since then.

The service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its main or significant financial risks, such as the possible future effect of changes in government funding, business rates, pay and pensions, which could lead to less money being available. The service has set aside an emerging risk reserve to deal with budget deficits if necessary.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic, and prudent, and take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. These are included in the medium-term financial plan as the most likely, reasonable, best case and the most likely, reasonable, worst case, based on the service's assessment of the current and future financial conditions.

We are pleased to see that the service has identified savings and investment opportunities to improve the service to the public or generate further savings. These include savings of around £560,000 for 2022/23, linked to reductions in rental expenditure, and efficiencies obtained following the move to hybrid working during the pandemic.

However, the anticipated budget surplus of around £950,000 can largely be attributed to a one-off grant. The service anticipates a budget deficit of £1.007m by 2024/25. Savings options to reduce this shortfall have yet to be finalised. The service should identify a range of options so that it is able to meet the future savings requirements.

The service has a good reserves strategy

The service has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves. This plan includes the maintenance of:

- a robust general reserve that is prudently held at around £5m for any financial uncertainties;
- a reserve, which will decline over time, that is earmarked for key schemes;
- an emerging risk reserve that the service has built up through savings due to staff vacancies and financial support provided during the pandemic; and
- a service improvement reserve to aid improvements in efficiency and new ways of working.

The service needs to improve its fleet and estate plans

Despite the savings obtained principally as a result of the pandemic we are disappointed to see that there has been little improvement since the 2019 inspection. The service has estate and fleet strategies, but it doesn't always exploit opportunities presented by changes in fleet and estate provision to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The service has ended the estates collaboration with South Yorkshire Police and brought in a new management structure. We look forward to seeing how this improves its estates function.

The service doesn't properly assess the effect any changes in fleet provision, or future innovation, may have on risk. The planned 2019–21 replacement programme for fire engines identified during our 2019 inspection hasn't yet taken place. Although it was noted that the service has placed an order for new fire engines.

During our latest inspection, we heard that the lifespan of fire engines had been extended from 10 to 12 and then to 15 years. Many staff told us there were numerous safety reports being logged due to defects with the ageing fleet.

The service has invested well in technology and capacity to support future change

The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. It has prepared well for the introduction of the Emergency Services Network, the critical communications system that is being developed with the Home Office.

It also seeks to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology. It has embarked on a digital transformation project and made some notable improvements. For example, it has:

- developed several ICT systems in-house, including operational debrief and performance management systems; and
- increased efficiency by replacing paper-based systems, for example by providing tablet computers to crews to carry out HFSCs and business safety visits.

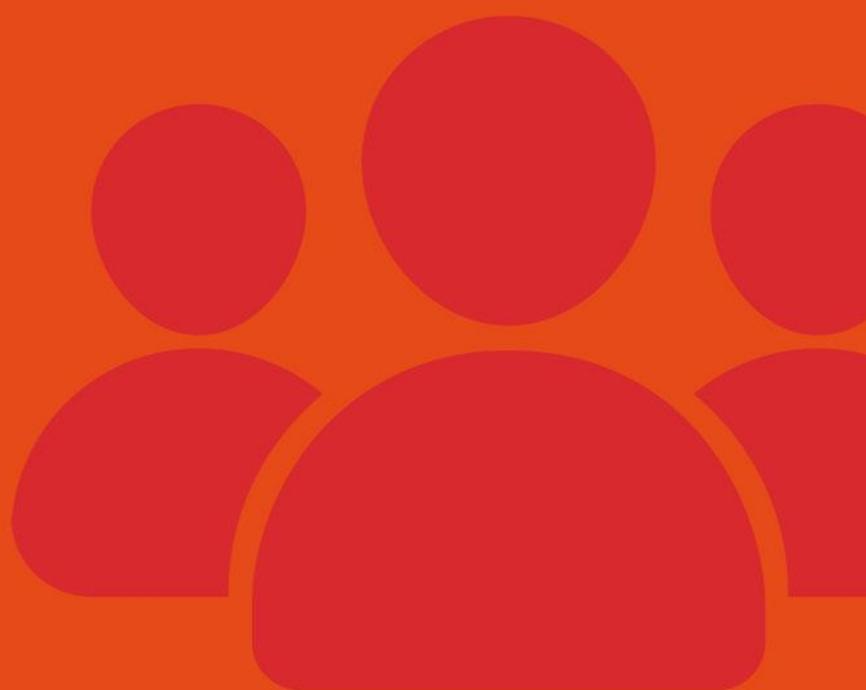
The service has put in place the capacity and capability needed to achieve sustainable transformation, and it routinely seeks opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency and provide better services in the future. It has identified further incorporation of agile working and investments and efficiencies as 2 key priorities in the 2022/23 annual plan. Further capital investment in ICT is planned over the next 3 years with £1.035m earmarked in the medium-term financial plan.

Income generation is limited

The service considers options for generating extra income, but its track record in securing extra income is limited. In the past, it has operated a trading arm, although it wasn't effective, and the decision was taken to close it down. It is, however, open to the idea of considering this or other commercial opportunities in the future.

Where appropriate, it has obtained external grant funding to invest in improvements to the service provided to the public. This funding includes grants provided to the service following the Grenfell Tower fire and the pandemic. The service has allocated this funding in appropriate areas. Internal bids for funding from this reserve are robustly reviewed and approved, based on the benefits that will be realised from the investment.

People



How well does the service look after its people?



Good

Summary

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

The service has a clear set of values that are understood throughout the service. But we found that there are inconsistencies in the way the service looks after people through its occupational health provision and absence management processes.

Since our 2019 inspection the service has improved the recording of staff training and is ensuring staff keep their skills up to date. However, it has made limited progress to make sure that its workforce plan takes full account of the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out the CRMP.

The service has made improvements to EDI. But it hasn't made the workforce more representative of the community it serves.

We did find the service to be good at how it manages individual performance, although it does have high numbers of staff in temporary promotion positions. Furthermore, it hasn't put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

Promoting the right values and culture



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

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

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

Area for improvement

The service should make sure staff have access to services to support both their mental and physical health via an effective occupational health service.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure that it has effective absence/attendance procedures in place.

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

Values are accepted and maintained throughout the organisation

The service continues to have well-defined values that are understood by staff. Of those who completed our staff survey, 94 percent (322 out of 341) said they were aware of service values.

Behaviours that reflect service values are shown at all levels of the service. The service's ten-year objective for the future of the service, Our Story (brought in over three years ago), sets out its intentions and behaviours. We are encouraged to see that the new national [Core Code of Ethics](#) for fire and rescue services has been incorporated in the service's objective.

Senior leaders act as role models. Seventy-five percent (240 out of 322) of respondents to our staff survey said that senior leaders consistently modelled and maintained the service's values. An even higher proportion of respondents, 88 percent (284 out of 322), said the same of line managers.

We spoke to staff who told us that there is a positive working culture throughout the service, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they encounter them.

The service needs to increase staff access to mental and physical health support

In our 2019 inspection we identified that the service should make sure that staff understand how to access well-being support. Since then, this understanding has improved. But it is evident that access to support services for the mental and physical health of some staff was ineffective. Several staff told us about delays and inconsistencies in the service's occupational health provision.

The service has some well-being provisions in place to support the mental and physical health of staff. These include an employee assistance programme and [critical incident](#) well-being sessions after attendance at traumatic operational incidents. Staff were positive about the well-being sessions, but we found that there were limited facilities in place for senior officers who attended such incidents.

The service could do more to understand and support individuals' needs. Our staff survey found that 58 percent (198 out of 341) of respondents discussed their well-being with managers twice a year or less. This includes 58 respondents (17 percent) that said they never have discussions about their well-being with managers.

The service has implemented measures to improve incident welfare provisions

An area for improvement that we identified in 2019 was that the service needs to ensure that staff involved in protracted operational incidents have adequate welfare facilities, for example refreshments and toilets. Since then, we have found that the service has introduced a new welfare vehicle shared with the British Red Cross. And it has entered an arrangement with an external provider to supply a larger unit should welfare requirements be extensive.

The service has produced a YouTube video to communicate with staff about the new welfare facilities. But most staff we spoke to told us that the service is still ineffective at providing welfare for its firefighters at protracted incidents. The service should make sure that the arrangements it has are robust and seek feedback from staff.

Staff understand and have confidence in health and safety policies

The service has effective and well understood health and safety policies and procedures in place.

These policies and procedures are readily available and effectively promoted to all staff. Ninety-seven percent (331 out of 341) of respondents to our staff survey stated that the service has clear procedures to report all accidents, [near misses](#) and dangerous occurrences. Both staff and representative body survey results show confidence in the health and safety approach taken by the service.

We found there is a good system in place to protect the safety of lone workers. And the service monitors staff who have dual contracts to make sure they comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours. The service's resource management system contains a feature that prevents dual contract staff from booking on duty unless they have had a sufficient rest period in-between shifts.

Monitoring of fitness testing is ineffective

We found that there was limited strategic monitoring and reporting of the fitness testing of firefighters. The service's fitness policy specifies two compulsory fitness assessments for all firefighters per calendar year. This is more than many other fire and rescue services that only complete one per year. However, in 2020/21 the service didn't complete the fitness testing in line with its policy.

Absence management procedures aren't effectively followed

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

The service has an absence policy, but we found many inconsistencies in the way staff absence was managed. Policy isn't always followed. For example, return-to-work interviews don't always happen on time, absence management forms are incorrectly completed causing delays and communication with absent staff doesn't take place or isn't recorded.

The service is ineffective at progressing absence cases due to delays with occupational health reports. And we found that the service doesn't have clear absence data, limiting its ability to monitor sickness trends and data effectively.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Good (2019: Good)

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at getting the right people with the right skills.

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

Area for improvement

The service should ensure its workforce plan addresses any gaps in capability which affect the availability of fire engines.

Area for improvement

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

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

The service needs to improve its workforce planning so it can fully understand the skills and capabilities of its workforce

The service does some workforce planning, but it doesn't take full account of the skills and capabilities it needs to be able to effectively meet the needs of its CRMP. We found limited evidence that the service's planning allows it to fully consider workforce skills and overcome any gaps in capability. The service has a workforce plan, but it hasn't been operating effectively. This was identified as an area for improvement in our 2019 inspection and we found in our latest inspection that there had been insufficient progress. Matters such as a lack of fire engine drivers, recruitment delays and staffing shortages have led to the increased use of overtime and temporary promotions.

In 2020/21 the service had the second highest number of staff on a temporary promotion in England. And the average length of these temporary promotions is 309 days/shifts.

The service needs to do more to improve how it considers its future needs and succession planning. In our inspection, we found there weren't always enough available firefighters, especially on-call firefighters, to crew fire engines to meet availability standards. Some staff told us about the difficulties in recruiting and keeping on-call firefighters. The service is also experiencing problems with staff in support roles leaving. For the last three years there have been many more leavers than joiners in the organisation.

The service has appropriate systems to record and monitor staff training

Most staff told us that they could access the training they need to be effective in their role. The service's training plans make sure they can maintain competence and capability effectively. Of staff who responded to our survey, 76 percent (260 out of 341) stated they had enough training to effectively do their job.

The service has made progress on the area for improvement we identified in 2019 – to make sure that all staff are appropriately trained for their role. The service records and monitors firefighter competence on training recording computer systems. This provides managers with a dashboard that shows staff training and maintenance of competency. During our inspection we reviewed the training records of several members of staff and found they were accurate and up to date with risk-critical training.

But the service recognises that although there is a system in place to review workforce capabilities, there is a risk that staff may lack important skills for the future. So, at the time of our inspection the service was reviewing maintenance of competence programmes for all staff, starting with middle managers. We look forward to reviewing the progress of this in the future.

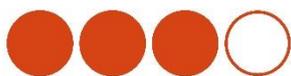
The service promotes learning and improvement

The service has some good arrangements in place to promote a culture of continuous improvement. For example, prevention and protection staff undertake continuous professional development to develop their individual skills and competencies. And staff across the service embarking on managerial roles are provided with Chartered Management Institute courses.

Staff in the service can explore development opportunities through the annual appraisal process and can view their own training and development records and apply for training relevant to their role.

Seventy-two percent (245 out of 341) of respondents to our staff survey are satisfied with the learning and personal development available to them in the service. And 71 percent (243 of 341) agreed or tended to agree that the service allows opportunities for personal development. This allows them to do their job effectively.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Good (2019: Good)

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

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

Area for improvement

The service should identify and overcome barriers to equal opportunity, so that its workforce better represents its community.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure 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.

The service engages with staff on matters that affect them

The service has developed several ways to engage with staff on issues and decisions that affect them. This includes methods to build all-staff awareness of fairness and diversity, as well as targeted engagement to identify matters that affect different staff groups. The service seeks the views of staff groups when it develops the annual plan and it sends out pulse surveys every two months, which monitor staff satisfaction on distinct areas within the service.

Pulse surveys may well help the service with short-term planning. However, the service doesn't carry out a comprehensive staff survey at regular intervals. This limits its ability to identify staff concerns and chart improvements over a defined period.

The actions being taken to address matters raised have been positively received by staff. Representative bodies and staff associations that responded to our staff survey reported that the service engages with them well on a wide range of topics. Sixty-two percent (212 out of 341) of respondents to our survey stated they had confidence in ways of providing feedback at all levels. But several members of staff feel that communications and feedback channels could be improved.

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

Staff have a good understanding of what bullying, harassment and discrimination are and their negative effect on colleagues and the organisation.

In this inspection, 12 percent (41 out of 341) of respondents to our staff survey told us they had been subject to bullying or harassment and 15 percent (52 out of 341) to discrimination over the past 12 months. Of these staff, 41 percent (17 out of 41) didn't report the bullying and harassment and 52 percent (27 out of 52) didn't report the discrimination. The main reason for not reporting were concerns that nothing would happen.

An area for improvement identified in our 2019 inspection was that the service should make sure that it has effective grievance procedures and to improve staff confidence in the grievance process. Since 2019, we found that the numbers of grievances being submitted had almost doubled. This could be an indicator of improved trust in the process. But we found that staff still have limited confidence in its ability to deal effectively with cases of bullying, harassment and discrimination, and grievances. Several staff told us that they thought processes were unfair and not in line with service values and desirable behaviours. Therefore, the area for improvement identified previously remains.

The service needs to do more to increase the diversity of its workforce

We found that the service had made only limited progress in responding to the area for improvement identified in our 2019 inspection: "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."

However, we also found that the service has an open, fair, and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for the fire and rescue service. The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment processes so that they are fair and understood by applicants. Comprehensive information is provided on its website, and it provides videos online of what applicants can expect.

The service has an effective system to understand and remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. For example, the service has produced a nationally recognised video that explains how the service uses positive action to remove barriers to recruitment for under-represented groups. And it has run taster days for people interested in becoming a firefighter.

However, the service is only seeing minor increases in staff diversity, and it needs to do more. There has been little progress to improve either ethnic minority background or gender diversity for all staff in the service. Of the 69 new joiners who stated their ethnicity in 2020/21, 4.3 percent were from an ethnic minority background, which is the same as proportion of the whole workforce from an ethnic minority background.

On 31 March 2021, 4.5 percent of wholetime firefighters in the service were from ethnic minority backgrounds, below the England proportion of 6.3 percent and the local population of 9.4 percent. For the same group, at the same date, 6.9 percent were women, below the England rate of 8.1 percent.

The service needs to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds into middle and senior-level positions. These positions tend to be advertised and filled internally, meaning that the service isn't making the most of opportunities to make its workforce more representative.

Improvements have been made to equality, diversity and inclusion but more needs to be done on equality impact assessments

The service has improved its approach to EDI and is making sure it can offer the right services to its communities and support staff with [protected characteristics](#).

For example, the service has demonstrated commitment to its EDI strategic direction by supporting campaigns such as LGBTQ+ and Black History Month and by taking a stand publicly in responding to complaints it had received on social media from some members of the community about conducting these campaigns.

The service provides education and training on EDI, and it has developed several ways to involve staff. These include methods to build staff awareness of the diverse communities in South Yorkshire and community handbooks produced for every fire station, which inform and educate staff on the various ethnicities and religions in their local community.

We did find, however, that some of the service's EDI policies and procedures are not robust. The service doesn't yet have effective arrangements in place for the management of equality impact assessments. These are needed to make sure that the service doesn't discriminate or disadvantage people. And the service's monitoring and reporting of EDI performance is ineffective. The service's last annual equality report was published on its website in 2016. This means the public aren't aware of improvements the service is making with EDI.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Good (2019: Good)

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at managing performance and developing leaders.

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

Area for improvement

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

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

The service manages individuals' performance well

There is a good performance management system in place which allows the service to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff, although staff who aren't in development or seeking promotion are less engaged with it.

The completion rates for performance reviews for all staff groups in the service (wholetime, on-call, fire control and corporate staff) in 2020/21 were significantly higher than previous years.

Through our staff survey, most staff reported that they have had regular discussions with their manager and that they were meaningful. Each staff member has individual goals and objectives, and regular assessments of performance. Most respondents to our staff survey feel confident in the performance and development arrangements that are in place.

Open and consistent processes are in place for promotion

The service has put considerable effort into developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair and understood by staff. In our staff survey, 62 percent (211 out of 341) of respondents agreed that the promotion process in the service is fair.

The promotion and progression policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. But some staff told us that the service provides limited career pathways for corporate staff.

The service has effective succession planning processes in place that allow it to effectively manage the career pathways of its staff, including roles requiring specialist skills.

Selection processes are managed consistently. During our inspection we reviewed a range of promotion files. We were encouraged to find these were well managed. Applications require endorsement from line managers and are reviewed and monitored by HR staff. HR staff sit in on a sample of interviews and a moderation review of the promotion process is carried out to ensure consistency.

However, we found that the service has a high number of staff on a temporary promotion. And the average length of these temporary promotions is long at around 520 days, which is higher than the England average of 309 for the year 2020/21. The service should ensure it effectively manages its temporary promotions to maintain confidence in the promotion process.

The service could do more to develop leadership and high-potential staff at all levels

The service has effective succession planning processes in place that allow it to manage high-potential staff into leadership roles. We found some good examples of staff being provided with opportunities to be developed for more senior roles and the service managing staff talent in a more systematic way before promotion.

The service provides management training for staff going into leadership roles. But there isn't a clear process for talent management or identifying high potential.

The service should consider putting in place more formal arrangements to identify and support members of staff to become senior leaders and actively manage the career pathways of staff, including those with specialist skills and those aiming for leadership roles. This was highlighted as an area for improvement in our 2019 inspection and limited progress has been made.

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