HMICFRS

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
and Fire & Rescue Services

Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

Contents

About this inspection

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

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

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

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

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

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

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

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

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

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

Overview

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

Question	This inspection	2018/19
£ **Efficiency**	●●●○ **Good**	**Good**
Making best use of resources	●●●○ Good	Good
Future affordability	●●●○ Good	Good

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

HM Inspector's summary

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

I am pleased with the performance of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks, although it needs to improve in some areas to provide a consistently good service. For example, the service's prevention teams could work better together, and the quality and timeliness of safe and well visits could be improved.

We were pleased to see that the service has made progress since our 2018 inspection. The service has improved consultation with the public, internal and external stakeholders about its integrated risk management plan (IRMP).

These are the findings I consider most important from our assessments of the service over the last year.

The service has made some progress in making sure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised, risk-based inspection programme (RBIP). However, it is too early to see how effective this will be. I look forward to understanding the impact once the new team structure is fully in place.

The service has an effective integrated risk management model in place. But the approach to preventing risk and protecting the public is often to respond to a report or referral. The service should consider how it can take a more balanced and proactive approach to dealing with its risks.

The service is taking good steps to improve recruitment diversity. It has invested in a positive action officer and adapted its approach to recruitment so that under-represented groups can better identify with the service.

The service has also improved consultation with the public, internal and external stakeholders in relation to its IRMP. A Community Engagement Forum has been set up and we look forward to seeing the benefits of this in our next inspection.

Overall, the service has developed a good understanding of its future financial challenges. It has also identified savings and investment opportunities to improve the service to the public or generate further savings.

The service has made good progress in most areas since our last inspection. We look forward to seeing the results of further improvements at our next inspection.

Roy Wilsher

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers

Response	West Yorkshire	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 30 June 2021	10.16	9.36
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	2.45	4.47
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2021	0.97	1.70
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2021	96.6%	86.4%

| **Cost**		
Firefighter cost per person Year ending 31 March 2021	£21.42	£23.73

Incidents attended in the year to 30 June 2021

All fires, 9,150, 38%

False alarms, 10,040, 42%

Total 23,826

Non-fire incidents, 4,636, 20%
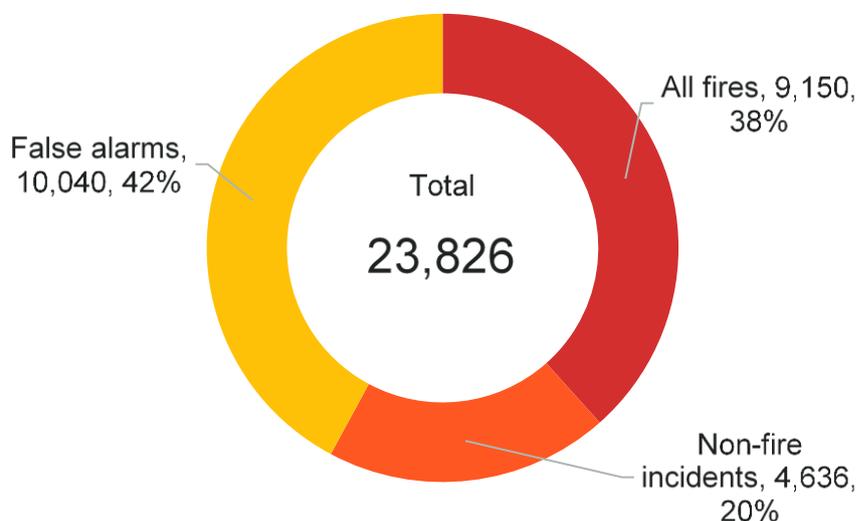
![Workforce] **Workforce**	West Yorkshire	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2016 to 2021	-4.69%	-1.60%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	0.45	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2021	84.5%	64.4%

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

■ Firefighters ■ Workforce ■ Local population

- Firefighters: 5.98%
- Workforce: 18.99%
- Local population: 50.75%
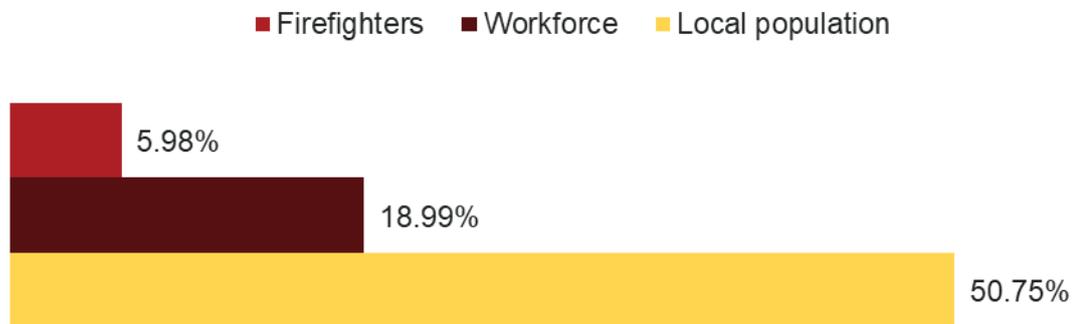
Percentage of population, firefighters and workforce who are from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2021

■ Firefighters ■ Workforce ■ Local population

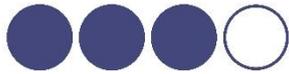- Firefighters: 4.11%
- Workforce: 5.22%
- Local population: 18.25%

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?

Good

Summary

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

The service has improved consultation with the public, internal and external stakeholders about its integrated risk management plan (IRMP) since our first visit in 2019. A Community Engagement Forum has been set up and we look forward to seeing the benefits of this in our next inspection.

The service has a clear integrated risk management model in place. This covers how to resource activities to prevent, protect and respond to risks. However, many of the service's activities are in response to a report or referral. The service should consider how it can take a more balanced approach to dealing with its risks.

The service gathers and shares risk information within its organisation, but could improve the speed of updates.

Since our 2019 inspection, the service has provided further command training and development to improve staff understanding of operational discretion. The service continues to provide targeted training and support to make sure knowledge stays current.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

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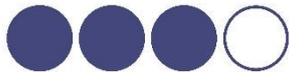
Good (2019: Good)

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

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

> **Area for improvement**
>
> The service should make sure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.

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

The service has improved how it engages with the local community to build a comprehensive profile of risk

The service has assessed an appropriate range of risks and threats after a thorough IRMP planning process. When assessing risk, it has considered relevant information collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and data sets, including incident and societal data. For example, the service shares data with healthcare partners to better understand risk and improve risk profiles.

The service has improved consultation with the public, internal and external stakeholders about its IRMP. When appropriate, the service has consulted and undertaken constructive dialogue with communities and others such as Public Health England, local authority housing and neighbourhood teams, and police. A community engagement forum has also been set up to help the service work better with communities. This isn't yet fully effective, and we look forward to seeing the benefits of it in our next inspection.

The service also consults with staff and representative bodies to both understand the risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it.

The service could improve how it delivers its IRMP

After assessing relevant risks, the service has recorded its findings in an easily understood IRMP. The plan is supported by an integrated risk management model which describes how prevention, protection and response activity is to be effectively resourced to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces, both now and in the future. For example, by increasing resource within the protection team and changing the shift system at some fire stations. The service undertakes an annual review and replanning exercise to make sure its approach remains current. The methodology used has been externally validated. However, many of the service's activities are prompted by a referral or report from a member of staff, partner or member of the public. For example, action is taken following a report of fire safety non-compliance. The service should consider how it can take a more balanced approach to dealing with risks.

The service has also recently introduced action plans for each of its districts to improve how it addresses local risk. These are supported by a quarterly risk reduction meeting. We look forward to seeing how these plans develop.

The service gathers and shares risk information within its organisation, but could improve the timeliness of updates

The service collects information about the people, places and threats it has identified as being at greatest risk, but the information we reviewed wasn't always up to date. The time between a risk visit being carried out and updated information being available on the system was, in most cases, too long. And the frequency of risk visits aren't always carried out in line with service policy.

At the time of inspection, there was a system problem that prevented risk information updates being transferred to the mobile data terminals on its fire engines. The service was working to resolve this issue.

However, information is available for the service's prevention, protection, response, and fire control staff, which enables it to identify, reduce and mitigate risk effectively. For example, operational staff gather information during their operational risk visits.

The service also works with organisations and businesses to identify short-term risk within the county: for example, in relation to sporting events and festivals. Details about risks relating to vulnerable members of the community, including hoarders, are recorded. This supports the service's response in the event of an incident.

Information is communicated to staff via a range of media. This includes mobile data terminals on fire engines, health and safety bulletins, operational policy documents and safety critical information messages.

Where appropriate, the service exchanges risk information with other fire and rescue services and organisations such as the police, health partners and local authorities.

The service uses feedback from operational activity to inform its understanding of risk

The service routinely updates risk assessments and uses feedback from local and national operational activity to inform its planning assumptions. For example, responses to incidents such as wildfire and flooding use insights from the environmental working group. The service uses national learning to inform risk, such as the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and the Manchester Arena attack. It also has a serious incident review panel which looks at anything that has resulted in a fire fatality. It uses this to identify any new risks.

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

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

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has responded positively and proactively to learning from this tragedy. The service has worked with the local authorities and social housing providers to assist in its building risk review work. It has developed tactical information plans for its high-risk, high-rise residential buildings. The service has assessed the risk of each high-rise building in its service area.

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

Preventing fires and other risks

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Requires improvement (2019: Good)

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at preventing fires and other risks.

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

> **Areas for improvement**
> - The service should make sure it delivers safe and well visits in a timely manner.
> - The service should make sure it consistently quality assures its prevention activity, so all staff carry out safe and well visits to an appropriate standard.

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

The service's prevention teams could work better together

The service's prevention strategy is clearly linked to the risks identified in its IRMP. It carries out risk modelling to categorise geographical areas into five bands ranging from very low to very high. The service then uses these categories to prioritise prevention activity.

During the inspection, it was apparent that there is a lack of unity between the district and central prevention teams. As a result, they don't always have shared priorities and objectives.

The service works with other organisations on prevention and it passes on relevant information when needed. Information is used to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between the service's prevention, protection, and response functions. For example, operational and fire control staff can access information about vulnerable members of the community to help them respond to incidents. This includes information such as temporary accommodation for refugees.

The service has adapted its prevention approach as a result of the pandemic

We considered how the service had adapted its prevention work during our COVID-19 specific inspection between 5 and 16 October 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its public prevention work appropriately.

During this inspection, we were encouraged to hear staff speak positively about how they have adapted in the wake of the pandemic. The service has recently put a triage process in place for safe and well visit requests received by telephone. This makes sure the service is prioritising these visits based on risk.

The service should optimise resources to target high-risk groups

Prevention activity is clearly prioritised using a risk-based approach towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. For example, the service has a process in place to make sure safe and well referrals and requests focus on vulnerable people. Partners receive training from the service to identify those people most at risk. However, the majority of the safe and well visits carried out are prompted by a partner referral. The service needs to make sure it is also visiting those people most at risk from fire based on local requirements and intelligence.

The service takes account of a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable individuals and groups. As a result, the service has identified the following factors which can increase an individual's risk of fire:

- living alone;
- smoking;
- having mobility issues;
- having mental health problems;
- using drugs;

- using alcohol; and
- being over 65 years of age.

The quality and timeliness of safe and well visits could be improved

Staff told us they have the right skills and confidence to make safe and well visits. These checks cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. This includes things like mobility, smoking and social isolation.

We reviewed a sample of safe and well visit records. We found that visits aren't always carried out promptly and the quality of records is inconsistent. We also saw evidence that some follow up and referrals aren't being carried out. The service is aware of this issue.

The service is good at safeguarding vulnerable individuals

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified safeguarding problems. They told us they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. Staff can explain the signs of vulnerability and what action they would take to respond to a safeguarding concern.

The service works well with others to prevent fires and other emergencies

The service works with a wide range of other organisations such as adult social care, NHS Trusts, Age UK, district nurses, local authority housing and police to prevent fires and other emergencies.

We found some evidence that it refers people at greatest risk to other organisations which may be better able to meet their needs. For example, working with Leeds City Council, the service jointly funds staff who support people with tenancy issues and give fire safety advice. Arrangements are in place to receive referrals from others such as oxygen providers.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses the information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention activity. For example, the service carries out training with partners to make sure they can identify people at an increased risk of fire and make relevant safe and well visit requests. Data sharing agreements support this work.

The service acts to tackle fire-setting behaviour

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people of different ages who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. These include school visits, its Prince's Trust programme and quarterly risk reduction meetings to identify trends and share what works across the districts.

The service works with partners including the police to share information and support a multi-agency approach. When appropriate, the service will also share information through campaigns. For example, 'Be Moor Aware' focuses on moorland fire safety to reduce the risk of wildfires.

The service evaluates its prevention activity to identify what works and how it could be improved

The service has evaluation tools in place. These tools measure how effective its work is so it knows what works, and its communities get prevention activity that meets their needs. For example, it uses educational course evaluation and success rates to assess its road safety partnerships. An evaluation of its safe and well programme has also identified several opportunities to improve activities such as performance management. As a result, the service is trialling a 'performance dashboard' to show managers how well they are doing.

Prevention activities take account of feedback from the public, other organisations, and other parts of the service. For example, as part of the safe and well evaluation, partner events were held with Leeds City Council and the Older Person's Forum. These identified that more work needed to be done, particularly in developing the partnerships and improving referrals.

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

Protecting the public through fire regulation

Requires improvement (2019: Good)

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

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

> **Area for improvement**
>
> The service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.

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 IRMP lacks detail regarding the risk profile of property types included in its RBIP

The service's protection strategy and IRMP don't specifically identify high-risk properties for audit and inspection. The service's RBIP is mainly reactive and targets premises where it has received a report of non-compliance with the fire safety order. Reports are prioritised based on the level of risk. Resource is allocated according to priority and in line with the service's policy. It is unclear from the strategy what level of activity the service aims to take, or how it evaluates what benefit protection activity will have for the public.

Staff across the service are involved in this activity, with information effectively exchanged as needed. For example, operational staff will carry out 'hazard spotting' during operational risk visits used to gather risk information and familiarise themselves with properties. They will flag any issues spotted to the protection team for further investigation.

The service's RBIP does not prioritise all high-risk properties due to its predominantly reactive nature

The service has an RBIP, but it is limited in scope. Audits and inspections are carried out largely in response to reports of non-compliance. This is based on intelligence from internal and external sources, such as complaints from the public, local authorities and operational staff. The service also doesn't routinely reinspect properties to make sure continued compliance after remedial action has been taken.

The service does undertake proactive thematic audits, currently at high-rise buildings. These generally make up a small proportion of the overall number of audits carried out.

It was disappointing that at the time of inspection the service was unable to provide data to show if it is consistently auditing the buildings it has targeted in the timescales it has set. The service told us that a manual process is in place which shows that performance is good.

The service is carrying out fire safety audits at all its high-rise buildings

At the time of inspection, the service was working with local councils and housing associations to audit high-rise buildings. This included those using cladding similar to that installed on Grenfell Tower. Information gathered during these audits is made available to response teams and control operators, enabling them to respond more effectively in an emergency.

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

The service carries out fire safety audits to a high standard

We reviewed a range of audits of different premises across the service. This included audits as part of the service's RBIP, after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies, where enforcement action had been taken and at high-rise, high-risk buildings. The audits we reviewed were completed to a high standard in a consistent, systematic way, and in line with the service's policies.

Relevant information from the audits is made available to operational teams and control room operators.

The service quality assures its fire safety audits

Quality assurance of protection activity takes place in a proportionate way. Staff activities are reviewed to make sure they meet the required standard.

However, the service's approach is predominantly to react to reports of non-compliance with fire safety. Therefore, it isn't clear how the service makes sure that all sections of its communities get equal access to protection services that meet their needs.

The service carries out enforcement activities

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers, and when appropriate, prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations. It works with local council housing safety partners to support a joint approach to fire safety. There are regular meetings with the enforcement team and joint inspections are carried out.

In the year to 31 March 2021, the service issued 0 alteration notices, 59 informal notifications, 36 enforcement notices, 6 prohibition notices and undertook 1 prosecution. In the last 5 years, from 2016/17 to 2020/21, it completed 13 prosecutions. During 2019/20, the service was involved in taking enforcement action that resulted in the largest ever fine for non-compliance with fire regulations.

The service has recently increased its protection resources

Our 2019 inspection included an area for improvement for the service to make sure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised RBIP. The service has made some progress. It has reviewed its pay structure and job descriptions to support recruitment and retention.

Although there has been a recent increase in protection resource it is too early to see how effective this will be. The protection department restructure has yet to be completed and the service plans to grow its team further over the next two years. We look forward to understanding the impact of the team once the new structure is fully in place.

The service has also yet to formalise an out-of-hours rota to provide 24-hour cover for protection activity. The current system, while effective, relies on staff who volunteer their time.

Staff get the right training and work to appropriate accreditation.

The service works closely with other agencies to regulate fire safety

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and routinely exchanges risk information with them. For example, it works with local housing authorities in relation to houses of multiple occupancy. And it works with West Yorkshire Fire Safety Group to identify and address new challenges to fire safety in the built environment.

The service response to building consultations is timely and supports its statutory responsibility

During our 2019 inspection we identified that the service should assure itself that it allocates enough resources to meet its own targets for responding to building control consultations. We are pleased to see that the service has acted and responds to the majority of building consultations on time. This supports its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings.

Business engagement to promote compliance with fire safety legislation is limited

The service could do more to engage with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. We were told that the continued promotion of fire safety with businesses is limited due to capacity within the team. The service has suspended its primary authority scheme until 2023, although any requests are being dealt with on a reactive basis.

The service acts to reduce unwanted fire signals

An effective risk-based approach is in place to manage the number of unwanted fire signals. Fire control operators challenge calls associated with automatic fire alarms. The service will only attend where a call is received from a person at the building and reasonably believes a fire has broken out or where there is a risk to life. It gets fewer calls because of this work.

Fewer unwanted calls mean that fire engines are available to respond to a genuine incident rather than responding to a false one. It also reduces the risk to the public if fewer fire engines travel at high speed on the roads.

Responding to fires and other emergencies

Good (2019: Good)

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at responding to fires and other emergencies.

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

Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure its mobile data terminals are reliable so that firefighters can readily access up-to-date risk information.
- The service should make sure 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 aligns resources to the risks identified in its IRMP

The service's response strategy is linked to the risks identified in its IRMP. Its fire engines and response staff, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to enable the service to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources. For example, it uses a risk-based planning approach which uses data gathered by the service. This makes sure that fire engines are in the most appropriate locations to respond to incidents as quickly as possible.

The service consistently achieves its targets for the time taken to respond to incidents

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standards in its IRMP. For example, in very high-risk areas the service aims to attend life incidents such as house fires within 7 minutes and property incidents such as commercial fires within 8 minutes on 80 percent of occasions. The service consistently meets this standard. The service also intends to make response performance publicly available in future by reporting it via the fire authority.

In the year to 31 March 2021, Home Office data shows the service's response time to primary fires was 8 minutes and 21 seconds. This is higher than the average time for predominantly urban services.

The service regularly reviews its response performance and makes changes when needed.

The overall availability of appliances supports the service's response standard

To support its response strategy, the service sets thresholds for the number of fire engines needed to meet its response standard. Overall, availability for the year to 31 March 2021 was 96.6 percent, an improvement on 94 percent the previous year.

Fire stations are located to provide cover based on local risk. And staff are available based on the level of risk that the local community faces. There are also arrangements in place with neighbouring fire and rescue services to supplement resource if required.

Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely

The service has trained incident commanders who are assessed regularly and properly. Since our 2019 inspection the service has provided further command training and development to improve staff understanding of operational discretion. To make sure this is consistent the service continues to provide targeted training and support. This enables the service to safely, assertively, and effectively manage the whole range of incidents that it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

As part of our inspection, we interviewed incident commanders from across the service. The incident commanders we interviewed are familiar with risk assessing,

decision making and recording information at incidents in line with national best practice, as well as the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)](#).

Fire control has some involvement with the service's command, exercise, debrief and assurance activity

We are pleased to see the service's control staff integrated into the service's command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. Fire control staff recalled attending operational debrief meetings used to review incident response, giving them an opportunity to provide feedback.

Fire control can provide fire survival guidance to multiple callers

The control room staff we interviewed are confident they could provide fire survival guidance to many callers simultaneously. This was identified as learning for fire services after the Grenfell Tower fire. The service has a fire survival guidance policy and procedure in place, which has been supported by staff training.

Control has good systems in place to exchange real-time risk information with incident commanders, other responding partners and other supporting fire and rescue services. Maintaining good situational awareness enables the service to communicate effectively with the public, providing them with accurate and tailored advice.

The service should ensure that systems support staff access to risk information all the time

We sampled a range of risk information associated with a small number of properties involving long and short-term risks. This included what is in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings and what information is held by fire control.

Although the information we reviewed wasn't always up to date we found it was comprehensive. Staff told us that they could easily understand the information but there are sometimes problems accessing it as the mobile data terminal on the fire engine can malfunction.

The service uses national operational guidance to inform its policies and should ensure operational performance is evaluated in a timely manner

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

There is some evidence of learning to improve operational performance. However, we are disappointed to find that the service doesn't consistently follow its policies to assure itself that staff command incidents in line with operational guidance. We found that the debriefing timescales set out in its policy aren't always achieved. The service told us that it has introduced a new process which isn't yet fully in place.

The service has responded to learning from incidents to improve its service for the public. For example, it has introduced wildfire awareness and refreshers before

wildfire season. And it has improved how it shares risk information with other agencies and fire and rescue services.

We are encouraged to see the service is contributing towards, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services or operational learning gathered from other emergency service partners. For example, the service now has access to National Police Air Service helicopter footage on its command units. The service is also (at time of writing) carrying out gap analysis of national operational guidance which is used to inform its policies and procedures.

The service is good at communicating incident-related information to the public

The service has good systems in place to inform the public about ongoing incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. This includes social media and its website. The service also has processes in place with the local resilience forum (LRF) to share information with the public.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

Good (2019: Good)

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

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

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 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 IRMP planning. These are considered for foreseeable risk and appropriate plans have been developed to support an effective response. These include planned events, severe weather risks and protests.

It is also familiar with the significant risks that could be faced by neighbouring fire and rescue services that it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. These include high-rise properties and wildfire areas in Greater Manchester and South Yorkshire. Firefighters now also have access to risk information from neighbouring services for areas within a 10 kilometre radius of the West Yorkshire border. This is an improvement to the arrangements reported in our 2019 inspection.

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

We reviewed the arrangements the service has in place to respond to different major incidents, including high-risk buildings, wide-area flooding and a marauding terrorist attack. The service has good arrangements in place, which are well understood by staff, to respond to a major incident. There is a specialist response team to deal with marauding terrorist attack incidents.

The service is well prepared to respond to local and national major incidents. Resources include a high volume pump (used for wide-area flooding) and a decontamination unit (used at incidents involving chemical hazards).

The service works well with other fire services

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. For example, it has mutual aid agreements with neighbouring fire and rescue services. 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. For example, it has assisted Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service at a large fire in student accommodation and has helped South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service tackle large moorland fires.

The service is taking steps to broaden its approach to cross-border exercising

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. The plan includes the risks of major events at which the service could foreseeably provide support or request assistance from neighbouring services. Cross-border training is generally organised by staff at fire stations located near the county's border. A central framework is being developed to extend this across the service.

We were encouraged to see that feedback from these exercises is used to inform risk information and service plans. For example, a neighbouring fire and rescue service has recently changed some processes and a joint training exercise is being arranged to help West Yorkshire staff understand what this means when dealing with incidents in that service's area.

Staff understanding of JESIP has been improved through command training

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with the JESIP. These are national principles which support all emergency services in working together at incidents.

The service could provide us with strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles and staff demonstrated a good understanding. The service also has joint training plans for JESIP with other agencies.

The service is an active member of the West Yorkshire LRF

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with other partners that make up the West Yorkshire LRF and the deputy chief fire officer is co-chair of the forum. These arrangements include planning for incidents such as extreme weather and events, for example at festivals. The service's media and communication team takes part in the warning and informing group. This helps all partners to give a co-ordinated message.

The service is a valued partner and takes part in regular training events with other members of the LRF and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

The service has arrangements in place with other agencies and partners such as Yorkshire Ambulance Service and the Environment Agency to work together at emergency incidents.

**The service fully supports national operational learning**

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

The chief fire officer leads a working group involved in the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) 'Fires in tall buildings' work. The service also takes part in the NFCC's National Operational Learning User Group.

Efficiency

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

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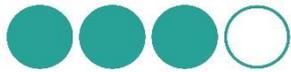
Good

Summary

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

The service has limited arrangements for managing performance. It would benefit from having clear key performance indicators and targets in all areas to show how it is making best use of its resources. The service has recognised this and a performance management project is in progress. We are interested to see the results of this activity.

The service has brought its treasury management function in-house to improve efficiency. It has also increased on-call staff's pay to improve availability, recruitment, and retention.

The service has developed a good understanding of future financial challenges. It has also identified savings and investment opportunities to improve the service to the public or generate further savings.

The service would benefit from improving its technology supplier management processes to support a better level of service.

Making best use of resources

Good (2019: Good)

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making best use of its resources.

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

The service's budget for 2021/2022 is £89.3m. This is an additional 2 percent change from the previous financial year.

Area for improvement

The service should have effective measures, targets, and processes in place to support performance management of its key business functions.

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 current financial plans support its objectives

The service's financial and workforce plans, including allocating staff to prevention, protection, and response, reflect and are consistent with the risks and priorities identified in the IRMP. For example, relocating the fire station at Cleckheaton will improve fire cover and be more efficient to maintain. The service has also carried out a review of day crewing to make sure it provides value for money.

Plans are built on sound scenarios. Finance are fully involved in IRMP and strategic planning. They have input to potential changes such as to funding, and what these might mean for the service. They help make sure the service is sustainable and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money.

The service recognises that it needs to improve arrangements for managing the performance of its key business functions

The service has limited arrangements for managing performance and these don't clearly show how successful the service is in delivering its IRMP and the service's strategic priorities. Only a few key performance indicators and targets are used to show how the service is making best use of its resources. In addition, there is a lack of oversight and management of key business functions.

The service has recognised this and has a performance management project in progress. The first phase of the project is expected during 2022. It will introduce key performance indicators and data to support performance management at an individual and organisational level. We are interested to see how the service realises the full potential of this activity.

The service is taking steps to make sure the workforce's time is as productive as possible. This includes implementing new ways of working. For example, the Command Leadership and Management (CLM) project has resulted in new responsibilities and increased capacity and productivity for watch managers. New on-call employment contracts have been introduced which provide increased financial security for individuals and support operational availability. Bringing the treasury management function in-house has achieved additional efficiencies and capacity.

The service had to adapt its working practices because of the pandemic, and these are still part of its day-to-day activity. These include some staff being able to work in a hybrid way, using a mix of remote and office working.

The service explores opportunities to collaborate with others

We are pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate, and routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. The service takes a practical approach to working with others and is exploring opportunities with other emergency services and beyond. For example, the service makes use of collaborative leasing agreements for its fleet to achieve value for money. The service also works with the police and Yorkshire Ambulance Service to respond to some incidents where it can reach people faster, gain entry and help individuals get attention sooner.

Collaborative work is aligned to the priorities in the service's IRMP. For example, the procurement strategy recognises the benefits from joint working and collaboration in optimising resources and achieving best value for money. There is some evidence that the service monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. Notable results include, in 2021/22, savings of £331,000 associated with national procurement and contract collaboration.

The service has plans to review its business continuity arrangements

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since the last inspection. The service has good continuity arrangements in place for areas where threats and risks are considered high. These threats and risks are regularly reviewed and tested so that staff are aware of the arrangements and their associated responsibilities.

The service told us its business continuity training is under review. Desktop testing is carried out. The service has recently taken part in an exercise on cyber-attacks with West Yorkshire local resilience forum.

The service has a degradation plan (known locally as derogation plan) to manage the impact of significant operational events and maintain delivery of its key functions. Fire control also has arrangements in place with other fire and rescue services to take calls if needed.

The service is involved in work with the Home Office to further develop industrial action business continuity plans.

The service has robust processes in place to manage non-pay costs

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. And this scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money. For example, robust challenge and scrutiny processes are in place. The service operates a budget monitoring system which holds budget owners to account. Variances are reported to the chief finance and procurement officer and accompanied with an action plan for correction or realignment.

The service has made savings and efficiencies, which haven't affected its operational performance and the service it provides to the public. The CLM project evaluation highlights that extra resources are now available to attend incidents. Additional command capacity has also been created, which increases opportunities for staff to develop.

The service is taking steps to make sure important areas, including estates, fleet, and procurement, are well placed to achieve efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. The introduction of a central procurement team has improved the procurement function. Any capital projects and spend are reported to the Capital Monitoring Group on a quarterly basis, with final project expenditure reported through the capital closedown process.

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

Good (2019: Good)

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

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

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

The service has robust plans in place which address future financial challenges

The service has developed a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its main or significant financial risks. For example, a greater than expected number of staff want to retire due to changes in the pension scheme. The service has offered potential retirees an incentive to give an extended notice period and therefore support its workforce planning.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic, and prudent, and take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. These include government funding, pay and inflation.

We are pleased to see that the service has identified savings and investment opportunities to improve the service to the public or generate further savings. The service advises that £56,600 of savings have been delivered by restructuring its management board. Monitoring officer responsibilities are provided through an agreement with Calderdale Council.

The service has a clear plan for its reserves

The service has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves. This plan includes the redevelopment of fire service headquarters.

Fleet and estate activity are linked to the IRMP

The service's estate and fleet strategies have clear links to the IRMP. The fleet strategy is in line with planned capital investment. Vehicles are being redesigned, as part of the fleet replacement programme, to provide a cleaner and safer environment for staff. There has been a thorough review of the estates function. The service has recognised that more work is needed to gain a better understanding of its estate to equip them for the future. Progress is being made, although work isn't yet complete.

Both strategies exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. For example, the relocation of Cleckheaton fire station is included in the redevelopment of fire service headquarters. This is a more cost-effective solution when compared to maintaining the building at its current location. This also supports fire cover arrangements.

The strategies are regularly reviewed so that the service can properly assess the impact on any changes in estate and fleet provision, or future innovation have on risk.

The service invests in technology to support change and improve efficiency

The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. However, staff told us about several ongoing system problems, for example in relation to its mobilisation system. The service would benefit from improving its supplier management processes to support a better level of service.

It also seeks to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology. Through its 'smarter working programme' the service has invested in new systems to support efficient ways of working. These include a self-serve purchase order system and a new rostering system which provides for more local management of staff movements. The service would also benefit from providing mobile access to its intranet for on-call staff.

The service has put in place the capacity and capability needed to achieve sustainable transformation, and it routinely seeks opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency and provide better services in the future. The pandemic has changed how and where people work, which has increased the demand on IT services. Systems and new hardware have been rolled out rapidly to help the service to operate effectively. The service is also taking part in the national trial for a new Emergency Services Network communications system.

The service takes advantage of opportunities to secure external funding and generate income

The service actively considers and exploits opportunities for generating extra income. For example, costs are recovered from attending incidents caused by an automatic fire alarm triggered in error.

Where appropriate, it has secured external funding to invest in improvements to the service provided to the public. The service has received COVID-19 grants totalling £2.5m. These have been invested in improvements in technology, and flexible ways of working. The grants have also been used to fund additional overtime costs caused by the effect the pandemic has had on business continuity, staffing and leave.

People
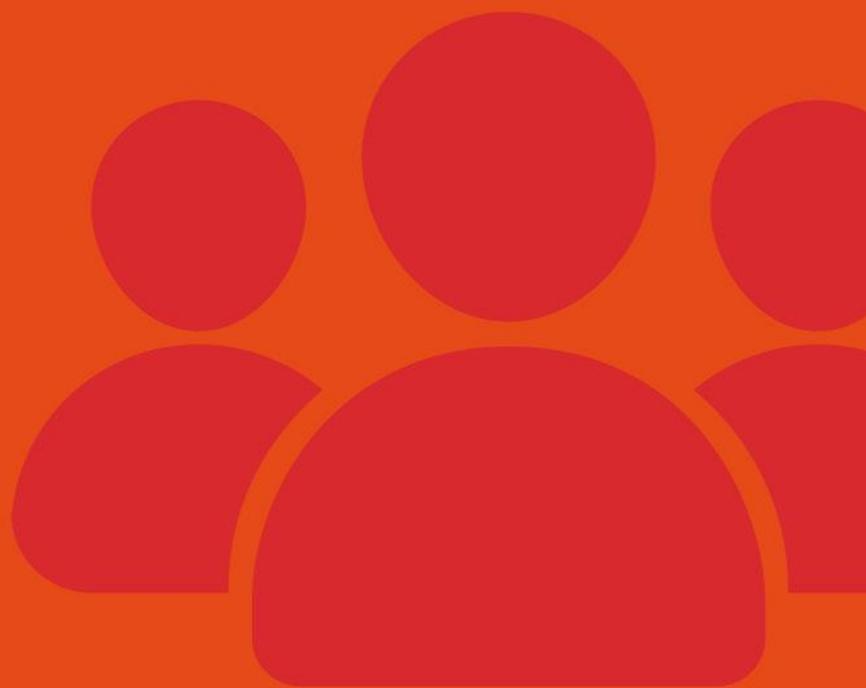
How well does the service look after its people?

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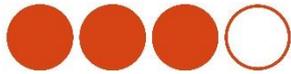
Good

Summary

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

During this inspection we were encouraged to hear staff feedback that visibility of and engagement with senior leaders has improved.

The service has effective wellbeing policies in place, and these are clearly understood. However, support could be improved for staff involved in a traumatic incident.

The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment campaigns. It employs a positive action champion. And it has adapted recruitment processes to increase the diversity of its assessment panels so that under-represented groups can better identify with the service.

The service has invested in a new system to support staff development and assess individual performance. It now needs to make sure that all staff understand and support its approach.

Promoting the right values and culture

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Good (2019: Good)

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at promoting the right values and culture.

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

Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to support staff following a traumatic incident.
- The service should ensure all staff are appropriately trained and up to date in relation to health and safety.

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

The service has well-defined values and staff engagement with senior leaders has improved

The service has well-defined values. Behaviours that reflect service values are shown at all levels of the service. Our staff survey showed that 95 percent of respondents (546 of 573) said they are aware of the service's statement of values. However, there is some evidence that staff understanding could be improved and the new annual review and promotion processes are now centred around the service's values. The service has carried out gap analysis to understand what is needed to align with the new national Core Code of Ethics. The service is satisfied that no changes to their current values are necessary.

Senior leaders act as role models. For example, we were encouraged to hear staff feedback that visibility of and engagement with senior leaders has improved. 'Let's Talk' briefings take place quarterly and give staff an opportunity for a two-way conversation with the senior management team. Of those who responded to our staff survey, 66 percent (363 of 573) said that senior leaders consistently model and maintain the service's values. When thinking about line managers and colleagues, this increases to 86 percent. However, some staff feel that the introduction of Command Leadership Management has reduced the visibility of the station managers.

Staff have access to services that support their mental and physical health

The service has well understood and effective wellbeing policies in place that are available to staff. A significant range of wellbeing support is available to support both physical and mental health. For example, there is an occupational health unit as well as an employee assistance programme and good physical fitness facilities.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff wellbeing. This includes mental health champions and welfare officers. Of those who responded to the survey, 93 percent (532 out of 573) told us they can access services to support their mental wellbeing.

However, only 39 percent of respondents (226 out of 573) told us they have a conversation about their health and wellbeing with their manager at least monthly. Support for staff involved in a traumatic incident could be improved as some staff weren't clear about what support was available or who to speak to.

Staff understand and have confidence in health and safety policies

The service continues to have effective and well understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. There are effective processes in place to monitor the health and safety of the workforce and the Health and Safety Committee meets quarterly to review performance and deal with any issues. The service has a comprehensive fitness policy which details the levels of fitness required and action to be taken by managers and staff.

These policies and procedures are readily available and effectively promoted to all staff. Information is available to staff on the intranet, via the *Burning Issues* newsletter and health and safety bulletins.

Both staff and representative bodies have confidence in the health and safety approach taken by the service. Of those who responded to our survey, 87 percent (501 of 573) feel their personal safety and welfare is treated seriously at work. Representative bodies also tend to agree that the service manages the health and safety of its staff well. All staff receive initial workplace health and safety training. Although there is no regular refresher training for all staff, operational staff access this through other training courses.

The service has processes and systems in place to support absence management

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 there are clear processes in place to manage absences for all staff. There is clear guidance for managers, who are confident in the process. Absences are managed well and in accordance with policy. The service has introduced a new system which provides better absence management information. Absence monitoring is in place and the Human Resources Committee meets quarterly to provide scrutiny and understand any trends.

Overall, the service has seen a decrease in staff absences over the 12 months between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

Getting the right people with the right skills

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Good (2019: Good)

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

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

> **Area for improvement**
>
> The service should make sure it has an effective, accurate and accessible system for recording and monitoring all staff training.

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

Workforce planning ensures that the required skills and capabilities are available

The service has good workforce planning in place. This makes sure skills and capabilities align with what is needed to effectively deliver the IRMP. Risk, the workforce and financial plans are the three major demands which shape the direction taken in the three-year IRMP. The workforce plan deals with operational resource requirements. The service is in the process of identifying its 'key posts' for non-operational staff as part of a talent management process. This is in its infancy. The service is also moving from having one large firefighter recruitment campaign to more frequent, smaller events.

Most staff told us that they could access the training they need to be effective in their role. The service's training plans make sure they can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, 81 percent (464 of 573) of respondents to the staff survey agreed that they have received enough training to do their job effectively.

The service monitors operational staff competency-based training by using a 'competency dashboard' which it has developed. However, non-competency-based training, such as safeguarding, isn't included on the dashboard. The service also isn't able to easily access all the training records held for staff and is looking at how to improve this.

The service updates its understanding of staff's skills and risk-critical safety capabilities in line with the revalidation policies it sets and by using [national operational guidance](). Annual development reviews with staff are also used to identify training needs. A business case process can be used to request additional training. The service recognises that following the introduction of Command Leadership Management it needed more crew managers. It has put a new development process in place to support crew members' development before promotion to speed up the promotion process. This approach means the service can identify gaps in workforce capabilities and resilience and can make sound and financially sustainable decisions about current and future needs.

The service supports staff with learning and development

A culture of continuous improvements is promoted across the service and staff are encouraged to learn and develop. For example, [fire control]() has developed its own standards which are linked to national occupational standards.

We are pleased to see that the service has a range of resources in place. This includes e-learning, which is available for staff on topics such as computer applications.

Overall, 75 percent of staff who responded to our survey (429 of 573) agree that they are satisfied with the level of learning and development that is available. This allows them to do their job effectively.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Good (2019: Good)

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

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

Areas for improvement
- The service should review how effective its policy on bullying, harassment and discrimination is in reducing unacceptable behaviour towards its staff.
- The service should assure itself that staff are confident using its feedback mechanisms.

> **Innovative practice**
>
> The service is investing in recruitment, including improving diversity through positive action to improve recruitment diversity.
>
> - It has employed a positive action officer, and the chief fire officer is also the positive action champion.
> - Its engagement style has been adapted and targeted.
> - Recruitment events are localised to increase engagement.
> - Assessment panels are more diverse so that all candidates can better identify with the service, including under-represented groups.

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

The service engages with staff on matters that affect them

There is a positive working culture across the service, with staff engaged in decisions that affect them. The service uses a number of communication methods to share information with staff. This includes the intranet and internal publications such as Burning Issues and Managers' Matters. However, some staff feel that communications could be better structured and focused, and the service is aware that improvements are needed.

Other actions being taken to address matters raised have been positively received by staff. This includes 'Let's Talk' sessions which give staff the opportunity to ask senior leaders questions. Staff networks, championed by senior leaders in the service, have been developed and are supporting the service in dealing with issues. However, 49 percent of staff (282 of 573) who responded to our survey don't feel confident in the methods for providing feedback at all levels. Representative bodies and staff associations reported that the service engages with them well, although they feel that the service could involve them earlier when dealing with problems.

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

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

In this inspection, 11 percent of staff who responded to our survey (65 of 573) told us they had been subject to bullying or harassment and 16 percent (90 of 573) had been subject to discrimination over the past 12 months. Of these staff, 56 percent didn't report the issue. The main reason given for this was that nothing would happen. Representative bodies don't feel the service has appropriate processes in place or takes appropriate action to eliminate bullying and harassment.

Most respondents to the staff survey are confident in the service's approach to tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination, grievances, and disciplinary matters. The bullying and harassment policy has been rewritten and staff networks are being used to get feedback about issues. The service has made sure all staff are trained and clear on what steps they should take if they encounter inappropriate behaviour. Grievance and discipline cases are monitored to understand any impacts for staff with protected characteristics. Further discipline and grievance training is planned for the year ahead. Service leaders have put in place several mechanisms for feedback from staff, and have improved how they act, so that staff, including those from diverse backgrounds and under-represented groups, have a better experience.

The service acts positively to improve diversity within recruitment

There is an open, fair, and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for the fire and rescue service.

The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment processes so they are fair and understood by applicants.

The service employs a positive action officer and the chief fire officer is also the positive action champion. The service has worked with an external media company to help it target recruitment campaigns, looking at how different groups want to engage and by using tailored messages. Recruitment events are more localised to increase engagement. It has also adapted recruitment processes to increase the diversity of its assessment panels so that under-represented groups can better identify with the service.

The recruitment policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles, other than directors and principal officers which are authority appointments. Recruitment opportunities are advertised externally.

The service has made some improvements in increasing staff diversity at all levels of the organisation. Of the whole workforce, as of 31 March 2021, 5 percent (70) are from ethnic minority backgrounds and 19 percent (270) are women. This is an improvement on five years ago.

As of 31 March 2021, 21 percent (17) of all joiners are women and 4 percent (2) of new joiners self-declared as being from ethnic minority backgrounds. This shows a reduction for both groups when compared to 2019/20. For firefighter recruitment, 10 percent (5) of all new recruits are women and just under 3 percent (1) are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The number of women is unchanged when compared with 2019/20, with recruitment from ethnic minority backgrounds showing a reduction.

The service knows it needs to go further to increase workforce diversity, especially in middle and senior management. The service advises that they currently have staff enrolled on a leadership programme for staff from ethnic minority backgrounds. The service is also working alongside the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to create talent and coaching mentoring to develop their staff. Priorities for the year ahead include investment in unconscious bias and behavioural interviewing training.

The service has improved its approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion

The service has improved its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and is making sure it can offer the right services to its communities and support staff with protected characteristics. For example, it is implementing an accessibility project to train staff on how to construct documents and present information to support individuals with neurodiverse conditions. It provides education and training on equality, diversity and inclusion to all staff.

It has developed several ways to engage with staff on equality, diversity, and inclusion. This includes methods to build all-staff awareness, as well as targeted engagement to identify matters that affect different staff groups, including to remove disproportionality. For example, a series of mental health awareness sessions have been introduced and the service provides 'lunch and learn' sessions dealing with topics such as International Women's Day and black history. The service has also introduced an on-call steering group and liaison officer to improve communications and engagement with on-call staff.

The service has an effective process in place for assessing equality impact and taking action. It has been recognised at a national level, receiving a bronze award for the work done in this area. The service recognises that gender appropriate workplace facilities aren't available or suitable in all buildings. Its approach to equality impact assessment will support the progression of issues more effectively.

Managing performance and developing leaders

Good (2019: Good)

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

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

Area for improvement

The service should improve all staff understanding and application of the performance (annual) review process.

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

The service has improved its management of individuals' performance

There is a good performance management system in place which allows the service to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff. It has invested in a new system which has improved the staff annual performance review process. The new process also requires staff to provide evidence about how they demonstrate the behaviours associated with the service's core values. Guidance is provided to staff in relation to carrying out performance and development reviews. Annual reviews are completed for all staff groups. Quality assurance is carried out as the service requires that the manager's manager revises and countersigns the review document.

Through our staff survey, most respondents reported that they receive regular discussions with their manager. Although some staff told us they don't always find performance conversations valuable. We also found that some staff don't have clear targets and objectives.

The service is developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair

The service has some succession planning processes in place which allows it to manage the career pathways of staff, including into leadership roles and roles requiring specialist skills. A talent assessment is included as part of an individual's annual review and is used to support the management of talent and succession planning. At the time of inspection, the service hadn't fully formalised the talent management structure and expects that it will be in place by April 2022. When this is in place, a talent list will be available for all staff groups to identify and support the development of future leaders. This will also take account of the NFCC's national talent management process. We are interested to see how effective this is in identifying and supporting all high-potential members of staff.

It has put considerable effort into developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair and understood by staff. The service provides a 'promotion toolkit' which is available to staff on the intranet. It also has a project in progress to provide development for operational staff before they move to a new role (currently staff 'develop' once in role). Interview questions are provided shortly before an interview starts to allow candidates some time to prepare. However, there is evidence that staff feel that more is needed as only 55 percent, (314 of 573), of respondents to our survey agree that promotion processes are fair. The promotion and progression policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles.

Selection processes are managed consistently. We reviewed recent promotion processes and found these were in line with the service's policy. Temporary promotions are used appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps.

The service supports the development of leadership and high-potential staff

The service has succession planning processes in place which allows it to manage high-potential staff into leadership roles. It is also developing its talent management processes.

There are talent management schemes to develop specific staff. The service has a qualifications and sponsorship policy to support all staff with job specific and personal development training. Apprenticeships are also available to staff. The service has introduced a 'firefighter safe to command' role as part of the Command Leadership and Management project. This increases the opportunity for individual development.

The service's priorities for the year ahead are to invest in unconscious bias, behavioural interviewing, discipline, and grievance training. We look forward to seeing the outcome of these in our next inspection.

The service advertises all talent and leadership opportunities for all staff to consider. Opportunities are shared both internally and externally.