

Ben Brook
Chief Fire Officer
Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

12 January 2022

Dear Ben,

WARWICKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS – CAUSE OF CONCERN

We inspected Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service during March and April 2021. During the inspection we identified several areas of concern. We made recommendations for the causes of concern, as follows:

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

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.

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

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.

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

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.

2. You kindly submitted an action plan to HMICFRS on 27 August 2021 setting out how you would address the areas of concern and the recommendations.

3. We reviewed the action plan between September and October to review your progress. We didn't expect to see all the remedial work completed; instead we were looking for evidence of progress.

Governance

4. The service has shown a firm commitment to carry out the action plan. You have put in place appropriate governance structures to oversee the completion of the plan. An Integrated Risk Management Plan Assurance Panel has been established which includes members of the Fire Authority. Peer support is provided by the vice chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council. The panel meets quarterly to review progress of the action plan. Updates are provided to the Warwickshire County Council Corporate Board and Cabinet every 6 months for their oversight and scrutiny. The service also has a Continuous Improvement and Change Board which meets monthly to review progress and identify any problems, which are escalated to the Integrated Risk Management Board.

Action plan

5. The service has developed an action plan covering the causes of concern identified in our letter to the service of 11 June 2021. The action plan has deadlines and resources to carry out the actions in sequence. The service has also put in place a new structure with named action owners for prevention, protection and response. You have also identified that more effective communication and technology are needed to support the implementation of the action plan. The actions are intended to make sure that prevention and protection activity focuses appropriately on risk.

Outcomes to date

6. It is good to see that the service has put in place some resources and appropriate governance structures for the commitments in the action plan. Some of the actions have been started. We are pleased to see that the service immediately put in place an interim process for serious fire case reviews. We also recognise that work has started on developing strategies for prevention and protection and you have started to review your risks in these areas. But we would like to see continued progress against all the action plan outcomes, and particularly improvements in premises-related data. The service needs to make sure that it supports the work to achieve these outcomes and communicates them effectively to its staff and to the public.

7. We will continue to monitor the progress made and will revisit the service in spring 2022 to make sure the contents of the action plan have been addressed and the service provided to the public of Warwickshire has improved.

Yours sincerely,



Wendy Williams

HM Inspector of Constabulary

HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services