

# Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

## Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service



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# About this inspection

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This is our third inspection of fire and rescue services across England. We first inspected Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service in June 2018, publishing a report with our findings in December 2018 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.

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In this round of our 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 Warwickshire 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 we find serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, we will judge it as inadequate.

# Overview

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

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

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

### HMI summary

Before I provide my assessment of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, I would like to pay tribute to the late Chief Fire Officer Kieran Amos, who sadly died in November 2021.

Kieran retired earlier that year after 30 years of service in the fire and rescue sector. He joined Warwickshire FRS in April 2019 and much of his service in Warwickshire was spent leading the service's response to the pandemic. During this time, the service worked steadfastly with other organisations to support the communities of Warwickshire.

Kieran is much missed by all those who knew him and we are indebted to him for his service.

It was a pleasure to re-visit Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way that the service engaged with our inspection.

I want to thank the service for working with us by accommodating the virtual approach of this inspection. These inspections would normally be conducted using a hybrid approach but inspecting against the backdrop of the pandemic meant we had to inspect virtually. I also want to recognise the disruption caused by the pandemic. This has been considered in our findings.

We are satisfied with some aspects of the performance of the service. For example, we are pleased to see that the service is contributing to its local community by operating a hospital-to-home scheme on behalf of local health trusts. The scheme transports patients who are ready for discharge from hospitals and helps people who might be [vulnerable](#). We are also pleased to see that the service is good at tackling fire-setting behaviour and responding to national risks.

However, we are disappointed that the service has not made the progress we expected since our 2018 inspection. We identified three causes of concern:

- the service hasn't got better at detecting who are the people most at risk from fire and doing prevention work with them to reduce the risk posed to them;
- the service hasn't done enough since 2018 to identify high-risk premises; and
- although the service has tried to improve diversity and inclusion since our 2018 inspection, its approach to this has made its staff disengage.

Moreover, in our last inspection we found the service's ICT systems were unreliable. Regrettably, the service still hasn't improved them, and this is hindering its work.

We also found that parts of the service don't have enough trained people to do the work needed. This means that the service can't work towards achieving its priorities.

Finally, we found that the service doesn't do enough to check how long staff have worked on shifts, which means that it doesn't always know if firefighters are fit for duty.

This year, we identified three recommendations. The service should:

- develop a prevention plan which makes a priority of people most at risk from fire;
- do better at identifying high-risk premises; and
- take a proportionate approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.



**Wendy Williams**

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

# Service in numbers



## Response

Warwickshire

England

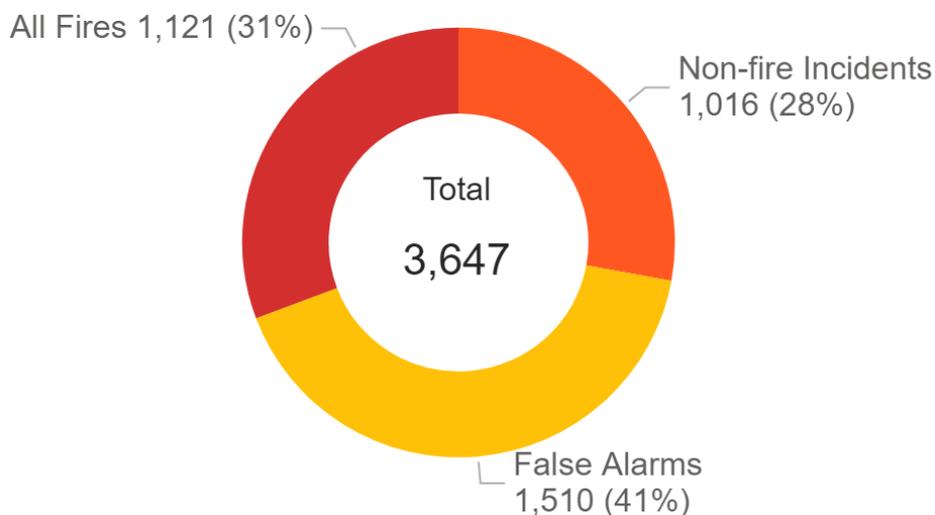
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 31 December 2020	6.31	9.39
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2020	10.74	10.17
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2020	0.91	2.55
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2020	85.19%	83.07%



## Cost

Firefighter cost per person per year Year ending 31 March 2020	£25.05	£23.82
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### Incidents attended in the year to 31 December 2020

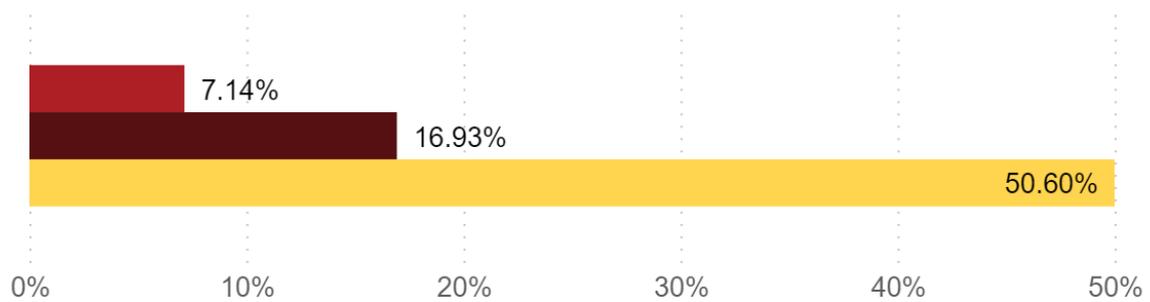




Five-year change in total workforce 2015 to 2020	7.26%	-5.30%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2020	0.69	0.63
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2020	65.32%	65.10%

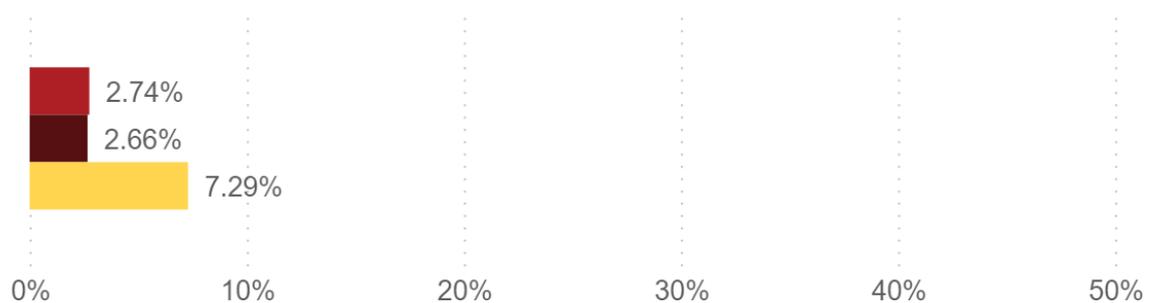
**Percentage population, firefighters and workforce who are female as at 31 March 2020**

Female ● Firefighters ● Workforce ● Local population



**Percentage of population, firefighters, and workforce who are Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) as at 31 March 2020**

BAME ● Firefighters ● Workforce ● Local population



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

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An effective fire and rescue service will identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks its community faces. It 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, respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness requires improvement.

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Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service has not made the progress that we would expect since our inspection in 2018.

It has developed a new [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#) and identified the risks in the community as part of that. But the risk information available to firefighters still isn't always up to date.

The service hasn't made progress in making sure it targets its prevention work at people who are most at risk from fire. It has a significant backlog in this area. The service has made the needed investment in its protection team. But it is not yet seeing the benefit of this. So, we haven't seen any improvement yet in its risk-based inspection programme. We did see an improvement in the level of enforcement action.

We found the service is good at responding to national risks. But it is not meeting its targets for responding to emergencies in its own communities.

## Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



### Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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.

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure its IRMP is informed by a comprehensive understanding of current and future risk by working with those communities that are most at risk of fire and other emergencies. It should use a wide range of data to build the risk profile and use operational data to test whether the risk profile is up to date.
- The service should make sure that the aims and objectives of prevention, protection and response activity are clearly outlined in its IRMP.
- The service should make sure it gathers and records relevant and up-to-date risk information to help protect firefighters, the public and property during an emergency.
- The service needs to ensure that risk information in Control is consistently kept up to date.

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 good at identifying risk in the community

The service has assessed an appropriate range of risks and threats after a thorough integrated risk management planning process. When assessing risk, it has considered relevant information collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and data sets. The service works with the county council, which provides the data about communities from a range of sources, and data from national reports by public health and other government departments. The service analyses this data to provide information on local risks that affect community risk. For example, it identified that local authority proposals to create more cycle paths and walkways in Stratford would affect how long it took fire engines to attend incidents.

Since we last inspected, the service has made progress in how it works with the local community to build its risk profile. When appropriate, the service has consulted community groups, local authorities and the police. During the pandemic it made good use of its website and social media to reach all parts of the community. This helped it

to both understand the risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it. The service received its highest response to date to its consultation on its IRMP. We welcome this.

### **The service doesn't clearly set out how it will fulfil its risk management plan**

After assessing relevant risks, the service has recorded its findings in an IRMP. But the plan doesn't fully indicate to the public how the risks will be mitigated. It doesn't give timescales or stipulate the resources it needs to mitigate the risks. Some of the actions have been carried over from the previous plan but have no timescales for completion, for example the development of new training facilities and a new station at Rugby South.

It's not clear from the plan how the service intends to use its prevention, protection and response resources to reduce risk and threats to the community it serves now and in the future. The service has departmental plans for these areas, but they do not always clearly link back to the IRMP and the departmental plans are not available to the public.

The service knows that it does not have enough resources to fulfil all the actions in the plan. It has some ways of estimating changes to risk levels in the future. For example, it reviews incident data, specifically flooding risks. But this analysis is limited. The service has not clearly set out the steps it will take over the five-year IRMP period should risk levels change, even though this is expected.

### **The service can't be sure that the risk information it holds is accurate and up to date**

In our last inspection we raised a concern about the risk information available to firefighters. Despite this, we are disappointed to find the service still can't ensure that this information is relevant and up to date.

The system the service uses to collect and update risk information about premises can't be relied on to be accurate. It doesn't automatically update the [mobile data terminals](#) which firefighters rely on for risk-critical information at emergency incidents, or the mobilising system in control. So staff must make changes manually. This delays the passing of risk information to stations and control and means there is a risk that the information isn't accurate.

We also found that [on-call staff](#) don't routinely get involved in assessing risks in their own areas. This means that they are not always familiar with risks or given up-to-date information about those risks. We heard about an example where on-call staff on a routine community visit found in their area a significant risk which wasn't on the mobile data terminal.

We found that the risk information that is collected is communicated well. Staff in the control room showed us that they could communicate information about risk. Urgent risk information is processed within 72 hours and staff in the control room showed us how the service uses flash messages to highlight a temporary risk.

## **The service doesn't consistently use emerging information from operational activity to test its risk profile and challenge its risk management plan**

We found limited evidence that the service learns from and acts on feedback from either local or national operational activity. We reviewed a range of significant incidents where we would have expected the service, in line with its policy, to carry out operational learning. We are disappointed not to find evidence of this.

So, the service is missing the opportunity to review risk assessments or challenge the assumptions in the IRMP.

## **The service has taken appropriate action to reduce risk following the Grenfell Tower inquiry**

During this round of inspection, we sampled how each fire and rescue service has responded to the recommendations and learning from phase one of the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry.

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service has taken some steps to respond to this tragedy. The service identified that it has 38 high-rise buildings but none of these have cladding that is similar to the cladding installed on Grenfell Tower. It has carried out a fire safety audit at each building and ensured extra safety measures have been put in place. The service has bought a turntable ladder and smoke hoods.

But we found a lack of detail on how the service records information on high-rise premises or premises with cladding similar to the cladding installed on Grenfell Tower and how it shares this information with its prevention, protection and response teams. However, the service has recognised this and is taking action to increase the detail needed.

## **Preventing fires and other risks**



### **Inadequate (2018: Good)**

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service is inadequate 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, as well as with the police and ambulance services. They should provide intelligence and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

### **Cause of concern**

The service hasn't done enough since the last inspection to develop prevention activity that prioritises those most at risk of fire.

### **Recommendations**

By 31 August 2021, the service should:

- develop a clear prevention strategy that prioritises the people most at risk and make sure that work to reduce risk is proportionate;
- put in place an effective system for joint reviews after significant or fatal incidents. Reviews should be at an appropriate strategic level in the service and with partner agencies; and
- review its systems and processes for dealing with referrals from partner agencies to make sure they are managed in accordance with risk.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The service should evaluate its prevention work so that it understands what works.
- The service should make sure it puts in place measures so it can reduce the backlog of safe and well visits that has built up during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

### **The service doesn't have a prevention plan that clearly links to the risk management plan**

The service does not have a prevention plan that clearly sets out how it will target those most at risk from fire in its communities. It has a departmental action plan which sets out the activities the department will undertake. But these aren't always clearly linked to the risks and priorities in the IRMP.

Prevention work mostly happens in isolation. We found little evidence that the service shares relevant information between its prevention, protection and response functions. For example, we reviewed records of significant fires and found in all but one there was no evidence that information had been shared with other functions.

We are particularly concerned to find that during the pandemic the service stopped carrying out joint reviews with other agencies it works with after significant or fatal fires. This is contrary to its policy. Four significant fires, including fatal fires, and two significant other fatalities occurred during the period we reviewed. But there was no learning to understand whether the service's systems and processes are effective at keeping people safe from fires. So, the service is missing the opportunity to use the learning from these events to reduce the risk of further fatal fires.

After the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the service carried out some prevention activity at high-rise and high-risk premises. There were 13 such premises which were domestic. We are concerned to find the records of the activity were incomplete and that there is no programme of ongoing prevention activity at these premises.

### **The service has made limited progress since the COVID-19 inspection**

We considered how the service had adapted its prevention work during our COVID-19 inspection in September 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its public prevention work appropriately. Although we acknowledge the impact the pandemic has had, the service has made limited progress to reduce the backlog of [safe and well visits](#). On 31 March 2021, there were still 667 outstanding visits and the service doesn't have a plan to prioritise and complete them. During the pandemic, the service also stopped receiving telephone referrals from the county council contact centre, from which it used to get information about [vulnerable people](#). People were instead directed to the website. This means that if some people are unable to use the website option then there is a risk that the service may not be getting all the referrals it needs to make sure it keeps people safe from fire.

### **The service has made no progress since our previous inspection in 2018 on how it targets its prevention activity**

The service still doesn't have a clear, risk-based approach that directs prevention activity towards the people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. The service uses only limited information and data to target its prevention activity. It does not have an effective way to prioritise referrals for safe and well visits, the majority of which come from the county council. Other referrals that are passed to the operational crews are acted on in date order rather than priority order.

We found only limited evidence of vulnerable people being referred to other relevant organisations if their needs couldn't be met by the service. We are particularly concerned to find the service doesn't have a system to communicate with the referring agency when it has been unable to contact the individual. We are also concerned to find that over half the referrals from agencies were either still outstanding or that the service had closed them after making attempts but without carrying out a safe and well visit.

### **Staff have not been adequately trained to conduct safe and well checks**

The service departmental action plan states that it will train operational staff on conducting safe and well visits, which include falls assessments. But most operational staff we spoke to told us they don't have the right skills and confidence to make safe and well visits. They told us that there had been limited and in some cases no training in this area.

### **Staff are not appropriately trained to respond to safeguarding concerns**

The staff we interviewed told us that they have received little or no training in identifying [safeguarding](#) concerns. And, while they did say that they felt they would be able to identify a safeguarding problem and would feel confident to refer it to their manager, they did not provide us with any examples.

### **The service is good at collaboration with health through the hospital-to-home scheme but could do more to explore opportunities with other relevant organisations**

The service works with some local organisations, for example the police and ambulance service, to provide road safety messages, and with the Safer Warwickshire Partnership group.

The service operates a hospital-to-home scheme on behalf of local health trusts. Staff transport patients who are ready for discharge from hospital to their homes and carry out a safe and well check. The scheme helps to reduce preventable hospital admissions and delayed transfers of care. And it gives the service access to people who may be vulnerable. The service is valued by both hospital staff and householders.

### **The service is good at tackling fire-setting behaviour**

The service works closely with the police to tackle fire-setting behaviour and support the prosecution of arsonists.

In the service area there has been a downward trend in deliberate fires since 2015. It has a lower rate of deliberate fires than the national average.

### **The service doesn't routinely evaluate its prevention activity**

Since we last inspected the service in 2018, we are disappointed to find limited evidence that the service has improved the way it evaluates how effective its activity is. And we are also disappointed to find limited evidence of how it makes sure all its communities get equal access to prevention activity that meets their needs.

We did find that the service had evaluated the pilot of the hospital-to-home scheme. As a result, this scheme was extended. But we found that a lack of capacity in the prevention team means that they don't have time to evaluate their main work. So, the service doesn't know if its work is benefiting the public, and it can't make continuous improvements.

## **Protecting the public through fire regulation**



### **Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)**

Warwickshire 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.

### **Cause of concern**

The service hasn't done enough since the last inspection to determine its highest risk premises to inform its risk-based inspection programme.

### **Recommendations**

By 31 August 2021, the service should:

- develop a protection strategy with a resourced and prioritised risk-based inspection programme;
- review its risk-based inspection programme to make sure it identifies its highest risk premises; and
- put in place a clear plan with timescales for improving its management of risk information.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The service should make sure there are enough qualified staff across the service to carry out fire safety audits competently.
- The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of false alarms.

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

### **Protection activity doesn't clearly link to the integrated risk management plan**

The service doesn't have a protection plan that clearly sets out how it assesses risks or how it targets its enforcement and inspection activity. It has a departmental plan, but this isn't clearly linked to the risks identified in its IRMP. We found no planned approach to how the service will inspect, audit and review premises. It is unclear what level of activity the service aims for. And it is not clear how it evaluates what benefit protection activity will have for the public.

Protection activity generally happens in isolation rather than across the whole service. In the files we reviewed we did not find that learning from inspections after fires was considered or disseminated across the service. The service's protection, prevention and response functions do not routinely exchange information.

### **The service has made limited progress since the COVID-19 inspection**

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 have found that the service has a backlog of inspections that it wasn't able to complete during the pandemic. The service has a target to carry out 175 audits of high-risk premises annually. In the year ending 31 March 2021 it had only audited 96 such premises. It has no clear plan to complete these inspections.

During the pandemic the service started using electronic rather than paper-based building regulation submissions. It has continued using these, and that has made it quicker at processing such submissions.

### **Activity is not clearly aligned to risk**

The service has a risk-based inspection programme, but it is limited in scope and not up to date. The service relies on a premises risk information system to inform its risk-based inspection programme. But staff told us that they can't rely on this system as it often produces inaccurate information. We identified this problem in our previous inspection in 2018. We are concerned to find that the service has not made enough progress to improve the system. The risk-based inspection programme hasn't been updated since 2019 so the service can't be sure that it has identified all high-risk premises.

We also found that the service isn't consistently auditing the buildings it has targeted in the timescales it has set. Some of the audit files we reviewed were of a good quality, but others were incomplete.

### **The service has taken appropriate action to audit high-rise buildings**

The service identified that it doesn't have any high-rise buildings with cladding that is similar to the cladding installed on Grenfell Tower. But some of its lower-rise buildings do have that cladding. It has 38 high-rise buildings and has carried out a fire safety audit at each. It has acted appropriately to ensure additional safety measures have been put in place. In some cases where there were significant structural or compartmental problems the buildings have been demolished.

However, we found a lack of detail on how the information from these audits is recorded or shared with response and prevention teams.

### **Quality of audits is inconsistent**

We reviewed a range of audits of different premises across the service. This included audits:

- that were part of the service's risk-based inspection programme;
- after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applied;
- 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.

### **Limited quality assurance takes place**

We found limited evidence of appropriate review and oversight of fire safety inspections. We were told that this is because of the lack of qualified fire safety inspectors and the workload of the team.

Operational staff have not been trained adequately in fire prevention and protection. So, although they carry out risk inspections, the quality of these inspections can't be assured.

The service doesn't have good evaluation tools 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 has made progress on taking enforcement action**

Since we last inspected the service in 2018 it has made some progress in enforcement activity. In the files we reviewed we saw that it had taken proportionate enforcement action. The service has introduced a compliance level calculator to help it decide the appropriate level of enforcement. It has also recently successfully prosecuted a business that was failing to comply with fire safety regulations.

In the year to 31 March 2020, the service:

- issued no alteration notices,
- issued 10 enforcement notices,
- issued 11 [prohibition notices](#); and
- undertook one prosecution.

It has completed one prosecution since 2016.

### **There are not enough qualified staff to provide the risk-based inspection programme**

We said in the last inspection that the service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.

Since then the service has invested in its protection staff and recruited six new inspecting officers. These staff are working towards appropriate accreditation, but they are not yet fully qualified. So, the service is yet to see the benefit of this investment. The staff who are qualified to do the risk-based inspection programme are often not as productive as they could be because too much of their time is absorbed by an inefficient system.

The service has plans to introduce the level 3 business fire safety qualification for operational staff to help with low-level fire safety audits, but at the time of the inspection this had not happened and operational staff have not received training in protection.

### **The service does not routinely share information with other agencies**

The service works inconsistently with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety. It doesn't routinely exchange risk information with them. The files we reviewed showed that in some cases information had been appropriately shared with, for example, the Warwickshire Care Partnership, but in other cases we found information wasn't shared when it should have been.

## **The service has improved its response times to building consultations**

The service has significantly improved the time it takes to respond to building consultations on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. In the year ending 31 March 2020 it had only responded to 25.8 percent of consultations within the required timeframe (112 of 434). This figure has increased to 88.3 percent in 2020/21 (318 of 360). This is to be commended. But the service needs to do more to improve communication with the other agencies it works with.

## **More work is needed with businesses to promote fire safety**

The service could do more to engage with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. It has done some good work since the Grenfell Tower fire with local authorities and property management companies to address the risks in high-rise properties. But the lack of capacity in the team means that they have not been able to engage with business forums. And the service needs better information on its website about business fire safety.

## **Not enough action has been taken to reduce unwanted fire signals**

The service changed its policy two years ago to reduce the number of unwanted fire signals. But this did not work as intended and resulted in the service attending more calls.

The number of calls that are unwanted fire signals has increased significantly from 543 in 2017/18 to 2,590 in 2019/20. The service is also attending more calls than in previous years. So, engines may be unavailable to attend genuine incidents because they are attending false alarms. This also creates a risk to the public because more fire engines are travelling on roads at high speed.

The service is reviewing its unwanted fire signals policy.

## **Responding to fires and other emergencies**



### **Requires improvement (2018: Good)**

Warwickshire 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 within their areas.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The service should ensure its response strategy provides the most appropriate response for the public in line with its integrated risk management plan.
- The service should ensure its operational and control room staff have good access to relevant and up-to-date cross-border risk information.
- The service should ensure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents.

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 response plan isn't clear**

The service doesn't have a response plan that is clearly linked to the risks identified in its IRMP. The service is over-reliant on historical data based on demand, for example demographic data, crime data and information on arson, to inform the IRMP and district resource plans.

Where it has identified that it needs to move resources to better mitigate risk it has been slow to develop plans. And on other occasions, such as the proposal to make changes to the site at Leamington Spa, the service could not explain a clear rationale for its plan.

### **The service is not meeting its response standards**

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standards in its IRMP. It states that it will get to all life risk calls in 10 minutes 75 percent of the time for the first engine and in 15 minutes 90 percent of the time for the second engine.

The service doesn't always meet these standards. In the year to 31 March 2020, the service responded to life risk incidents within 10 minutes 71 percent of the time with the first engine and within 15 minutes 80 percent of the time with the second engine. This got worse in the year ending 31 March 2021, when it responded to life risk incidents within 10 minutes 66 percent of the time with the first engine and within 15 minutes 75 percent of the time with the second engine. The service states that it aims to do more prevention and protection activity in those areas it can't reach in 10 minutes, but we did not find evidence of this. We were told the service put resources where they will have most impact on risk. This was the reason for the proposal for a new station at Rugby South, but it has not yet been built.

## **The service does not meet its published availability targets for fire engines**

To support its response plan, the service aims to have 90 percent of on-call fire engines available at major stations and 100 percent of wholetime fire engines available at all times. The service doesn't always meet this standard. In the year ending 31 March 2020 it achieved 85 percent on-call availability and 98 percent wholetime availability. It also stated that it would aim to have no instances where a fire engine failed to mobilise to an incident. In the same year there were nine instances of this. The data for the year ending 31 March 2021 shows a slight improvement but the service is still not meeting its standards.

## **The service can command incidents effectively**

Incident commanders are trained and assessed regularly and properly. This includes an annual health check and a full assessment every two years. So, the service can safely, assertively and effectively manage all the incidents it might expect, from the small and routine to the complex, and those involving multi-agency organisations.

As part of our inspection we interviewed incident commanders from across the service. They showed us they were familiar with assessing risks, making decisions and recording information at incidents in line with national best practice and the [joint emergency services interoperability principles \(JESIP\)](#).

## **Control staff do not regularly get involved in operational learning and debriefing**

We found that the service's control staff are invited to debriefing and operational learning events. But they rarely attend because the control room often doesn't have enough staff to meet its minimum crewing levels. The control room has not fully tested and exercised its fallback arrangements with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service control since February 2020 because of the restrictions due to the pandemic.

## **The service can deal with fire survival guidance calls**

The control room staff we interviewed were confident they could provide fire survival guidance to many callers simultaneously. After the Grenfell Tower fire, this was identified as something services need to be able to do. Staff are properly trained and can get help with multiple calls from Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service control room. Staff provided a good example of giving fire survival guidance to a caller which had a successful result. But we found that the service doesn't have arrangements for giving fire survival guidance to callers who don't speak English. We are disappointed that staff could not identify on their system other buildings with cladding similar to the type installed on Grenfell Tower, although the service has this risk information.

Control has good systems to exchange real-time risk information with incident commanders, other responding partners and other supporting fire and rescue services. This includes communicating in a timely way with crews and making sure all staff in the control room are up to date with the latest information.

If the service needs to pass calls to Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service control then the two services can both access and update the incident information on

a shared system. With this good situational awareness the service can give the public accurate and tailored advice.

### **Staff have good access to risk information within the service but not for neighbouring fire and rescue services**

We sampled a range of risk information, including that given to firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings, and that held by [fire control](#).

We found that the control room and stations did not have access to appropriate and up-to-date over-the-border risks. We found that this was a problem in our previous inspection. But we found that the service sends out regular bulletins to update risk information and the mobile data terminals on the fire engines are updated promptly. The information we reviewed was up to date and detailed. Staff could easily access and understand it.

### **The service doesn't consistently evaluate operational performance and national operational guidance**

As part of the inspection we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events.

We are pleased to see the service audits incident command to assure itself that staff command incidents in line with operational guidance.

We found examples of operational learning from incidents being spread through the service. Following incidents and exercises, stations complete a form capturing that learning, which they send to the operational planning team. The team then sends operational bulletins to all stations by email to share the learning.

But we are concerned to find that there has been no formal structured learning after serious incidents for some time. We reviewed six such incidents in the last 18 months. We found that none had a formal debrief. So, information was not shared internally or with other relevant organisations. We also reviewed two multi-agency exercises and a significant commercial fire. Learning from these had not been fully shared within the service or with other agencies over a year later.

We also found the process for allocating and monitoring actions after incident debriefs was inefficient. It is a manual process operated by one individual and we found gaps in timescales and monitoring. The service can't be sure that all actions are completed. So it isn't routinely improving its service to the public.

### **The service doesn't do enough to keep the public informed about incidents**

The service has some systems to inform the public about ongoing incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. But these systems aren't comprehensive enough for the service to be sure the messages are reaching the public.

It uses social and local media to warn and inform the public about ongoing incidents. But the support for this isn't available in the evenings and at weekends so it has to rely on other support, for example the police. The service's website doesn't have any live incident information.

## Responding to major and multi-agency incidents



### Good (2018: Good)

Warwickshire 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 ensure it understands national and cross-border risks and is well prepared to meet such risks.

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 integrated risk management planning. For example, it has major incident plans and site-specific operational plans for all its high risks in the county such as Warwick Castle and the Kingsbury Oil Terminal.

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. For example, it has carried out a multi-agency exercise with Leicestershire FRS. But firefighters don't always have access to risk information from neighbouring services. The service shares its risk information on [Resilience Direct](#) but this isn't always reciprocated by neighbouring services.

### The service is good at responding to major and multi-agency incidents

We reviewed the arrangements the service has to respond to different major incidents, including flooding and marauding terrorist attacks (MTA).

The service has good arrangements, which are well understood by staff. For example, staff in the control room were clear on the action to take if a major incident were called. The service does not have its own MTA team but can support other services in the event of such an attack and a lead officer works closely with police, ambulance and local authorities. The service has resources to support a major incident, such as a mass decontamination unit, environmental unit and high-volume pump and staff are clear on when and how to deploy these resources.

### **The service can work effectively with other fire services**

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. It does cross-border exercises with neighbouring services to share learning and local teams train on specific risks with other agencies. It has also supported other services to respond to emergency incidents, for example the flooding event in Hereford and Worcester FRS. 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 as such.

### **The service carries out cross-border exercising but the plan needs to be updated**

The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services so that they can work together effectively to keep the public safe. But this plan needs updating and during the pandemic fire services have done less testing and exercising. Nevertheless, the service still carried out two major exercises.

### **Incident commanders understand JESIP**

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with the joint emergency services interoperability principles.

The service could provide us with strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. All the incident commanders that we spoke to could effectively describe the joint decision-making principles. And they could describe the procedures for reporting information on major incidents to relevant government departments.

### **The service is improving the way it works with other relevant organisations**

The service has good arrangements to respond to emergencies with other partners in the Warwickshire [Local Resilience Forum \(LRF\)](#). This includes using [national co-ordination and advisory framework](#) arrangements to supplement resources if needed.

The service is a valued participant in the LRF. The chief fire officer chairs the LRF and the service leads the training and exercising sub-groups. The recently reformed training and exercising group is developing a schedule of training with plans for flooding and HS2 rail exercising.

### **The service uses national learning to inform planning**

The service keeps itself up to date with joint operational learning updates from other fire services and [national operational learning](#) from the police service and ambulance trusts. This learning informs planning assumptions made with other organisations the service works with.

# Efficiency



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



## Requires improvement

### Summary

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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](#). 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 outcomes for the public. Plans should be based on robust and realistic assumptions about income and costs. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency requires improvement.

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We found that the service hasn't made progress since our 2018 inspection on some important developments. These developments would improve its response and training capability.

In 2018 we also found the IT systems were out of date and unreliable. The service still hasn't improved them. This hinders it in performing some statutory functions.

Some parts of the service don't have enough people with the right training and skills. So, the service can't work towards the priorities in its IRMP. The service doesn't manage staff performance in a way that lets it direct resources at priorities.

The service also isn't collaborating enough with others to improve efficiency.

## Making best use of resources



### Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Warwickshire 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 those resources to meet the services' risks and statutory responsibilities. They should make best possible use of their resources to achieve better outcomes for the public.

The service's budget for 2021/22 is just under £22m. This is an increase from £21.1m in the previous financial year.

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.
- The service should make sure there is a testing programme for its business continuity plans, particularly in high risk areas of service.
- 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 the IRMP.
- The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities set out in its IRMP.

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

Since the last inspection, the service has put extra resources into its protection function using the government funding. But there is little evidence to show that the service has made enough progress with the provision of its protection function. There are several weaknesses that need addressing. The way the service allocates resources to prevention, protection and response functions is mainly based on historical information. This affects the service's ability to fulfil its responsibilities in these areas, as reflected in the effectiveness section. The service states that it wants to assess its overall resource capability, but we found no specific plans to do this. The service has developed a five-year IRMP but this isn't fully resourced and the service acknowledges that it may not be able to meet all objectives in the plan, although it does have clear financial plans covering the priorities.

There is no performance management oversight of major functions such as prevention and protection. So, the service isn't evaluating activity to make sure it has enough resources to achieve the priorities in the IRMP.

The service sometimes uses its resources well to manage risk. We saw that it clearly links its operational activity to risk. It has reviewed its operational response cover. This led to the development of a new station at Gaydon and plans for a new station at Rugby to improve response times. But it has not made enough progress with this.

The service's budget is part of the county council budget and it has a sustainable financial position. We found suitable financial controls through the county council monitoring and scrutiny arrangements. This reduces the risk of misusing public money.

### **The service is not using its workforce in the most productive way**

The service monitors the performance of its stations well. But its arrangements for managing performance in other functions are weak and don't clearly link resource use to the IRMP and the service's most important and long-term aims. The service doesn't coordinate its activity across prevention, protection and response to make sure that activity is directed at priorities in the IRMP. The lack of qualified resources in protection, which we also found in our last inspection, means that the service doesn't know if its activity is targeting the greatest risks.

The service should do more to make sure its workforce is as productive as possible. For example, the delays to the new training centres mean that staff must travel some distance for risk-critical training. This wastes staff time and costs the service extra money.

We did find that the technological changes to working practices as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have continued, which is helping the service to give staff more flexible working options. The service, as part of the county council, is moving to more cloud-based technologies.

We found some areas in the service that were struggling with capacity. So staff were having to work extra hours or carry out multiple functions. For example, the service is running some projects which are not well co-ordinated and don't always involve the right people. These create additional workload for staff.

### **The service needs to collaborate more**

Since the last inspection the service has decided not to proceed with the proposed collaboration with West Midlands Fire Service in control, training and prevention. This has contributed to the delays with Warwickshire FRS's new training centres as the service has had to look for other suitable options.

The service does have an effective collaboration with Northamptonshire Fire Control which provides resilience for both services. The service needs to ensure that this arrangement continues to provide the resilience for the service to provide an effective control room function.

A notable collaboration project is the hospital-to-home partnership with the NHS. This doesn't generate savings for the service but helps to provide a more efficient patient discharge service for the NHS.

However, the service needs to do more to consider and participate in collaborative activities. The service has an informal arrangement with two neighbouring services, but this is not a formal collaboration. Other than a joint procurement of smoke hoods, there has not been much collaboration to date.

The service's monitoring, review and evaluation of the benefits and end results of its collaborations is limited in scope. The service doesn't use these activities to learn or change decisions. The only example we saw was an evaluation of the pilot of the hospital-to-home scheme that led to an expansion of the scheme. This scheme doesn't generate any savings for the service but does give it access to people who may be [vulnerable](#).

### **The service hasn't fully tested its continuity arrangements**

The service has business continuity plans for industrial action and fire control. But there are some gaps in the plans. They do not consider extra costs that may be incurred during, for example, industrial action, nor do they describe governance arrangements. There is no provision to review or evaluate the plans after they have been activated.

The plans haven't been fully reviewed and tested during the pandemic. In this period the service put on hold plans for a full evacuation of control to Northamptonshire FRS because of the restrictions in place. But this means that staff aren't fully aware of the arrangements and their associated responsibilities.

### **The service doesn't demonstrate sound financial management**

We are disappointed to find little focus on efficiency in the service. So it can't show it is getting value for money from the county council services it uses. We found no evidence of the service comparing the cost and value for money of its fleet and estates provision with other services. Procurement mostly takes place through framework agreements and a competitive tendering process. We saw examples where current arrangements cost the service more than if they were to procure parts and services themselves.

We are disappointed to see a lack of progress since our last inspection on the development of a new station at Rugby and the development of new training facilities. The current training arrangements are costing the service extra money. In the year ending 31 March 2021 it has allocated an extra £275,000 to provide the training needed.

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



### Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at making itself 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 should invest in better services for the public.

#### Areas for improvement

- The service needs to assure itself that it is maximising opportunities to improve workforce productivity and develop future capacity through use of innovation, including the use of technology.
- The service should make sure that its IT systems are resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible.
- The service should make sure that its fleet and estates management programmes are linked to the IRMP, and it understands the impact future changes to those programmes may have on its service to the public.
- The service needs to speed up progress with its estates plans for training to ensure it is delivering effective and efficient training provision.

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 its financial risks well

The service has a secure financial position. The service's budget is part of the overall county council budget which shows a balanced budget over five years.

The financial consequences of withdrawing from the collaboration with West Midlands FRS have been mitigated by allocating extra funding to the fire budget. The council's financial plans included an allocation of approximately £1m to mitigate the risk associated with its day-crewed plus duty system. The service manages its main financial risks through a risk register which it regularly reviews.

The county council is not expecting the service to make any savings in the 2020–21 financial year.

## **Use of reserves**

The service doesn't hold its own [reserves](#). These are held by the county council. We were told that the council reserves are available for the service to make bids against. We have seen evidence that funding is available to the service to meet its priorities.

## **The service isn't maximising efficiency through its fleet and estates**

We found the service's fleet and estates provision to be inefficient. The service is charged by the county council for works and services. This does not always provide best value for money.

And the service does not properly assess the effect any changes in estate and fleet provision or future innovation may have on risk. There is an asset management plan which identifies proposals for the fire estate. These changes include new training facilities, and changes to Nuneaton, Bedworth and Leamington sites. But the service has made very little progress with these schemes and it has not assessed the impact on risk of this lack of progress.

## **The service is not using technology well to transform its service**

The service has a five-year digital plan. It contains little detail, beyond some broad strategic statements, on what the plans are to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce.

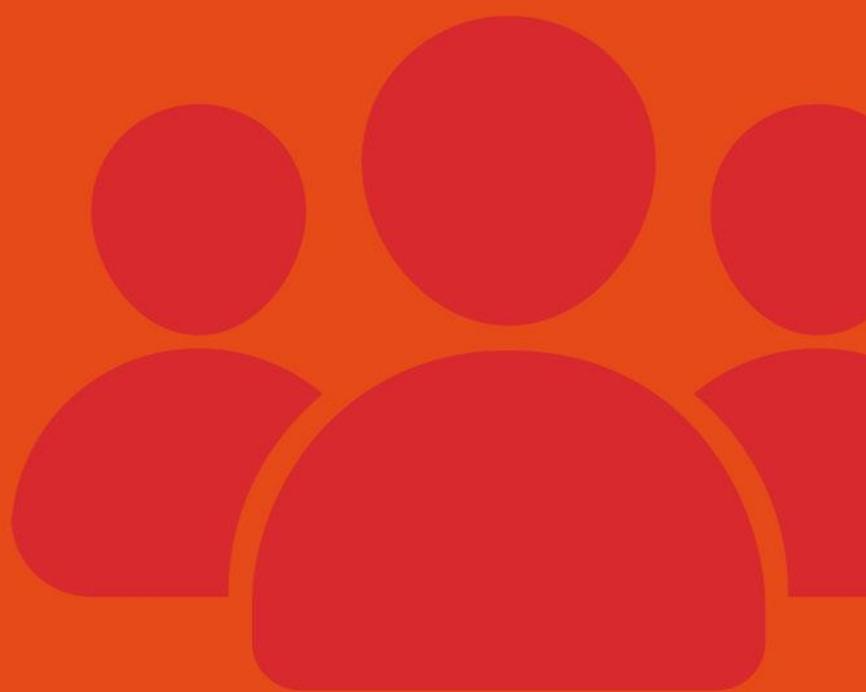
We are disappointed that problems with technology that we identified in our last inspection have not been resolved. These are creating significant capacity problems for staff. We were told that many IT systems are out of date and don't help them to work efficiently and effectively.

The service has limited capacity and capability to bring about lasting future change. There is little evidence of it working with others to improve efficiency.

## **The service is not doing enough to generate income**

The service considers options for generating extra income, but its ambition and track record in securing extra income is limited. For example, it has plans to generate income from its training facilities but the delays with these mean that this hasn't progressed. It also plans to generate income from fire safety work with local businesses, but again the capacity problems in the protection team have delayed this.

# People



# How well does the service look after its people?



## Requires improvement

### Summary

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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 is embedded in everything the service does and its staff understand their role in promoting it. Overall, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at looking after its people.

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Since we last inspected Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2018 it has put a greater emphasis on equality, diversity and inclusion, which is to its credit. But we found that its approach isn't always proportionate and it has left its workforce disengaged.

The service has a set of values but we didn't find these shown consistently.

Staff value the service's wellbeing support. But we found that the service still doesn't have a wellbeing plan or evaluate its provision.

There are some areas of health and safety that need improvement. We found that the service doesn't monitor the working time of its staff to make sure they are fit for duty.

The service provides good risk-critical training for its staff but other training is inconsistent. Staff still feel that the promotion processes aren't fair.

## Promoting the right values and culture



### Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Warwickshire 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 effectively promoted, and staff should have access to a range of wellbeing support that can be tailored to their individual needs.

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it has a robust system in place to review and update its risk assessments.
- The service should ensure that recommendations from workplace accidents are monitored and actioned appropriately and in a timely manner.
- The service should monitor overtime and secondary contracts to ensure working hours are not exceeded.
- The service should develop a wellbeing strategy and a system to improve understanding of health, safety and wellbeing.

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

#### **The service doesn't consistently demonstrate the right culture, behaviours and values**

The service has a clearly defined set of values, and most staff agree that they are aware of them.

But the service's culture doesn't always align with its values. Staff told us that the service's values aren't demonstrated at all levels. We heard that staff seeking promotion were reluctant to challenge for fear this might affect their chances. We also heard that the open culture promoted by senior leaders sometimes had a negative effect, with staff bypassing their line managers.

Staff told us that despite [on-call firefighters](#) playing an important role and having similar responsibilities they are not given the same recognition or opportunities as [wholetime](#) staff. This has created a cultural divide.

Most staff we spoke to did say that senior leaders are approachable and demonstrate the service's values well.

## **Workforce wellbeing provision is good but the service needs to engage more with its staff to understand their individual needs**

The service has some wellbeing provisions to support the mental and physical health of staff. This includes occupational health, post-incident support, wellbeing ambassadors and a wellbeing portal where staff can access information on the support and services available. Staff were positive about the occupational health service and all staff reported they understand and have confidence in the wellbeing support processes available. But we found that some of these roles are carried out on a voluntary basis and rely on the goodwill of staff. There is no occupational health plan and the service doesn't monitor the uptake of the wellbeing services or review its provision to understand if it is meeting individual needs.

Although the service states that line managers are required to meet their staff monthly to discuss their wellbeing, nearly half of the respondents to the staff survey said they were having wellbeing conversations once a year or less.

## **Some aspects of health and safety are not being monitored effectively by the service**

The service continues to have sufficient governance arrangements to review and report on health and safety. A committee meets every eight weeks to review the measures that ensure the health, safety and wellbeing at work of staff. The service reports health and safety to the leadership team at the county council, which has oversight. The representative bodies are fully involved in this committee.

But we heard that the service doesn't always communicate changes to health and safety policy effectively to staff. It emails risk-critical information to staff in a bulletin, which they have to sign to say they have read. But staff told us there is no other way to communicate health and safety matters.

We were told that the service doesn't monitor or review the results of investigations into accidents and [near misses](#). As such, they cannot be sure that the improvements identified by investigations have been made. We also heard that although risk assessments are carried out at station level there is no oversight of these. So, the service is not effectively monitoring risk assessments in a way which will assure both quality and consistency.

We found that the service was not effectively managing the working hours of staff. Some staff work additional or excessive hours from overtime and secondary employment. The service puts the onus on staff to manage their working time. So there is no oversight or scrutiny to check whether staff are fit for duty.

## **The service manages absence well**

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

We found the service has clear and consistent processes to manage absences for all staff. There is clear guidance for managers, who get information on staff absences from the county council. Although managers told us that they hadn't received formal

training in managing absence, they were confident in the process. Absences are managed well and in accordance with policy. The staff we spoke to also understood the process and their responsibilities when absent from work.

Overall, the service saw no significant difference in staff absences over the 12 months between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020.

## Getting the right people with the right skills



### Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at getting the right people with the right skills.

Fire and rescue services should have workforce plans in place that are linked to their [integrated risk management plans](#), set out their current and future skills requirements, and address capability gaps. This should be supplemented by a culture of continuous improvement that includes appropriate learning and development across the service.

#### Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure that it is able to record and monitor the training and competence of all its staff.
- The service should ensure it has the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out the integrated 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 needs to improve its workforce planning so it can fully understand the skills and capabilities of its workforce**

Although there is some workforce planning, the service doesn't effectively take full account of the skills and capabilities it needs to meet the requirements of its IRMP.

We found limited evidence that the service's planning allows it to fully consider workforce skills and overcome any gaps in capability. For example, a monthly meeting is held to review the operational resourcing, but this is reactive and based on known absences.

The service uses a system to monitor the operational competence of its workforce. But this doesn't inform a longer-term workforce plan and doesn't routinely include information on other training.

The service provides good training for risk-critical skills including incident command. It also has effective processes to monitor this training. And it uses a robust resource management system to manage the availability and skills of operational staff.

But we found significant gaps and inconsistencies when considering other training provision. This includes training on [safeguarding](#), health and safety, and equality, diversity and inclusion. We also found that operational staff were not adequately trained in prevention and protection work.

We are concerned to find that the service still doesn't have a system to monitor the competence of its control room staff.

### **The service needs to offer staff learning and development that goes beyond risk-critical training**

Although the service provides learning and development, this is focused on risk-critical skills and it doesn't meet the needs of all staff or the organisation. The staff we spoke to were positive about the learning after operational incidents. Most staff who responded to the survey agreed that the service listens to feedback from operational incidents and acts on what it has learned.

Most staff told us that they received enough training to do their job and were satisfied with the learning and development opportunities available. But some staff told us that they haven't received enough training in prevention and protection to allow them to do their job effectively. The service plans to introduce training in business fire safety but this had not been implemented at the time of our inspection.

### **Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity**



#### **Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)**

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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 that equality, diversity and inclusion are firmly embedded and understood across the organisation. This includes successfully taking steps to remove inequality and making progress to improve fairness, diversity and inclusion at all levels within the service. It should proactively seek and respond to feedback from staff and make sure any action taken is meaningful.

### **Cause of concern**

The service isn't taking a proportionate approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the workplace.

### **Recommendations**

By 31 August 2021, the service should make sure that:

- its actions to promote EDI don't compromise the integrity of other policies, including health and safety and performance management;
- senior leaders respond appropriately and quickly to EDI feedback or concerns from its staff;
- its approach to positive action is appropriate and proportionate and is understood by staff; and
- it understands the diversity of its workforce and has the right provisions in place to support their individual needs.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The service should put in place mechanisms to engage with all staff and monitor how effective the mechanisms are.
- Staff survey outcomes and progress on actions should be regularly communicated to the workforce.
- The service should review how effective its policy on bullying, harassment and discrimination is in reducing unacceptable behaviour towards its staff.

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

### **The service isn't effective at seeking and acting on staff feedback and challenge**

The service needs to improve its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). In a small number of cases, the present approach has a detrimental impact on health and safety and as a result is not credible with staff. Staff feel disconnected from EDI and the ways of addressing their concerns are ineffective.

Since our last inspection the service has placed greater focus on EDI, which is positive, but its actions are not always proportionate. Many staff told us that the service's approach was forceful rather than educational and this was having a negative impact on the workforce. It has also compromised on other important areas such as health and safety, which had a negative impact on the credibility of the actions the service was taking. Some of the workforce feel that some actions taken by the service do not uphold the required standards of operational competence in some cases for those with protected characteristics. As a result, the workforce has become even more sceptical about the benefits of diversity. The service explained that its actions were legitimate in this area, but staff told us that the service had not explained the reasons for this to the workforce.

Although the service does have some means of gathering staff feedback, these are inconsistent and do not have the desired impact. For example, the inclusion network has only met three times and is only accessible to those staff that are at work between 9.00am and 5.00pm. The service has also set up six-weekly meetings called 'mission and purpose', and staff based at headquarters were aware of these and their purpose. But the staff we spoke to at stations weren't aware of these meetings.

There is also a service improvement network, which is intended to include people from underrepresented groups, but staff told us that they didn't know how people were selected for it. And staff we spoke to did not know the purpose of this network.

Staff have limited confidence in the service's feedback methods and don't think they are effective. Staff told us that the service uses surveys to get feedback. But the findings are not discussed and staff don't see any meaningful actions as a result. We heard that staff feel less confident to challenge on issues relating to EDI than they do with other areas.

The service has a process for equality impact assessments, but there is not enough scrutiny of them. So the impacts on each of the protected characteristics may not be adequately assessed. Nor does the service know if it is acting on its findings. And it does not know if such action is appropriate.

More work is needed to increase staff diversity. There has been limited progress to improve both BAME and gender diversity across all staff in the service. Since 2017/18, the percentage of staff who have self-declared as being from a BAME group has fallen from 3.4 percent to 2.7 percent (this represents 12 and 11 members of staff respectively). Eighteen percent of the workforce don't declare their ethnicity. In the same period the percentage of female staff has increased slightly from 81 to 85 members of staff, but this included one additional whole-time member of staff and one fewer on-call member of staff. The overall percentage of women firefighters is 7 percent, which is the England average.

The service has made some progress in encouraging applicants from diverse backgrounds into middle and senior level positions. Some of these positions are advertised without the need for an operational background and are advertised externally.

The service also does some work to encourage underrepresented groups to apply for roles in the service through offering taster days. We look forward to seeing whether this will have a positive effect in its forthcoming whole-time recruitment campaign.

### **The service needs to do more to address disproportionality in recruitment, promotion and progression processes**

The service needs to do more to make sure its recruitment and promotion and progression processes are fair. It does not have a clear plan on how it will do this and it doesn't evaluate its activity. There is a lack of service oversight of recruitment processes to make sure they are fair and consistent.

We heard how staff viewed the recruitment process as a tick-box exercise to increase diversity. We reviewed promotion processes and found that the service

didn't consistently follow its own policy. This led to a grievance. We note that the service is reviewing its promotion policy.

### **The service needs to improve the way it tackles bullying, harassment and discrimination**

The service could go further to improve staff understanding of bullying, harassment and discrimination, including their responsibilities for eliminating it. Through our staff survey, 32 members of staff told us they had been subject to harassment or discrimination over the previous 12 months. Of these staff, the majority stated that no action had been taken as a result of them reporting the incidents.

Although the service does have clear policies and procedures, staff have limited confidence in the service's ability to deal effectively with disciplinary and grievance cases. A significant proportion of the staff we spoke to told us they would not feel comfortable reporting confidential matters. We heard some staff say that they would not feel comfortable in challenging inappropriate behaviour. We saw that the service does not monitor results of grievance processes or use them to inform organisational learning and improvements.

## **Managing performance and developing leaders**



### **Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)**

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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 high-potential staff and improving diversity in leadership roles.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The service should make sure its selection, development and promotion of staff is open and fair.
- The service should make sure it has mechanisms in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation.

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 inconsistent at managing individuals' performance**

The service has a performance management system, but we heard that the effectiveness of this depended on the skills of the line manager doing the review. We also heard that the process is more effective for those staff in development or seeking promotion.

In our staff survey, 75 percent of respondents (116 of 154) reported that they had a personal development review or appraisal in the last 12 months and most of these staff (90) stated that these were meaningful. Less than half of all staff were recorded to have had a performance appraisal in the year ending 31 March 2020, with only 23 percent of support staff having one.

### **The service isn't effective at developing leadership and high-potential staff at all levels**

The service needs to improve how it actively manages career pathways, including those for specialist skills and for leadership roles.

The service doesn't have a formal talent management scheme to develop leaders and high-potential staff. Its promotion processes aren't managed in a way that ensures it offers progression and development opportunities in an open and fair way. For example, we saw inconsistencies in the advertising and filling of promotion opportunities. This undermines staff perception of fairness in the process.

The service hasn't made enough progress since our last inspection to make sure that its promotion processes are seen as fair by staff. In the staff survey that we carried out more than half of those who responded said that they didn't think the promotion process was fair and a third said that they weren't given the same opportunities as other staff to develop.

The service should consider more formal arrangements to identify and support members of staff to become senior leaders. There is a significant gap in succession planning at present. The service has not set out how it will identify high-performing staff and develop them. The only process it has is the promotion process.

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