

Hereford and Worcester Fire And Rescue Authority

Organisational Assessment (Summary version)

Pre-publication version dated 03 December 2009

Provided under embargo



for an independent overview
of local public services

Hereford and Worcester Fire And Rescue Authority

Overall, Hereford and Worcester Fire And Rescue Authority performs well

Managing performance	3 out of 4
Use of resources	3 out of 4
Managing finances	3 out of 4
Governing the business	3 out of 4
Managing resources	3 out of 4

Description of scores:

- 1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
- 2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
- 3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
- 4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

The FRA performs well and scores 3 out of 4 for its organisational assessment. This is because the FRA is achieving its main priority - to keep people safe from fire. The risk from fire is low. Fires and fire deaths and injuries have been reducing at a rapid rate and last year the FRA recorded the lowest number of fires ever. The FRA responds to incidents quickly and is making a difference to the lives of vulnerable people who are at risk. It promotes equality and diversity in what it does and is reducing arson and road casualties. It is providing value for money as it is low cost and achieves high performance. It manages its finances well and links funding to priority services. It is self aware and is well placed to make further improvements with plans and funds in place.

The FRA performs well and scores 3 out of 4 for managing performance. Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority manages performance well, because it is providing an effective and improving fire and rescue service to communities and provides value for money. It is also well placed to make further improvements.

People in Herefordshire and Worcestershire are at low risk from the dangers of fire and last year the FRA attended the lowest number of fires ever recorded in the two counties. Accidental house fires, fire deaths and injuries have been reducing rapidly for a few years - at one of the fastest rates nationally.

The work of the FRA is helping to make people safe in their homes. The FRA

has a good understanding of communities and visits the most vulnerable people to improve safety. Arson is not a widespread problem in most parts of the county and the work of the FRA has lessened the occurrence by half in the last 3 years.

It works closely with other agencies on a wide range of community issues. For example, while ensuring vulnerable individuals and families are safe from the dangers of fire it helps to ensure they can live independently in their own homes. Youth work includes a Young Firefighter Association and talks to schools about arson and malicious calls as well as fire safety. This is helping to improve levels of home fire safety, reduce arson and ASB. The FRA is improving safety on the local roads where deaths and serious injuries are fairly high.

The FRA is among the best services in the country for promoting equality and diversity. It has gained a high standard - level 4 - on the national local government equality standard and a high score of 95% for the duty to promote race equality. Customer service, engagement and care are also good. It has gained a nationally recognised award - the Charter Mark - with twelve important areas which are national best practice.

The FRA is responding quickly and effectively to emergencies. It is achieving attendance standards to attend fires and other emergencies anywhere in the two counties within a time limit of 10 minutes.

The FRA is aware of where it can get better. For example, by further reducing attendances to unwanted fire alarms and malicious fire calls which, although improving, are rather high. Sickness levels are also high and levels rose and fell over recent years. There are also a few staff new to their current posts and therefore grappling with new areas of responsibility. Despite these minor shortcomings which the FRA is tackling, is well positioned and has the capacity to make further improvements.

The FRA scores 3 out of 4 for Use of Resources.

The FRA is providing value for money in the way it provides and improves services to communities and it is achieving safer communities. It is low cost and is high performing. It is good at making savings and has made above average levels of efficiency savings some from more efficient staffing arrangements at stations.

It looks for opportunities to reduce costs by buying essential equipment with others and has made many efficiency savings over recent years.

The FRA manages its finances well. It links money to its priorities such as community safety. It is improving performance and does not under or overspend its budget. The FRA has also got extra money for itself and Worcestershire by meeting its targets to reduce arson in high risk areas.

Financial arrangements are effective and the 2008/09 accounts completed, audited and approved well in advance of the required date of September. However, during the auditing of the 2008/09 accounts some errors were found.

The FRA is in a good position to improve further. It is displaying leadership, by influencing partners and supporting a wide range of community activities. It is clear about what is important to local people and what needs improving. It plans well for the future, regularly checks and manages how it is improving.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>



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