



Promoting improvements  
in policing and fire & rescue  
services to make everyone safer

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**Dru Sharpling**  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue  
Services

Steve Owen-Hughes  
Acting Chief Fire Officer  
Surrey FRS  
Croydon Road  
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Surrey  
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20 December 2018

Dear Steve,

### **SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE REVISIT**

We inspected Surrey Fire and Rescue Service the week of 23 July 2018. During the inspection we identified several areas of concern. We shared the following cause of concern with you and made the following recommendation:

2. Surrey FRS doesn't have a robust and sustainable system to support its operational response model.

By 30 June 2019, the service should:

- (a) put in place a response plan based on a thorough assessment of risk to the community;
  - (b) ensure it has appropriate resources (people and equipment) available to respond to risk in line with its integrated risk management plan; and
  - (c) tell the people of Surrey what benefits its service provision and ways of working in the operational response model will give them.
3. You kindly submitted an action plan to HMICFRS setting out how you would address the areas of concern and the recommendations.
  4. We revisited Surrey FRS between 8 and 10 October 2018 to review your progress against the action plan. We didn't expect to see all the remedial work completed, we were looking for evidence of progress. We explored the following areas of the action plan:
    - (a) the excessive use of overtime used to crew fire engines and the lack of information and control to manage this; and
    - (b) the lack of information available to frontline managers in relation to ensuring the competence of staff.

4. During the revisit we interviewed staff involved in the action plan, including the acting Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Chief Executive of Surrey County Council. We also spoke to frontline managers at three fire stations selected by the inspection team. We concluded the revisit by feeding back our findings to the acting Chief Fire Officer.
5. HMICFRS have provided feedback against each area below.

#### *Governance*

6. We found a firm commitment to carry out the action plan; however, the early dates on the action plan outcomes had not been met. Senior leaders agreed that the action plan dates were initially unrealistic, and new dates had been set. The service has the resources in place it needs to monitor overtime usage. It has also clearly identified in its action plan the issues it needs to address. It was evident that work had started, and the action plan was being reported on at a monthly assurance meeting chaired by a member of the senior leadership team.

#### *Action plan*

- (a) The excessive use of overtime used to crew fire engines and the lack of information and control to manage this.
7. We found that the service had made some progress in understanding the use of overtime; however, this was limited. The information gathered had not been used or shared to improve the situation. Clear guidance had been produced on the use of overtime for frontline staff, including a flow chart showing responsibilities through the overtime booking process. This had not yet been shared with staff. As a result, we found little change to how overtime was being managed on the front line.
- (b) The lack of information available to frontline managers in relation to ensuring the competence of staff.
8. We found that the service was in the process of reviewing the operational competencies of its staff, and communication had been sent to managers. Information regarding individual competencies was available to front line managers through the learning recording system. The service had identified that staff were not aware of how to access this. It had sent communications to show how this was done. We found that not all staff were aware of these communications. There was no oversight in place at station level to ensure these communications led to change.
9. Our recommendation also included:
  - (a) ensure it has appropriate resources (people and equipment) available to respond to risk in line with its integrated risk management plan; and
  - (b) tell the people of Surrey what benefits its service provision and ways of working in the operational response model will give them.

10. The service has included plans to address these issues in the action plan. However, the service needs more time to be able to improve its workforce planning and then communicate any changes to the people of Surrey.

*Outcome*

11. The revisit team were pleased to see that the service had in place some resources and appropriate governance structures to carry out the commitments within the action plan. Some of the actions had been started. However, we would like to see more progress against the action plan outcomes. Staff we spoke to were aware of the improvements needed. The service needs to ensure that it supports the delivery of these outcomes and communicates them effectively.

12. We will return to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service in July 2019 to make sure the contents of the action plan have been addressed and the service provided to the public of Surrey has improved.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dru Sharpling', written in a cursive style.

**Dru Sharpling**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services