HMICFRS

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

Fire & Rescue Service
Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19

An inspection of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Contents

About this inspection

This is the first time that HMICFRS has inspected fire and rescue services across England. Our focus is on the service they provide to the public, and the way they use the resources available. The inspection assesses how effectively and efficiently Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service prevents, protects the public against and responds to fires and other emergencies. We also assess how well it looks after the people who work for the service.

In carrying out our inspections of all 45 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. After taking all the evidence into account, we apply a graded judgment for each of the three questions.

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

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

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

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

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

If we find serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, we will judge it as **inadequate**.

Service in numbers

Public perceptions

	Hereford and Worcester	England
Perceived effectiveness of service Public perceptions survey (June/July 2018)	90%	86%

Response

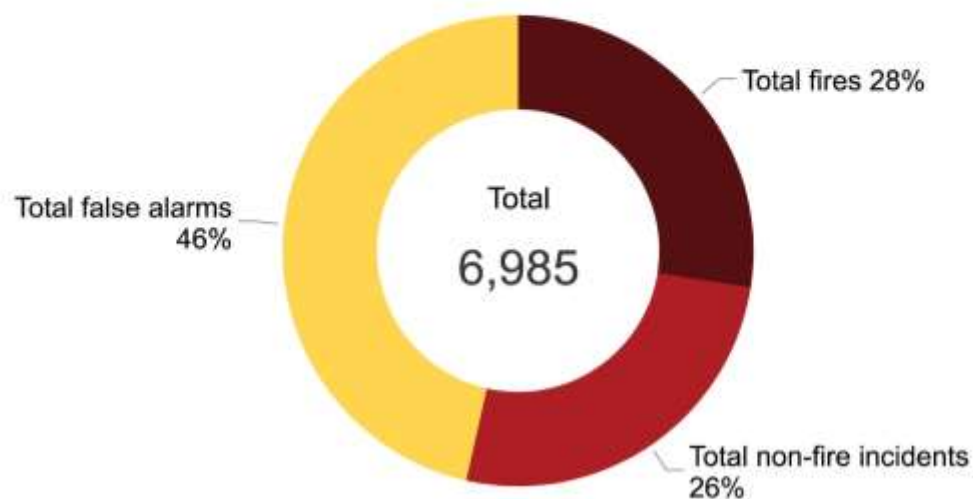|	Hereford and Worcester	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2018	9.0	10.2
Home fire risk checks carried out by FRS per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2018	5.3	10.4
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises 12 months to 31 March 2018	3.9	3.0

Incidents attended in the 12 months to 31 March 2018

Total fires 28%

Total false alarms 46%

Total
6,985

Total non-fire incidents 26%

£ Cost

	Hereford and Worcester	England
Firefighter cost per person per year 12 months to 31 March 2018	£20.02	£22.38

⊛ Workforce

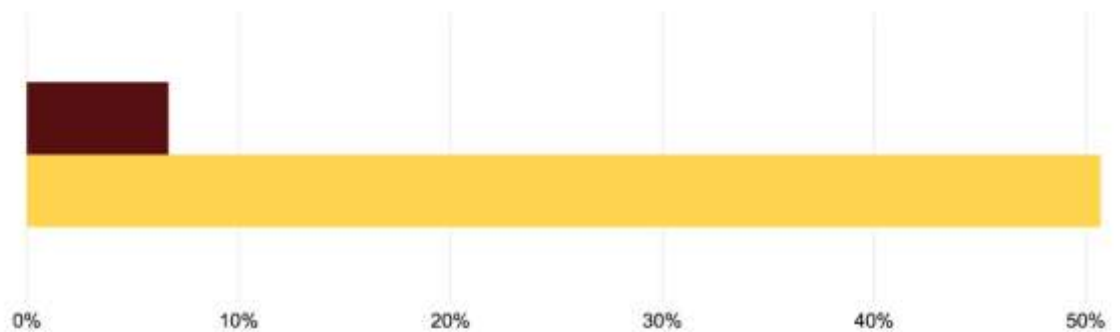|	Hereford and Worcester	England
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population As at 31 March 2018	0.6	0.6
Five-year change in workforce As at 31 March 2013 compared with 31 March 2018	-20%	-14%
Percentage of wholetime firefighters As at 31 March 2018	51%	70%

Percentage of female firefighters as at 31 March 2018

● Female firefighters ● Female residential population

Percentage of black, Asian and minority ethnic firefighters as at 31 March 2018

● BAME firefighters ● BAME residential population
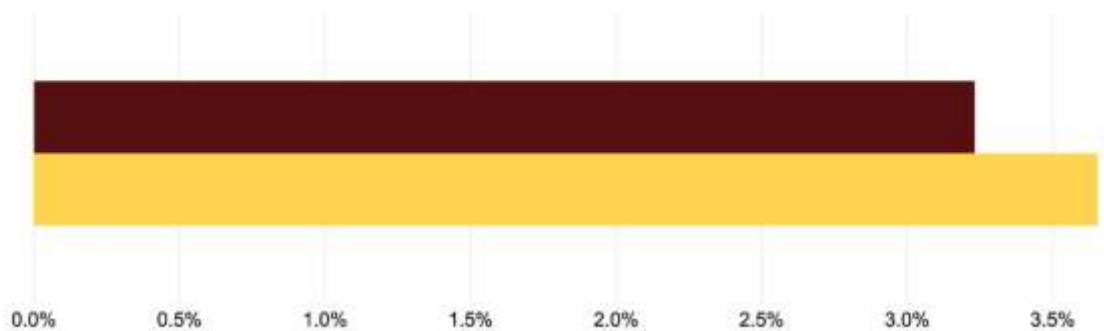
Please refer to annex A for full details on data used.

Overview

⚙ **Effectiveness**	●●●○	**Good**
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	●●●○	Good
Preventing fires and other risks	●●○○	Requires improvement
Protecting the public through fire regulation	●●●○	Good
Responding to fires and other emergencies	●●●○	Good
Responding to national risks	●●●○	Good
£ **Efficiency**	●●○○	**Requires improvement**
Making best use of resources	●●○○	Requires improvement
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	●●●○	Good

People

Requires improvement

		Rating
Promoting the right values and culture		Requires improvement
Getting the right people with the right skills		Good
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity		Requires improvement
Managing performance and developing leaders		Requires improvement

Overall summary of inspection findings

We are satisfied with some aspects of the performance of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. But there are areas where the service needs to make improvements.

The service keeps people safe from fire and other emergencies in an effective manner. It is good at:

- understanding risk;
- protecting the public through fire regulation;
- responding to fires and emergencies; and
- responding to national risks.

But it does need to improve its prevention activity.

The service needs to improve the way it looks after its people. This is particularly the case in these areas:

- promoting the right values and culture;
- ensuring fairness and promoting diversity; and
- managing performance and developing leaders.

However, it is good at getting the right people with the right skills.

It needs to provide a more efficient service, particularly in the way it uses resources. But it provides an affordable service.

Overall we would like to see improvements in the year ahead.

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 will target its fire prevention and protection activities to those who are at greatest risk from fire. It will make sure businesses comply with fire safety legislation. When the public calls for help, the fire and rescue service should respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness is good.

The service is good at understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies. Its plan to manage risk is based on a range of information. However, mobile computer systems are not updated fast enough with this risk information. The service recognises this and has plans in place to address this. Community engagement could also be better, to help understand local risk.

The service needs to improve how it prevents fires and other risk. Its prevention plan does not explain how or when things will be done. The service has extended its home fire safety checks to include questions about vulnerable people. Further training is needed to give staff more confidence in this process. This is currently being assessed. The service should also ensure it evaluates all its prevention activity.

The service is good in how it protects the public through fire regulation. It needs to get the right balance between inspections based on risk and those based on intelligence. However, the work of the multi-agency targeted enforcement team has the potential to be notable practice. The service supports local businesses in understanding fire regulations. It should also work more closely with them to reduce the number of false alarms.

The service is good at responding to fires and other emergencies. It has good equipment and training. It is flexible in how it responds to incidents and follows national guidance. However, it should use hot debriefs more often. Also, when it evaluates incident commanders, it should share the learning more widely.

The service is good at responding to national risks. It has good plans in place and staff understand what they need to do. Staff have done local and national multi-agency training exercises. The service works closely with other nearby services.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

● ● ● ○

Good

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is good at understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

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

All fire and rescue services should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks. They should also prevent and mitigate these risks.

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

Understanding local and community risk

The public can give general feedback about Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service through links on its website. The procedure to submit comments and complaints is explained and includes expected response times. The website provides users with clear information and considers people with impairments and disabilities. The information can also be obtained in other languages, although these alternatives are not instantly accessible.

The website includes a section where consultations are published, like the Wyre Forest Emergency Services hub. Apart from statutory consultations, however, like the one for the Wyre Forest hub, local station engagement with the community is limited. The service could not show how it engages with the community concerning the services it provides. The only exception is the service's 'after fire' surveys, which it is aiming to improve.

We found that each station has its own top five risks, known as '7(2)d' risks. Section 7(2)d of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a responsibility on fire and rescue services to gather risk information within their area. Fire crews visit at least three of the risk sites in each station area each year, undertaking training exercises. In addition, all watches and on-call staff make familiarisation visits on a rolling programme, depending on the level of risk. Certain high-risk sites are visited every year, with others visited every two or three years. All relevant information for the sites is checked to see whether there have been any changes. Updates are recorded.

We were told that the service uses Mosaic data to map community risk in relation to poverty levels, which informs station risk profiles. The service can also access Exeter data (a database of all patients registered with an NHS GP in England and Wales). It is reviewing how it can use this more widely, for example in building station risk profiles. The service is developing data on the top five economic risks in an area. For example, this could be the loss of a school or a major employer. It assesses the wider economic effect that this would have on the community, and how the service would manage that risk.

The service has an established referral process with local heath and social care teams to identify vulnerable residents. It also exchanges certain data with partner organisations, such as Age Concern, to highlight the people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. But this depends on local arrangements. It is not done countywide. The Worcestershire Office of Data and Analytics – which is supported by senior leaders across the public sector – plans to make better use of the service's data. The service also says it wants to use data held by partner organisations better.

The service's strategic plan is called the community risk management plan (CRMP); in other services, it is known as the integrated risk management plan. The service uses various data (dwelling house fires, other building fires, casualties, and indices of multiple deprivation) to create a risk map. It has mapped risk, and the reduction of risk, since 2009. The data was reviewed and updated as part of the CRMP mid-point review in 2017/2018. Within the CRMP, there are links to the national risk register and the local resilience forum community risk register, called West Mercia Prepared. This deals with the requirements of the fire and rescue national framework for England in planning for, and meeting, national risks.

Having an effective risk management plan

The CRMP 2014–2020 document sets out clearly how the service uses information to assess risk within the two counties, and how it manages the risk under the following headings:
- identify the hazard;
- assess the risk;
- review and rank the risk;
- agreed actions to reduce risk; and
- action planning.

The service has produced five strategies that support the CRMP and its overall objectives. These are:
- medium-term financial strategy;
- ICT and data strategy;
- asset management plan;
- people strategy; and
- community risk strategy.

Four of these strategies are part of the 'saving more lives' programme, recently introduced by the service. They are easy to understand and link to the overall CRMP. The community risk strategy also supports the CRMP. But while the priorities within this strategy are clear, it is less clear how they will be achieved, or how they link to the CRMP.

We saw examples of risk strategies for districts, as well as for the areas covered by each station. The station risk plans are publicly available and linked to each fire station website page. These describe the risk profile for each station, including high-risk locations and heritage risk, and the activities to reduce this risk. The service has a single point of contact for heritage risk and its role includes managing the heritage risks that come under the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005.

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is in the process of a potential change of governance from the combined fire authority to the West Mercia police and crime commissioner. This was subject to a judicial review at the time of our inspection and the process had been suspended. The service is also evaluating proposals for a joint work stream with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (whose governance may also change, to come under the West Mercia police and crime commissioner) to adopt a common approach to their risk management plans.

Maintaining risk information

Staff clearly explained to us the process for gathering risk information. When a new risk is identified, staff complete basic details (premises information and apparent risk) and send this to the district watch commander. The watch commander then reviews other available information and completes a more detailed risk assessment. This is added to the information held on fire crews' mobile data terminals. In urgent cases, a temporary action note is sent to control, and information is put on the mobilising system. This ensures that fire crews receive the information via the station turnout message and on their mobile data terminals as well.

Operational crews visit risk premises to familiarise themselves with the location and complete risk reviews. The schedule for these visits depends on the number of risk premises within each station area, and on the level of risk. Staff also gave us examples of floor plans being placed in dry risers within high-rise buildings, so that crews can use them, should an incident occur. Risk information is only gathered by wholetime crews and managers.

Staff informed us that delays often occur in uploading new or updated risk records to the mobile data terminals. This is due to limited capacity to produce the plans and to the need to update each fire engine mobile data terminal manually. This means that it can take several months to upload the full risk information. This is an area for improvement.

Preventing fires and other risks

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Requires improvement

Areas for improvement
- The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.

- The service should ensure staff understand how to identify vulnerability and safeguard vulnerable people.

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

Prevention strategy

The service's prevention strategy is part of the community risk strategy 2017–2020. It lays out the broad priorities, which are:

- To reduce the number of accidental fires in the home.
- To work with our businesses to ensure they are properly protected.
- To reduce the number of deliberate fires.
- To improve the health and wellbeing of people in our area.
- To reduce the number of road fatalities and the injury severity of those involved in road traffic collisions.

The document gives members of the public a good overview, but lacks any detail. It does not explain how and when these priorities will be implemented, or who is responsible for ensuring they are completed. We witnessed a more targeted approach to prevention when we visited stations to do reality testing. Staff members agree on which areas to focus, based on local risk profiles.

The service undertakes home fire safety checks and has recently completed a pilot scheme for safe and well checks. Safe and well checks involve staff thinking about wider risks for vulnerable people, such as the potential for slips, trips and falls, hoarding, and other health concerns. Worcester University is currently evaluating the pilot scheme. We look forward to reviewing the results of this academic assessment.

In the meantime, the community fire risk management information system (CFRMIS) forms for home fire safety checks have been adapted. They now include more detail about vulnerable people who may be at greater risk from fire in the home. The extra information means the service is able to tell vulnerable people where they can get additional assistance. The CFRMIS system provides a daily report of vulnerable people for the safeguarding lead to make referrals to the most appropriate organisation, such as Age Concern. This addresses some of the immediate

concerns about vulnerable people, such as a lack of mobility, or whether the person uses oxygen. The information is also sent to fire control to update command and control systems with the immediate risk. Once the process for safe and well checks is fully implemented, it should ensure a consistent and appropriate approach is taken to supporting those people who are the most vulnerable.

We found that staff had varying levels of understanding about safeguarding and vulnerable people. Staff informed us that most of the training has been done via e-learning, and that some people are not confident about what questions to ask, to complete the new home fire safety checks. The service acknowledges this and says it is planning further training as part of the rollout of safe and well checks.

Partner organisations are very positive about how the service takes the lead with initiatives, and about its work to support vulnerable people. The 'connecting families' programme is a good example of joint working to turn around the lives of disadvantaged families through early intervention. Partner organisations share data about vulnerable families to enable targeted interventions, depending on need. The programme has not been formally evaluated yet, but there are plans to do so.

The majority of referrals for home fire safety checks come from partner organisations. These referrals are for high priority, vulnerable individuals who require support from the service. The referrals are allocated to crews or specialist staff for completion in the order they are received unless the required checks are identified as urgent.

The service does have access to Exeter and Mosaic data, but does not use this information to create risk profiles that guide prevention activity. It believes the current system of referrals from partner organisations enables it to target 'at risk' groups. The service will review this at a later date.

The service recognises it has not evaluated all of its preventative work, other than the assessment of safe and well checks conducted by Worcester University and the Dying2Drive road safety scheme.

Promoting community safety

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has made 'reducing deliberate fires' one of the five priorities of the community risk strategy. Staff are aware that the service has a juvenile fire-setters programme, and that referrals go through to technicians within the community safety teams.

The service website has links to useful information for prevention and to government fire safety advice. It displays the latest campaign information at the top of the page. Links to various campaigns can be found in the events calendar. Each station risk profile also has a copy of the National Fire Chiefs Council campaigns calendar. The corporate communications team links national campaigns to local issues.

Partner organisations acknowledge that they could do more to assist the service with campaigns and campaign promotions. At the moment, joint planning is limited.

Road safety

The service is involved in several road safety campaigns. It runs 'dying to drive' sessions, which is a road safety initiative aimed at reducing death and serious injury among young road users. This initiative is primarily aimed at Year 11 students (aged 15 to 16) who will soon become young drivers. The scheme is run with the other emergency services. The service considers this scheme a success and plans to have it formally evaluated soon. Some staff informed us that the Safer Roads Partnership does not support this scheme, as it does not focus on their target group.

The service works with the Safer Roads Partnership to run 'green light'. This programme educates sixth-form and college students about why so many young drivers and passengers are involved in road traffic collisions, and how they can avoid them. The 'dying to drive' and 'green light' programmes both target a similar age group. We would therefore encourage the service to discuss this with the Safer Roads Partnership, to agree on an effective joint approach.

The service leads the Biker Down programme within the two counties. This is a national programme, run by bikers for bikers. It gives motorcyclists information on what to do if they are the first to arrive at the scene of an accident involving a motorcyclist.

Protecting the public through fire regulation

Good

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is good at protecting the public through fire regulation. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

> **Areas for improvement**
> - The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.
>
> - The service should assure itself that its enforcement plan prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.

All fire and rescue services should assess fire risks in buildings and, where 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.

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

Risk-based approach

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has a risk-based inspection programme, which is managed via the community fire risk management information system (CFRMIS). This is consistent with the fire and rescue national framework for England. We reviewed the fire safety policy and found that it did not contain much detail about how the service classifies risk and manages its risk-based inspection programme.

The service has a protection team for each of its three districts. These are supervised by a station manager, who has responsibility for community protection and community safety. Within each team, all members have a [Level 4 Diploma in Fire Safety](#) and some inspectors have a Level 5 Diploma in Fire Engineering Design. All staff can carry out each other's roles.

The service uses operational crews to carry out business fire-safety checks. We found that most crews had a good understanding of the process and of the importance of gathering wider operational intelligence. Assigning these checks to operational crews means fire safety officers can concentrate on more high-risk inspections. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, the had service audited 92 percent of the 107 identified high-risk premises. This confirms that allocating checks in this way has enabled fire safety officers to focus on high-risk premises inspections.

The service has made a considerable effort to move to more intelligence-led safety inspections. Two projects exemplify this in particular: the team targeting houses in multiple occupation; and the multi-agency targeted enforcement (MATE) team in Herefordshire. These projects are resulting in an increase in enforcements; however, the service feels this is targeting those most at risk.

The dilemma for the service is that this intelligence-led approach has reduced its capacity for risk-based inspection work. Staff told us that inspectors are unlikely to be able to complete all their risk-based inspections due to the additional intelligence-led work. The service needs to consider what balance it wants to take. Its fire safety enforcement strategy should be clear about how much of its inspection work will be pre-planned and risk-based, and how much will be intelligence-led, and why.

Enforcement

The work of the MATE team is innovative. It involves partners from a range of organisations that all work together from one location. These partners are:

- West Mercia Police;
- Herefordshire Council Trading Standards;
- Herefordshire Council Housing Enforcement;
- Herefordshire Council Environmental Health;
- Home Office Immigration Enforcement;
- HMRC; and
- Gangmasters Licensing Authority.

The service informed us that inspectors took [fire safety enforcement action](#) at approximately 75 percent of the premises targeted by the MATE team. We reviewed a case that started with the service issuing an enforcement notice but led to much wider public safety and organised crime issues. The work of the MATE team has the potential to be notable practice. The service should consider formalising this in a partnership agreement and evaluate the outcomes.

Although the service has taken other enforcement action, it has not carried out a prosecution for a number of years. However, its level of enforcement action has increased. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018 there were 132 Article 30 enforcement notices, compared with 45 in the year before. The service recognises that it needs to develop skills and capacity in this area, as it is not currently using the full range of its powers as a regulator.

Working with others

Information available to businesses through the service's website is generally good. It is easy to read and has links to appropriate legislation and guidance on risk assessments. The service hosts business forums at its headquarters, together with other enforcing authorities. These forums aim to help businesses to understand and work through all the rules and regulations.

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service provides [primary authority](#) services to two large local companies. A watch manager runs the scheme. The service admits it could offer these services to more companies.

The service is updating its policy for unwanted fire signals (false alarms from fire alarms and detection systems). It last partially updated this in 2014. We found evidence that the service is working with premises where repeat activations occur. This depends on individual operational managers, however, and protection officers are only used when they request it. As the number of false alarms makes up a large proportion of the incidents attended to by the service, the service should continue its work to engage with business and reduce false alarms.

Responding to fires and other emergencies

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Good

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is good at responding to fires and other emergencies. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

> **Areas for improvement**
> - The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command.

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 interoperability) 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.

Managing assets and resources

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service supports its response activity with a good standard of equipment and training. It has national assets, including an urban search and rescue team, a high-volume pump and boat and water rescue capability. The policy of the service is to provide a balance of cover across the service area, and move firefighters and equipment around if gaps occur (e.g. where a fire engine is unavailable for some reason).

The service measures areas of risk that are as consistent as possible in population size. It uses its own defined response times to risk-critical incidents, where there is a risk to life, to buildings or to the environment. For building fires, the response standard is ten minutes on 75 percent of occasions. Data supplied by the service showed that it met this standard 59.7 percent of the time for the 12 months to 31 March 2018.

The service has pre-determined response levels for incident types. We saw these being used when we visited fire control. Control operators can select a pre-determined attendance type (number of fire engines, specialist equipment etc.), but can increase or decrease this, depending on the information they receive and their professional judgement. Control operators also monitor call-handling performance times. We saw evidence of this with an individual operator who followed up a call that had fallen outside set call handling times to find out the reasons for the delay. Control operators could confidently describe procedures, such as fire survival guidance and breathing apparatus emergencies. The service also offers access to a language service for non-English speakers.

Operational crews that we spoke to could confidently demonstrate the use of breathing apparatus and carry out the appropriate testing and recording. They could also describe what to do during a breathing apparatus emergency and/or a potential building collapse.

Response

The service has carried out a gap analysis against national operational guidance. Where it varies, it highlights the difference and carries out work to improve matters. The service has already updated its breathing apparatus and incident command procedures.

We found that the use of mobile data terminals in vehicles is well understood and is an effective way of managing information on mobilisation. If necessary, control operators will confirm important information with crews while they are on their way to an incident. The mobile data terminal also contains information on vehicle data for crews to access when attending road traffic accidents. This allows them to find battery isolation points and areas to avoid cutting during extraction.

The service recognises that the availability of on-call firefighters is a current and future challenge. At several locations, staff (both wholetime and on-call), expressed their concerns about the availability of the on-call fire engine, as this often led to delays in additional crews attending an incident. The service is working on addressing this concern and is implementing an on-call charter. We look forward to reviewing this charter.

Command

We found that the principles of incident command are well understood at all levels across the service. Managers know the requirements for dynamic as well as analytical risk assessments. Staff are aware of the incident command pack held in fire engines and understand how it should be used.

The use of operational discretion at an incident is broadly understood. Staff feel they would be supported if they had to use it. We were given an example of when it had been used and then debriefed, after which the learning was shared across the organisation. The service intends to do more to ensure all staff fully understand it, and any use of it properly recorded.

Keeping the public informed

The service uses social media via Twitter to update users on incidents or other matters of note. There is a section on the front page called 'latest incidents', and the service shows all incidents from Twitter on this page.

All press-related enquiries are forwarded to the service's corporate communications team during working hours. Out-of-hours cover for media and press enquiries is the responsibility of the duty officer. Each duty officer has received media and social media training. Control can also send out priority messages.

Operational staff broadly know what to do when they encounter a person who is vulnerable. They all know that, if they have concerns, they may contact control to request support from a more senior officer. Nobody we spoke to had first-hand experience of this happening.

Evaluating operational performance

The senior management board receives quarterly reports on all operational assurance activities and acts on any deficiencies. Operational learning comes from debrief findings. We found that the use of incident debriefs varies between stations. At some locations, hot debriefs (that is debriefs shortly after the incident has occurred) follow all incidents, whereas at other stations they rarely happen. The service's incident and exercise debrief policy contains a clear process for identifying wider fire and rescue service or multi-agency learning. Nominated members of staff are responsible for identifying and communicating responses to joint operational learning and national operational learning. This is gathered together by a single point of contact and shared across the service. Electronic debriefs contain a specific section for Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) consideration.

The service uses active incident monitoring (AIM) to assess incident commanders. It believes this system is effective. It publishes the number of AIM assessments it carries out, as part of its performance snapshot to the public. However, with the number of incidents declining, AIM assessments are not always easy to achieve. Staff we spoke to were not clear about when these assessments should be carried out and who should complete them. The service acknowledges that this process is still evolving. We are keen to see how this work develops.

Responding to national risks

Good

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

Preparedness

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has good arrangements in place to mobilise national resilience assets. Control staff are confident about the arrangements for national asset deployment. They told us how they inform the Fire and Rescue Service National Co-ordination Centre when national assets are mobilised and explained about information collection and planned holding areas. Recent examples of when the service has deployed national assets include Norfolk (tidal surge) and Devon and Somerset (flooding Somerset Levels).

Premises' risk plans are documented, up to date and available for crews. Site plans for the top five risk premises in the area have been used to create simulations on a virtual reality system. This allows staff to test various scenarios and learn in an interactive way. It is an effective system; we found that staff have a good knowledge of these sites.

The service has done training exercises in high-rise premises involving crews across the county. Operational staff have also completed larger-scale exercises, involving ambulance hazardous area response teams and other fire and rescue services.

Working with other services

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service shares the same control system technology with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. Each service has its own system but allows the other service to log on and access its functions. This means that each service can mobilise the other's resources in a fall-back situation. This happens when a fire control is forced to change procedures due to a loss of a piece of equipment or to the need to change location. This was used when Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service had staffing shortages and when Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service suffered a loss of its communications control system.

We found several examples of the service working with nearby fire and rescue services (English and Welsh), both operationally and in training. The service collects risk data for other fire and rescue service areas up to 10km away and we saw this demonstrated at several sites.

Managers were confident in describing JESIP. The service has chosen to incorporate the recommended message structure into its standard radio messages. Control operators assist staff when the standard of messages has not been met.

Working with other agencies

The West Mercia local resilience forum is positive about the involvement of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service in supporting its work. This includes chairing some of the sub-groups. The county has two control of major accident hazard sites. As well as helping produce plans for the site, the service regularly completes exercises there to test the plans.

The service takes part in multi-agency exercises and invites partner organisations to attend training exercises it is running. Recently, the service was part of an exercise involving a crashed aircraft. It has also carried out training with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service in marauding terrorist attack procedures, using their shared national incident liaison officer cadre. They used the example of the Manchester terrorist attack to carry out table-top scenarios.

Efficiency

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

Requires improvement

Summary

An efficient fire and rescue service will manage its budget and spend money properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to its risk. It should try to keep costs down without compromising public safety. Future budgets should be based on robust and realistic assumptions. Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency requires improvement.

The service made ambitious plans in 2014 that it has not achieved. These were based on saving money by improving efficiency and making changes to the workforce. The financial plan is good and is based on sensible assumptions. But delays in bringing in the planned changes are costing the service money. This presents a risk. We found that staff do not fully understand the proposed changes to the role of watch managers. The service needs to address this situation.

Progress made in the service's prevention work is likely to increase workloads in other areas. We found that specialist prevention officers already have a lot of work to do. This is a risk. The service should review the situation and consider how to deal with this problem. In particular, it may be able to introduce a better system for replacing faulty smoke alarms.

The service is good at working with partner organisations. Good arrangements are in in place for joint work with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, West Mercia Police and several local authorities. Some of these arrangements are innovative and the service is willing to try new things. The service should evaluate the benefits of these arrangements and make sure they are achieved. The benefits should include providing value for money. There are good arrangements in place to make sure the service can continue to function in all circumstances.

Making best use of resources

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Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself that its workforce is productive. It needs to clarify the role of watch manager and consider alternative ways to manage the replacement of faulty smoke alarms.

- The service should ensure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any future collaboration.

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

How plans support objectives

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is not operating as efficiently as planned. The service is spending more than it needs to in responding to emergencies. The 2014 CRMP was ambitious in its plans for the service. It intended to reduce costs by operating with greater flexibility and greater efficiency.

One of the main elements of the plan was to reorganise the way the service responds to emergencies by aligning resources more closely to risk. Within this new model, fire engine crews for most incidents would reduce in number from five firefighters to four. However, the combined fire authority later decided to continue operating with crews of five at as many incidents as possible for another two years. It funded extra staffing for this by using £800,000 of the service's reserves until February 2017.

The medium-term financial plan is good. It identifies the problems the service faces, making prudent assumptions about future income and expenditure. While the budgets are broadly balanced during the four years of the plan through to 2023, this is mainly achieved by using financial reserves. Longer-term action is needed to reduce spending to acceptable levels in line with projected funding available. Had the service implemented its changes as planned in the 2014 CRMP, it would have mitigated some of these problems. The service is considering alternative crewing arrangements together with other cost-saving measures. These include reducing the number of fire stations in the Wyre Forest area and relocating the fire headquarters and control room to the West Mercia Police headquarters.

Productivity and ways of working

Compared with 2010, the service has reduced the numbers of fire engines and staff to save money. More recently, it introduced a range of flexible working patterns to align its response arrangements to risk and demand for services. The new staffing structure removes watch managers from riding on fire engines as part of the crew. This means the service can reduce the number of watch managers at each station from four to two. The two watch managers are employed on a flexible seven-day rota (except at day crewing plus stations). In the new structure, crew managers do more of the day-to-day supervision of firefighters; watch managers manage the performance of a wider group of firefighters and have an enhanced role in local partnership engagement activities. However, because the service has not yet fully implemented the reduction to four riders, or the wider changes to the operating model, we found some staff were unclear about the proposals. While the service has communicated the benefits and reasons for change to staff and representative bodies, more needs to be done.

The service allocates resources to prevention and protection activities. These activities are designed to reduce the number of fires and other emergencies, as well as manage the risks throughout the area. We found that the specialist prevention officers have a backlog of work. The service needs to review this situation and make any changes necessary to reduce the backlog. It is not clear whether the service is making the best use of response firefighters for prevention activities. For example, we found occasions when the service sent a full fire crew to replace faulty smoke alarms (in homes where the service previously fitted them). We recognise it is essential that fire crews can be deployed quickly to an emergency, and defective alarms do need to be replaced, but there may be more cost-effective ways of achieving this. This could free up crews to undertake other work, such as new home fire safety checks, where their skills could be better employed.

The service's fire protection programme of work is risk-based and is increasingly targeted at sites where the risk to community and firefighter safety is greatest. However, this better targeting of protection activity means that inspections are leading to more enforcement and follow-up activity. This affects the workloads of other staff and could soon lead to current resourcing levels becoming stretched.

Collaboration

We found that the service is keen to collaborate both with other fire services and with the wider public sector. However, it is not clear whether the benefits of collaboration, for the fire and rescue service and its users, have been fully evaluated. There are constructive joint working arrangements in place with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and with West Mercia Police in particular. There are already several shared police and fire stations. In addition, plans are at an advanced stage to relocate the fire service headquarters along with its fire control centre to the site of West Mercia Police headquarters. The services were successful in a joint bid for government funding of £1.89m to support this move.

Hereford and Worcester Fire Service is also part of an innovative collaborative venture, known as Place Partnership Ltd. This includes a number of local authorities as well as Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police. It was set up as joint venture

to manage all the partners' property, facilities and energy management solutions. It is not yet clear that the anticipated cost savings are being achieved. Indeed, costs have increased due to the number of capital projects the service has under way. However, costs are no higher than they would have been, and the service is confident that it now has access to greater capacity and skilled resources in implementing its various estates projects.

The service has also obtained transformation funding for a joint emergency services hub within the Wyre Forest area of Worcestershire. This involves relocating three stations, one wholetime and two retained, into one central hub alongside police services. The fire service has carried out extensive consultation. It has recently agreed a site, bought the land and obtained planning permission. The three fire stations were all located close to each other. The service made a compelling case for creating one central hub serving the area and maintaining acceptable response times at lower operating costs. This has been a difficult process for both the public and staff members affected. Although it has taken longer than originally envisaged, the project is now close to being finished.

Continuity arrangements

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has a comprehensive system for assessing and recording business continuity. We reviewed plans across many areas, including plans for the move of fire control. These include detailed plans for before, during and after the move, to ensure business as usual. However, in two of the plans supplied, there was no version control and review dates had not been recorded. The service could not, therefore, reassure us that these plans had been fully agreed.

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

Good

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

Improving value for money

The service plans to achieve a balanced budget by making long-term cost savings, which will improve value for money. However, over the medium term, it continues to spend more than it receives in funding. It uses its reserves to fill the gaps. The service intends to have put in place sufficient measures to reduce its spending to within affordable limits. The assumptions made on income and expenditure are prudent and cautious. This means that the use of the reserve can be phased to meet the budget shortfalls later in this financial period.

Once again, the delay in implementing the decisions taken in the 2014 CRMP mean that the pace of improving value for money has been slow. There is a risk that the service will continue to operate inefficiently and that the operating model may become unaffordable. This is made more likely by delays in implementing the workforce and crewing changes, and by any delays in some of the more ambitious

change projects, such as the Wyre Forest hub and the relocation to the West Mercia Police headquarters site.

Much of the collaboration work to date, although constructive and valued by partners, has not resulted in measurable improvements in terms of value for money. In discussions with the service and partner organisations, it is clear that the main initial motivation for these initiatives was not to save money but because it felt like the right thing to do. The chief fire officer has ambitious intentions to involve fire service staff in much greater joint service provision with other public services. However, these plans are at an early stage. The service is not yet able to show how it can increase its range of activities without affecting its main statutory functions. The service acknowledges it needs to identify the expected benefits at the start, and then monitor and evaluate the outcomes, to ensure these benefits are realised.

Innovation

The service has shown it is willing to innovate and find creative solutions. We have already discussed the Place Partnership. Another example is the joint programme with Wychavon District Council, which resulted in the council providing a £3.5m purpose-built fire station in Evesham, at minimal cost to the service. The new station was part of the council's plan to regenerate Evesham town centre, which required the relocation of the old fire station. The service worked closely with the council to achieve the best results for the community and for the service.

The service is planning to improve its out-of-date mobile data terminals with updated software and improved Wi-Fi to allow the devices to function remotely throughout the area. This should ensure crews are provided with up-to-date data, including risk information.

Following the 2014 staffing review, the service identified that changes to workforce models would mean it had too many staff. Through constructive joint planning, staff were seconded to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service across both operational areas and fire safety. This enabled Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to manage skills gaps in its workforce without the need to recruit, and meant that Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service could save the salary costs of its extra staff. Staff were also seconded to several other fire and rescue services. Over 50 staff were involved in total.

Future investment and working with others

The service's reserves are set to fall significantly by the end of this financial period. Reserves are being used to balance the shortfalls in spending over the whole period of the medium-term financial plan. The service is planning to invest £32.6m in capital projects between 2018/19 and 2020/21. This is broken down as follows:

- fire stations/training facilities £19.7m;
- vehicles and equipment £8.5m; and
- ICT/minor building works £4.4m.

This will be funded by earmarked reserves and some borrowing.

One of the five fire and rescue authority ICT priorities for 2018/19 is moving the fire control mobilising system to the operational communications centre at the police headquarters. Police and fire controls will be then based from the same location. This project involves both police and fire team members and is led by a fire service manager. In addition, the police told us that they have included fire service requirements in the specification for the new police command and control system. This means that collaborative working should be able to continue in future without disruption.

The service secured funding on its own from the fire transformation fund for the Wyre Forest hub, and for the move to West Mercia Police headquarters. It has also assisted the police in gaining funding from the Home Office for the operational communications centre.

The service has agreed to share incident command units with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. These specialist units will increase from two to three across the two services. This will also mean that the policies for incident command will need to be aligned, so that the units can deployed across either service. It should lead to wider collaboration for incident command.

People
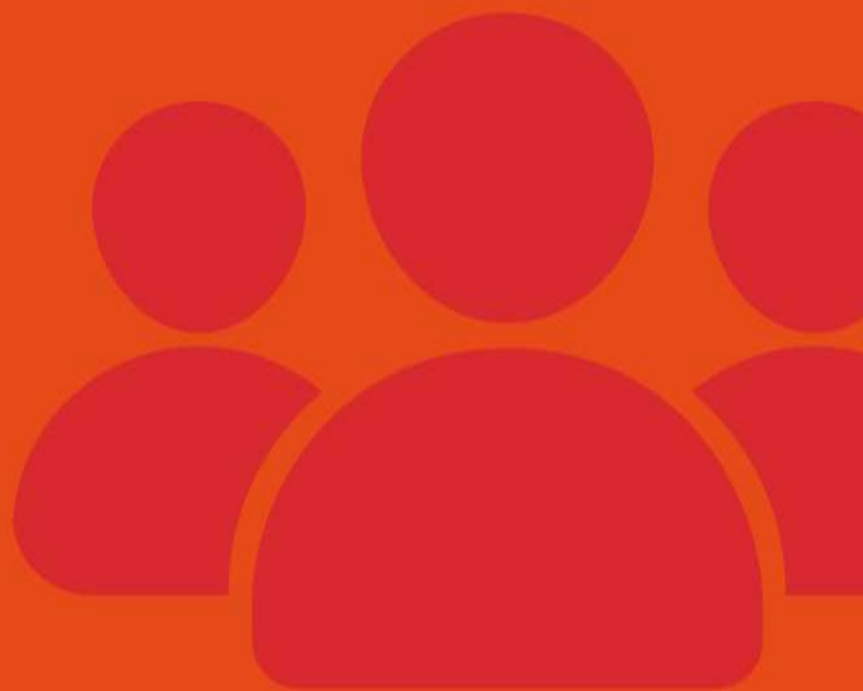
How well does the service look after its people?

Requires improvement

Summary

A fire and rescue service that looks after its people should be able to provide an effective service to its community. It should offer a range of services to make its communities safer. This will include developing and maintaining a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse. The service's leaders should be positive role models, and this should be reflected in the behaviour of the workforce. Overall, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at looking after its people.

The service needs to improve how it promotes the right values and culture. It particularly needs to improve how senior leaders communicate with the workforce. It is making changes to make the workforce more adaptable and take on different work. Staff do not fully understand the reasons for these changes. The service should address this, so that it can improve trust and move forward with its plans.

The service is good at making sure staff wellbeing is a priority. Staff can access a range of support services. The service could consider the benefits of letting staff from all roles work more flexibly. Operational staff maintain their fitness levels. The new policy for responding to incidents focuses on both public and firefighter safety.

The service is good at getting the right people with the right skills and makes sure they are well trained. It is working on a charter for on-call firefighters to improve their experience and increase numbers. The service would also benefit from finding out about the wider skills and experience of on-call staff.

The service needs to improve how it ensures fairness and promotes diversity. We found that some staff do not understand the importance of diversity. The service should focus on developing this understanding, so that the workforce can build trust and confidence with its community.

The service should improve how it manages performance and develops leaders. Managers with specialist skills should continue to be included in leadership team meetings, to support decision making. All staff need to understand and use the appraisal system, to assist workforce development. The service should do more to make sure staff are confident in the promotion process. It is not as open as it could be.

Promoting the right values and culture

Requires improvement

Areas for improvement
- The service should put in place a regular and effective system to measure and monitor staff engagement (across the whole service). It needs to improve its two-way communication channels with staff, and its face-to-face communication by and with senior leaders.

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

Workforce wellbeing

The service sees wellbeing as a priority. There are good examples of appropriate and timely wellbeing provision. These include early intervention after traumatic incidents, counselling, therapy, and services provided by occupational health. Access to wellbeing services is good and managers and staff clearly understand how to do this. On-call staff told us that welfare support received through the critical incident support team is good, and there is an emphasis on mental health and dementia awareness.

Managers have a very good understanding of the wellbeing needs of the workforce and gave us examples of where they had been proactive in identifying and seeking assistance for staff. Sickness is monitored and the reasons for absence are investigated. Following every period of absence, a return-to-work interview is held.

The service provided us with examples of flexible working. It should continue to consider requests for flexible working across all its roles, to meet its people strategy. On-call staff told us they would welcome more flexibility in the contracts for on-call staff, which they said would aid recruitment and retention. The service believes there is suffcent flexibility but recognise it needs to do more to promote opportunities more widely.

Health and safety

The service carries out annual fitness testing for operational staff. This is done independently by a fitness instructor from the University of Worcester, who is also an on-call firefighter. All staff are expected to achieve the national standard for a person's individual aerobic capacity. Staff are given three months to achieve this standard if they underperform. The service has just raised the fitness standard from a lower level. It is thought that just over 100 members of staff are still below the new level. They have been given 12 months to reach the new standard. If a person fails to achieve the lower level of fitness, they are taken off active duty and given a programme for improvement.

The service introduced a graded response policy just before our inspection. This followed a health and safety review of all driving activity. Fire control now puts a grade of response on to the call sheet for the fire crews, based on the information given by the caller and the type of incident. The three grades of response are emergency, prompt and non-emergency. The officer in charge can alter the response based on their judgement of any other facts, such as distance or traffic congestion. The prompt response allows crews to use audible warnings and blue lights if necessary; otherwise, they should proceed at normal road speed. The policy allows for a flexible response, but recognises the service's duty of care to the public.

Culture and values

The service management team wants to move the service into new areas and develop an adaptable workforce that can cope with the new roles. We saw a lot of evidence of the more recent change initiatives. This included changes to crewing and the change in role for watch managers to become more flexible and responsible for wider change.

Negotiation between the service and representative bodies has taken a considerable amount of time and effort, but has not yet achieved an agreed outcome. Staff told us that they had not understood the change process and felt it was being imposed on them. The senior manager with responsibility for frontline operational teams made regular visits to watches and stations to discuss the proposed changes with affected staff. Staff told us, however, that they felt senior management were not sufficiently visible and had only communicated through the union.

Staff from a range of roles and levels across the organisation said they thought that challenge wasn't welcomed and that the service does not listen to them. They believe there is no proper project management, "just people running with their own ideas". Several members of staff described Hereford as remote and forgotten about.

The senior management board has recognised some of these problems. In early 2018, it hired independent consultants to carry out a cultural survey of the senior management board. Those who were consulted within the service were station and group managers or non-uniformed manager equivalents.

After receiving the report, the chief fire officer proposed forming a managers' group to improve the culture, whose members would be selected from among their peers. This aimed to encourage the change proposals from managers who had been part of the survey. It was also intended to represent a team approach, as the survey's results indicated that the leadership was viewed as high-handed.

While senior and middle managers received a copy of the report and other staff groups were aware of the review, staff members reported they had not been told any details. In the absence of information, staff have drawn their own conclusions.

It is clear that improvements need to be made in communications and openness between senior leaders and the workforce. Senior leaders showed us plans that are in place to re-commence visits across the service. We would encourage this at the earliest opportunity, to tackle these communication problems.

Getting the right people with the right skills

Good

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

Workforce planning

The service has a published people strategy, while an action plan has been drafted but not yet published. A workforce planning meeting is held quarterly, with data provided in respect of workforce numbers and anticipated moves or retirements.

A quarterly meeting for an operational assurance report takes place, at which the senior management board discusses training activity. Statistics are produced that include the number of training courses run and how many staff have completed them. This is a robust system, which shows that the service is tracking training activity across the service. It plays an important part in ensuring that the service can identify and act on any gaps it finds.

The service has introduced an additional crew manager development post to each crew. It created these new posts from existing firefighter posts to:
- provide additional resilience;
- maintain appropriate supervisory management; and
- create opportunities to identify, develop and support staff aspiring to become managers.

Each of these new staff must pass a five-day incident command course and assessment. We were told of several occasions when engines had relatively new crew managers in charge. While this is not unusual across fire and rescue services, the service will need to ensure that these new managers are supported during their operational development, especially at incidents.

We were told that the low numbers of on-call staff willing to take on crew manager management roles is a principal reason why fire engines are unavailable. The reasons given for this reluctance are the extra responsibility and time required, balanced against the reward offered. The service is publishing an on-call charter and will be surveying on-call staff. We look forward to seeing the progress of the on-call charter.

On-call staff told us that the service doesn't audit the skills that staff have gained from working in other jobs, to understand how these may benefit the service. These staff work in roles outside the fire service, as business owners, project managers or IT workers, for example. The service should consider what wider skills could be gained from its on-call workforce.

Learning and improvement

Staff are well trained. A comprehensive training and competency records system is maintained and monitored by managers. This allows the service to deploy staff with the right skills and level of competence to incidents. We saw this across wholetime firefighters, on-call firefighters and control. All records we reviewed were up to date except for one, and the reasons for it not being current were recorded. Areas checked included:

- breathing apparatus;
- water rescue;
- health and safety;
- incident command;
- equality and diversity; and
- safeguarding.

The system for supporting operational staff carrying out business fire safety checks is well developed and is supported by those operational fire inspectors we spoke to. Training and development of fire protection staff is also at a high level. All level one to four incident commanders are re-assessed every two years, to make sure they remain competent to command at incidents. As part of this, they undergo a virtual-reality assessment to test their abilities.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Requires improvement

Areas for improvement
- The service should assure itself that staff are confident using its feedback mechanisms.

- The service should ensure any change processes it proposes are visible to all staff.

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

Seeking and acting on staff feedback

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has various groups and methods of communication within the service.

An organisational development group meets every two months and has terms of reference. Its remit is to consider and address problems outlined in the people strategy 2017–2020. There is a two-way feedback process between the group and the senior management board, via an area manager. There is also a joint consultative committee, chaired by the assistant chief fire officer. This includes senior managers and all representative bodies. It is designed to look at problems and address areas of concern. The service also issues to all staff a weekly bulletin, with a range of information, and a fortnightly chief fire officer briefing.

We have already discussed some of the concerns about engagement from senior leaders under the 'Culture and values' section. Work is underway to address this and we look forward to reviewing the results of this at a later date.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, the service recorded a low number of grievances. We reviewed these and found that the majority did not meet the timescales laid down in the policy. In some cases, an explanation was given for the delay. However, support was not offered to the staff members, despite the potential of these delays to cause stress. This was the case even when a grievance was subsequently upheld.

Diversity

As at 31 March 2018, the percentage of firefighters who were female in Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service was slightly above the England rate (6.7 percent, compared with 5.7 percent). However, when considering all staff groups, the service had a slightly smaller percentage of female staff (14.8 percent, compared with 15.9 percent). Also, the percentage of firefighters from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds was below the England rate (3.2 percent, compared with 4.1 percent); however, this should be seen in the context of the service area's BAME population (3.7 percent, compared with 14.6 percent in England).

During its most recent wholetime recruitment campaign, the service informed us that it undertook positive action to increase the pool of applicants. It is developing a positive action strategy for the next recruitment campaign, planned for January 2019.

Senior leaders understand the need for a diverse workforce, but staff at lower levels are not as clear and do not understand its relevance. The service provides diversity training for staff. However, staff referred to 'diversity issues' in the 1990s, which they said had made them wary of having a female firefighter on their station. Overall, staff told us there is too much emphasis on diversity and the service is already doing all it can in this field. This again indicates the importance of more effective communication between the service and its workforce.

Managing performance and developing leaders

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Requires improvement

> **Areas for improvement**
> - The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

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

Managing performance

The service has an individual personal development review (IPDR) or appraisal process in place. We found that all operational staff use it to maintain their continual professional development, for which they receive a payment. However, some staff have not had an IPDR for several years. We were also told others have been emailed their review without having a face-to-face meeting with their manager. By not ensuring that staff understand the IPDR process, and by not using the information to assist workforce development, the service is missing out on wider benefits.

We were informed that the service manages any failure of on-call staff to respond to incidents. This will usually involve an investigation into the reasons for the failure, such as traffic conditions or a pager not working. The service's policy states that when six failures to respond occur within six months, management intervention is required. During our inspection the lack of evidence meant that no conclusion could be drawn about whether this happens uniformly across the service.

Processes are in place for the use of exit interviews when staff leave the service, but their use does not appear to be consistent. The service would benefit from using these interviews in all cases, where possible, as important information can be obtained that will assist with future improvements.

Developing leaders

The service does not have a process throughout the organisation to identify future leaders. It has recently allowed group managers to apply for the national executive leadership programme. Two have since been successful.

The senior management board includes specialist staff. The board invites managers with specialist skills to participate in some discussions and decisions. To support its understanding of issues and allow more informed decision making, the service should consider how this could be expanded. It could also consider using these skills more in wider senior management meetings.

Staff at many levels informed us that the promotion procedure is not open and clear. At roles up to watch manager, we noted a lack of defined selection criteria, and that the procedure has changed several times. The perception is common that staff will only be promoted to station manager and above if they have sponsorship from more senior managers. The service's process for promotions should be clear and open.

The service has recognised this perception, which the cultural review mentioned previously also highlighted. An independent person took part in its recent middle-manager promotions, to encourage a more open process. We highlighted this change to the staff we spoke to. They told us they were aware of it, but felt it was only a start. More needs to be done to build confidence in the process.

We were told that that some staff have been in temporary management positions for years, and have not been substantively promoted, despite having applied for it. Staff members gave us various examples of this, each with different explanations as to why this might be the case. This situation may result in some individuals being in long-term temporary management positions with little or no management training, though they are experienced operational commanders. The service should ensure that it is confident in the skills of its managers and supports them in these roles.

The people strategy action plan includes a number of proposed changes. This is still to be agreed. It is important that the service uses this opportunity to include staff in the process, so that they are aware of what is being proposed.

Annex A – About the data

Data in this report is from a range of sources, including:

- Home Office;
- Office for National Statistics (ONS);
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA);
- our inspection fieldwork; and
- data we collected directly from all 45 fire and rescue services in England.

Where we use published Home Office data, we use the period to 31 March. We selected this period to be consistent across data sets. Some data sets are published annually, others quarterly. The most recent data tables are available online.

We use different data periods to represent trends more accurately.

Where we collected data directly from fire and rescue services (FRSs), we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with services and with other interested parties such as the Home Office. We gave services several opportunities to validate the data they gave us, to ensure the accuracy of the evidence presented. For instance:

- We checked and queried data that services submitted if notably different from other services or internally inconsistent.
- We asked all services to check the final data used in the report and correct any errors identified. Data that services submitted to the Home Office in relation to prevention, protection and workforce figures was published in November 2018. This data was updated after reports had been checked by services, so we haven't validated it further.

We set out the source of Service in numbers data below.

Methodology

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use ONS mid-2017 population estimates. This is the most recent data available at the time of inspection.

BMG survey of public perception of the fire and rescue service

We commissioned BMG to survey attitudes towards fire and rescue services in June and July 2018. This consisted of 17,976 interviews across 44 local fire and rescue service areas. This survey didn't include the Isles of Scilly, due to its small population. Most interviews were conducted online, with online research panels.

However, a minority of the interviews (757) were conducted via face-to-face interviews with trained interviewers in respondents' homes. A small number of respondents were also interviewed online via postal invitations to the survey. These face-to-face interviews were specifically targeted at groups traditionally under-represented on online panels, and so ensure that survey respondents are as representative as possible of the total adult population of England. The sampling method used isn't a statistical random sample. The sample size was small, varying between 400 and 446 individuals in each service area. So any results provided are only an indication of satisfaction rather than an absolute.

Survey findings are available on BMG's website.

Service in numbers

A dash in this graphic indicates that a service couldn't give data to us or the Home Office.

Perceived effectiveness of service

We took this data from the following question of the public perceptions survey:

How confident are you, if at all, that the fire and rescue service in your local area provides an effective service overall?

The figure provided is a sum of respondents who stated they were either 'very confident' or 'fairly confident'. Respondents could have also stated 'not very confident', 'not at all confident' or 'don't know'. The percentage of 'don't know' responses varied between services (ranging from 5 percent to 14 percent).

Due to its small residential population, we didn't include the Isles of Scilly in the survey.

Incidents attended per 1,000 population

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, 'Incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England, by incident type and fire and rescue authority' for the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- There are six worksheets in this file. The 'FIRE0102' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and fire and rescue authority (FRA) for each financial year. The 'FIRE0102 Quarterly' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and FRA for each quarter. The worksheets 'Data fires', 'Data fire false alarms' and 'Data non-fire incidents' provide the raw data for the two main data tables. The 'Figure 3.3' worksheet provides the data for the corresponding chart in the statistical commentary.

- Fire data, covering all incidents that FRSs attend, is collected by the Incident Recording System (IRS). For several reasons some records take longer than others for FRSs to upload to the IRS. So totals are constantly being amended (by relatively small numbers).

- We took data for Service in numbers from the August 2018 incident publication. So figures may not directly match more recent publications due to data updates.

Home fire risk checks per 1,000 population

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, 'Home fire risk checks carried out by fire and rescue authorities and partners, by fire and rescue authority' for the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Each FRS's figure is based on the number of checks it carried out and doesn't include checks carried out by partners.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

- The England total hours figures for 'Number of Fire Risk Checks carried out by FRS' include imputed figures to ensure a robust national figure. These imputed figures are: '2016/17 – Staffordshire'.

- Figures for 'Fire Risk Checks carried out by Elderly (65+)', 'Fire Risk Checks carried out by Disabled' and 'Number of Fire Risk Checks carried out by Partners' don't include imputed figures because a lot of FRAs can't supply these figures.

Home fire risk checks may also be referred to as Home Fire Safety Checks by FRSs.

Fire safety audits per 100 known premises

Fire protection refers to FRSs' statutory role in ensuring public safety in the wider built environment. It involves auditing and, where necessary, enforcing regulatory compliance, primarily but not exclusively in respect of the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO). The number of safety audits in Service in numbers refers to the number of audits FRSs carried out in known premises.

According to the Home Office definition, "premises known to FRAs are the FRA's knowledge, as far as possible, of all relevant premises; for the enforcing authority to establish a risk profile for premises in its area. These refer to all premises except single private dwellings".

We took this from the Home Office fire statistics, 'Fire safety audits carried out by fire and rescue services, by fire and rescue authority' for the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- Berkshire FRS didn't provide figures for premises known between 2014/15 and 2017/18.

- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

- Several FRAs report 'Premises known to FRAs' as estimates based on historical data.

Firefighter cost per person per year

We took the data to calculate firefighter cost per person per year from the annual financial data returns that individual FRSs complete and submit to CIPFA, and ONS mid-2017 population estimates.

You should consider this data alongside the proportion of firefighters who are wholetime and on-call / retained.

Number of firefighters per 1,000 population, five-year change in workforce and percentage of wholetime firefighters

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, 'Total staff numbers (full-time equivalent) by role and by fire and rescue authority' as at 31 March 2018.

Table 1102a: Total staff numbers (FTE) by role and fire authority – Wholetime Firefighters and table 1102b: Total staff numbers (FTE) by role and fire authority – Retained Duty System are used to produce the total number of firefighters.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- We calculate these figures using full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers. FTE is a metric that describes a workload unit. One FTE is equivalent to one full-time worker. But one FTE may also be made up of two or more part-time workers whose calculated hours equal that of a full-time worker. This differs from headcount, which is the actual number of the working population regardless if employees work full or part-time.

- Some totals may not aggregate due to rounding.

- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

Percentage of female firefighters and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) firefighters

We took this data from the Home Office fire statistics, '<u>Staff headcount by gender, fire and rescue authority and role</u>' and '<u>Staff headcount by ethnicity, fire and rescue authority and role</u>' as at 31 March 2018.

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.

- We calculate BAME residential population data from ONS 2011 census data.
- We calculate female residential population data from ONS mid-2017 population estimates.
- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset and Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

Annex B – Fire and rescue authority governance

These are the different models of fire and rescue authority (FRA) governance in England. Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is a combined FRA.

Metropolitan FRA

The FRA covers a metropolitan (large urban) area. Each is governed by locally elected councillors appointed from the constituent councils in that area.

Combined FRA

The FRA covers more than one local authority area. Each is governed by locally elected councillors appointed from the constituent councils in that area.

County FRA

Some county councils are defined as FRAs, with responsibility for fire and rescue service provision in their area.

Unitary authorities

These combine the usually separate council powers and functions for non-metropolitan counties and non-metropolitan districts. In such counties, a separate fire authority runs the fire services. This is made up of councillors from the county council and unitary councils.

London

Day-to-day control of London's fire and rescue service is the responsibility of the London fire commissioner, accountable to the Mayor. A Greater London Authority committee and the Deputy Mayor for Fire scrutinise the commissioner's work. The Mayor may arrange for the Deputy Mayor to exercise his fire and rescue functions.

Mayoral Combined Authority

Only in Greater Manchester. The Combined Authority is responsible for fire and rescue functions but with those functions exercised by the elected Mayor. A fire and rescue committee supports the Mayor in exercising non-strategic fire and rescue functions. This committee is made up of members from the constituent councils.

Police, fire and crime commissioner FRA

The police, fire and rescue commissioner is solely responsible for the service provision of fire & rescue and police functions.

Isles of Scilly

The Council of the Isles of Scilly is the FRA for the Isles of Scilly.