

Fire & Rescue Service 2023–25

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

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Changes to this round of inspection

We last inspected Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service in March 2021. And in January 2022, we published our inspection report with our findings on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how well it looks after its people.

This inspection contains our third assessment of the service's effectiveness and efficiency, and how well it looks after its people. We have measured the service against the same 11 areas and given a grade for each.

We haven't given separate grades for effectiveness, efficiency and people as we did previously. This is to encourage the service to consider our inspection findings as a whole and not focus on just one area.

We now assess services against the characteristics of good performance, and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and [areas for improvement](#). We have also expanded our previous four-tier system of graded judgments to five. As a result, we can state more precisely where we consider improvement is needed and highlight good performance more effectively. However, these changes mean it isn't possible to make direct comparisons between grades awarded in this round of fire and rescue service inspections with those from previous years.

A reduction in grade, particularly from good to adequate, doesn't necessarily mean there has been a reduction in performance, unless we say so in the report.

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

More information on [how we assess fire and rescue services](#) and [our graded judgments](#) is available on our website.

Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how well Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service has performed in 11 areas. We have made the following graded judgments:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
		Understanding fire and risk	Preventing fire and risk	
		Responding to fires and emergencies	Public safety through fire regulation	
		Responding to major incidents	Best use of resources	
		Promoting values and culture	Future affordability	
			Right people, right skills	
			Promoting fairness and diversity	
			Managing performance and developing leaders	

In the rest of the report, we set out our detailed findings about the areas in which the service has performed well and where it should improve.

HMI summary

It was a pleasure to revisit Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way in which the service worked with our inspection staff.

I am satisfied with some aspects of the performance of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, but there are areas in which the service needs to improve. In particular, I have serious concerns about how effective it is at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety. In view of these findings, I have been in regular contact with the chief fire officer as I don't underestimate how much improvement is needed.

We were pleased to see that the service has made some progress in most areas since our 2020/21 inspection. For example, it has improved its community risk management process and its approach to equality and diversity. It has commissioned a resource-to-risk review to make sure that it can target its resources at its highest risks. We also found positive practice in some aspects of leadership development.

But we were disappointed to see that the service hasn't made the progress we expected in other areas. For example, IT systems are still not efficient or effective, and the productivity of the workforce still needs to improve. We also found that the service needed to do more to introduce effective risk management systems and improve how it manages some aspects of training provision.

My principal findings from our assessments of the service over the past year are as follows:

- The service's effectiveness at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety is a cause of concern.

We were disappointed to find that it hadn't made enough progress against the cause of concern that we identified in 2020/21. We found high-risk residential buildings that still hadn't been inspected. The service still needs to put in place a suitable risk management system and make sure that it has the capacity and capability to proactively reduce the highest risk to the public.

- The service is taking steps to improve productivity, but it needs to do more.

The service has developed a prevention, protection and response strategy and improved its use of data to target activity towards risk. However, we found that this approach was still not driving the activity of operational staff and more focus was needed to make sure staff are productive.

- IT systems are still not resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible.

The service has planned improvements to systems, including its command and control system and its risk management system. However, we found that current systems didn't work together effectively and weren't always specific to the requirements of the service. Additionally, they didn't effectively enable information sharing and often presented a risk.

- The service doesn't effectively record and monitor the skills and capabilities of its staff.

We were disappointed to find that the service had made limited progress in addressing this area for improvement that we identified in 2020/21. It has invested in new systems to provide and monitor training and has started to trial these. However, we found gaps in the completion of training for several important areas. This poses a risk to the effective provision of services to the public.

- The service has failed to improve how it evaluates operational performance.

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. We found inconsistencies in the learning that was identified. We also found the process to be inefficient and slow. The service doesn't always act on learning it has identified or should have identified from incidents in a timely manner.

- The service has improved its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

In our last inspection, a cause of concern was that the service wasn't taking a proportionate approach to promoting EDI in the workplace.

In this inspection, we were pleased to see that it has made improvements to its approach to EDI. Staff are positive about the communication they have received and told us it has improved their understanding of positive action and equality and diversity. The service has also carried out a culture review and adopted the [Core Code of Ethics](#). It has included this as part of its new approach to EDI.

My report sets out the detailed findings of this inspection. I will continue to check the service's progress in addressing areas for improvement and monitor the cause of concern and associated recommendations.



Wendy Williams

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Profile

	Warwickshire	England
Area		
Square miles	764	50,370
Population (thousands)		
June 2021	599	56,536
Population density		
Thousands per square mile	0.8	1.1



Cost

Funding		
Year ending 31 March 2022	-	£2.5bn
Expenditure per population		
Year ending 31 March 2022	-	£41.88

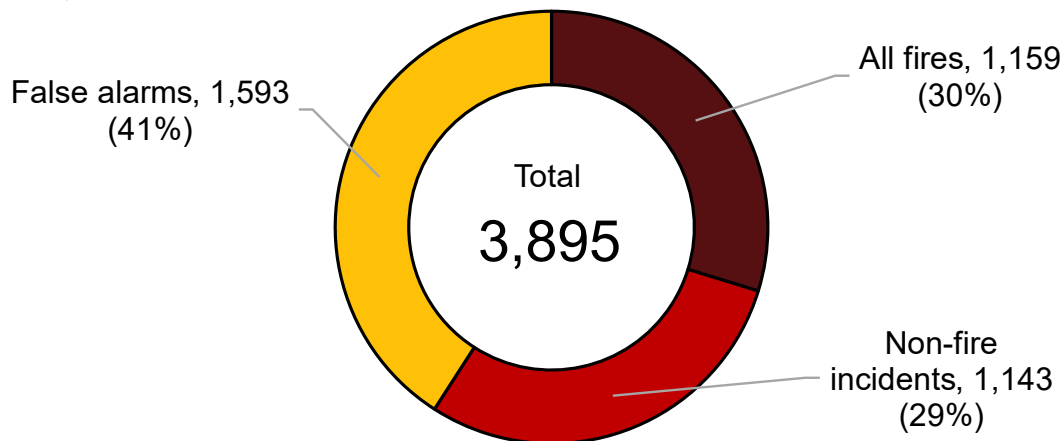


Response

Incidents attended per 1,000 population		
Year ending 30 June 2022	6.5	10.3
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population		
Year ending 31 March 2022	7.7	7.7
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises		
Year ending 31 March 2022	0.7	2.0
Availability of wholetime pumps		
Year ending 31 March 2022	91.3%	
Availability of on-call pumps		
Year ending 31 March 2022	67.5%	



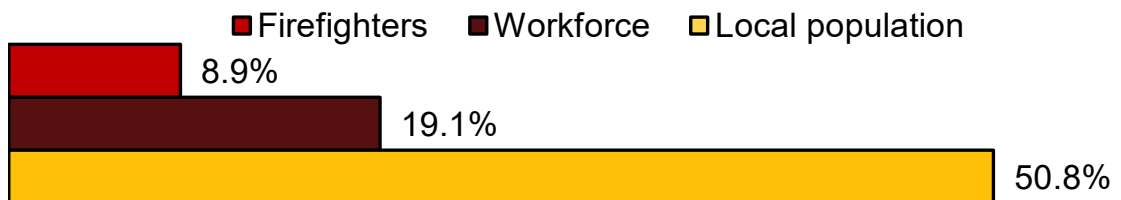
Incidents attended in the year to 30 June 2022



Workforce

	Warwickshire	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2017 to 2022	18.5%	0.2%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2022	0.72	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2022	68.3%	65.2%

Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who are female as at 31 March 2022



Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who are from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2022



References to ethnic minorities in this report include people from White minority backgrounds but exclude people from Irish minority backgrounds. This is due to current data collection practices for national data. For more information on data and analysis in this report, please view the [‘About the data’ section of our website](#).

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

Adequate

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at understanding risk.

Each fire and rescue service should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks that could affect its communities. It should use its protection and response capabilities to prevent or mitigate these risks for the public.

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure it gathers and records relevant and up-to-date risk information to help protect firefighters, the public and property during an emergency.

The service needs to ensure that risk information in [fire control](#) is consistently kept up to date.

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

Main findings

The service has improved its understanding of risk by working with its communities, partner organisations and local councils

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement: “The service should make sure its IRMP is informed by a comprehensive understanding of current and future risk by working with those communities that are most at risk of fire and other emergencies. It should use a wide range of data to build the risk profile and use operational data to test whether the risk profile is up to date.”

In this inspection, we were pleased to see that the service has enhanced its analysis of risk. It has assessed a suitable range of risks and threats using a thorough

community risk management planning process. In its assessment of risk, it uses information it has collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and datasets. It works with the county council, which provides data about communities from a range of sources, including national reports by public health and other government departments. The service has used this data to identify areas of risk in its community and to improve the way it targets its prevention, protection and response activity.

The service has continued to improve the way it consults and has constructive dialogue with its communities and other relevant parties to understand risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it. For example, the service has recruited a dedicated community engagement officer and has used several external and internal communication channels to encourage community involvement. It has hosted face-to-face and virtual engagement sessions. It has also spoken to local councils, partner organisations and community groups, including Warwickshire Road Safety Partnership, Warwickshire Police and the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#). It has used the information gained to inform its understanding of risk and its [community risk management plan \(CRMP\)](#).

The service has improved how its CRMP targets its prevention, protection and response activity

In our last inspection, one area for improvement was that the service should make sure that the aims and objectives of prevention, protection and response activity are clearly outlined in its CRMP.

Once it has assessed risks, the service records its findings in an easily understood CRMP. As part of the CRMP, it has developed a prevention, protection and response strategy. This describes how the service intends to use its prevention, protection and response activities to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces both now and in the future through its mission statements:

- Keeping people safe in their homes;
- Keeping people safe in their workplace;
- Keeping people safe when they are travelling in and through Warwickshire; and
- Keeping people safe in their environment.

The service implements this strategy through department, team and individual plans.

The strategy also includes specific plans for risk, people, ethics and sustainability.

The CRMP now includes performance measures, priorities and outcomes, which are used to assess performance and review progress against implementation plans. The CRMP also includes an annual statement of assurance, which provides financial, governance and operational assurance to the public.

The service needs to do more to gather, maintain and share a good range of risk information

In our last inspection, we found that the service couldn't rely on the accuracy of the system it used to collect and update risk information. Since then, it has made some progress. It has reviewed its approach to updating risk information and has replaced and updated [mobile data terminals](#), which firefighters rely on for risk-critical information at emergency incidents. However, it still needs to introduce a suitable risk management system. It has a plan in place to do this and we look forward to seeing the benefits of this.

In our last inspection, we also found that risk information in [fire control](#) wasn't always up to date. The service now has an interim approach to manage this but it is inefficient and risks being ineffective.

We sampled a broad range of the risk information that the service collects, including [safe and well visits \(SAVV\)](#) files, site-specific risk information, protection files and temporary and urgent risk information.

The service collects some information about the highest-risk people, places and threats it has identified. But some of the information we reviewed was limited, inaccurate or out of date. Furthermore, risk information isn't always readily available throughout the service due to unreliable, inaccessible and inefficient IT systems. The service needs to do more so that staff in prevention, protection and response roles can access the information they need. For example, although it aims to improve the way firefighters carry out prevention and protection activity in addition to responding to incidents, we found examples where risk information hadn't been shared. Therefore, the service missed the opportunity to complete prevention or protection activity as a result. This means the service can't effectively identify, reduce and mitigate risk.

Staff at the locations we visited, including firefighters and fire control staff, were able to show us that they could access, use and share risk information quickly to help them resolve incidents safely. This has improved due to the introduction of new mobile data terminals.

We found some evidence that the service exchanges risk information with others. For example, it continues to work closely with the county council and shares risk information with Warwickshire Police.

The service needs to improve how it uses local and national learning to inform its understanding of risk

We found some evidence that the service uses risk information from local or national operational activity to inform the assumptions it makes in its CRMP. The service has identified climate change as a thematic risk in its CRMP and uses data to identify areas at risk of flooding.

However, we found that operational learning, including how the service identifies learning from incident debriefing, still needed to improve and that processes were slow and inconsistent.

Preventing fires and other risks

Requires improvement

Warwickshire 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 sectors, and with the police and ambulance services. They should share [intelligence](#) and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure that its prevention activity is effectively prioritised and targeted to reduce risk.

The service should evaluate its prevention work so that it understands what works.

The service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity, so 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.

Main findings

The service has developed a prevention strategy that links to its CRMP

In our last inspection, we asked the service to develop a clear prevention strategy that prioritises the people most at risk and to make sure that work to reduce risk is proportionate. Since then, it has published its strategy for prevention, protection and response. This clearly sets out the service's priorities for prevention and its risk-based approach. These priorities range from specialist support for the most [vulnerable people](#) in the community to general fire safety information for low-risk groups.

The service's prevention, protection and response strategy is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP. These risks include people over 65, people living alone, people using adult social care or living in deprivation, an ageing population and people experiencing isolation and loneliness.

The strategy includes implementation and team plans, which set out the activities that staff will carry out. However, we consistently found operational activity was target-driven rather than based on those identified as being most at risk.

We found that IT systems weren't efficient and didn't share information between prevention, protection and response. This means that it is sometimes difficult for teams to exchange information, and therefore work generally takes place in isolation. As a result, members of the public, including vulnerable people and others, may not be getting the support they need.

Prevention activity is still not effectively prioritised and targeted at reducing risk

The service has improved its risk-based approach to prioritise its prevention activity towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. It has introduced time frames for initial contact to be made and SAWVs to be carried out. It now asks additional questions to prioritise high-risk referrals, in line with National Fire Chiefs Council guidance.

However, Home Office data shows that in 2021/22, of the 4,607 SAWVs carried out by the service, 2,162 were targeted at vulnerable groups. This means less than half of all SAWVs were targeted at the three most vulnerable groups.

The service has a broad range of data to target its prevention activity. For example, it has developed systems for staff to access information on areas of community risk, areas of deprivation, single occupier households, people with long-term disability, NHS data, people living in fuel poverty, people using the hospital-to-home collection service and adult social care users. However, operational crews don't routinely use this information to direct activity.

Since our last inspection, we were encouraged to see that the service has reduced the backlog of SAWVs that built up during COVID-19.

We recognise that the service has made some improvements. However, it needs to evaluate and review the prevention activity carried out by firefighters to make sure it is prioritised and targeted at reducing risk.

The service doesn't have an effective quality assurance process for prevention

SAWVs visits cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. For example, they include the identification of fire-related risks, the fitting of smoke alarms and advice on health and welfare.

We found that, since our last inspection, the service had reviewed its prevention training. Staff now receive training on SAWVs and other prevention activity. Despite this, though, there is no evidence of any quality assurance to make sure staff are carrying out visits competently or to the required standard.

Not all staff understand the process for reporting safeguarding concerns

We found that the service had reviewed its [safeguarding](#) policy and had a clear process in place. In our last inspection, we found that staff weren't appropriately trained to respond to safeguarding concerns. The service has since introduced safeguarding training for all staff. It has also invested in increasing the number of dedicated safeguarding leads in its prevention teams.

The service uses a safeguarding flowchart. This guides staff through the appropriate actions to take and contacts to use when they are making a safeguarding referral. However, the staff we interviewed didn't always understand how and when the service expects them to act when they identify safeguarding problems. For example, not all staff were able to locate the folders on station that detail the process they need to follow.

The service works well with partner organisations

The service works with a range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. These include Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire Police, West Midlands Ambulance Service and the NHS.

We found some evidence of the service referring vulnerable people to other organisations when it couldn't meet their needs. We also found evidence of the service receiving referrals from other organisations and acting appropriately on those referrals. For example, the service maintains an effective hospital-to-home partnership with public health, adult social care and local hospitals. It visits patients discharged from hospital to reduce their risk from fire and other emergencies.

The service has improved how it exchanges information with relevant organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses this information to target activity and initiatives and often shares it with partner organisations. This includes NHS data and information on people living in deprivation, single occupier households, people with a long-term disability, people living in fuel poverty and adult social care users.

The service chairs the post-collision subgroup as part of the Warwickshire Road Safety Partnership. It provides initiatives including road safety education and [Biker Down](#), and it uses data on road traffic collisions to target activity.

Since our last inspection, the service has introduced a system for joint reviews after significant or fatal incidents. These serious fire incident reviews lead to information being shared, including with neighbouring fire and rescue services.

The service prioritises tackling fire-setting behaviour

The service has a dedicated arson-reduction officer to lead on tackling fire-setting behaviour. We found evidence of a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people with diverse needs who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. These interventions include working with [antisocial behaviour](#) teams, which teach young people about the dangers of fire setting and target community involvement in prevention.

When appropriate, it routinely shares information, such as the locations and times of fires, with relevant organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists. Such organisations include Warwickshire County Council and Warwickshire Police.

The service doesn't routinely evaluate its prevention activity

We were pleased to see that the service has commissioned Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service to peer review its prevention activity as part of its ongoing improvement. However, since we inspected the service in 2018 and 2021, we were disappointed to find limited evidence that the service has improved the way it routinely evaluates how effective its prevention activity is.

The service told us that it has considered its approach to evaluation and developed an evaluation toolkit, which it is now testing. However, we found limited evidence that the service has made sufficient progress in this area. The service can't be assured that its activity is effective or make sure all its communities get appropriate access to prevention activity that meets their needs.

The service doesn't routinely use feedback to improve what it does. As a result, it is missing opportunities to improve its prevention work for the public.

Protecting the public through fire regulation

Requires improvement

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

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

Cause of concern

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

Recommendations

Within 28 days, the service should review its action plan, detailing how it will:

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

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure there are enough qualified staff across the service to carry out fire safety audits competently.

The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.

The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of false alarms.

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

Main findings

The service has developed a protection strategy that is linked to its CRMP

In our last inspection, we recommended that the service develops a protection strategy with a resourced and prioritised risk-based inspection programme. However, during this inspection, we found that the service still didn't have adequate resources to manage the risks identified.

Since our last inspection, the service has published its strategy for prevention, protection and response. This clearly sets out the service's priorities for protection and its risk-based approach, ranging from specialist intervention, including enforcement for complex and high-risk buildings, to general fire safety information for low-risk groups.

The strategy is linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP and includes protecting the built environment and supporting business.

We found that IT systems weren't efficient and didn't share information between prevention, protection and response. This means that it is sometimes difficult for teams to exchange information, and therefore work generally takes place in isolation.

The service needs to reduce risk in its highest-risk buildings

The service has reviewed its risk-based inspection programme and continues to identify areas for improvement, but it isn't yet up to date.

We found that the service wasn't consistently auditing the buildings it has targeted within the time frames it has set. We found evidence that it hadn't inspected all its high-risk residential buildings, including some high-rise buildings. In 2021/22, the service carried out 116 high-risk audits with a target of 175. The service is aware of this and has been actively working with local authorities, owners and residents to reduce the risk to the public in these buildings.

The service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and should take steps to make sure that risk in its high-risk residential buildings is mitigated.

Quality of audits and management of risk information are poor

We reviewed a range of audits that the service had carried out at different buildings across its area. This included audits as part of the service's risk-based inspection programme and those that took place after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies or where enforcement action had been taken and at high-rise, high-risk buildings.

We found that the current IT system for managing risk information wasn't suitable and didn't manage or record information adequately. The service recognises this and has a plan in place to introduce a new risk management system. Without a system to manage its risk information efficiently and effectively, the service can't make sure that it is appropriately reducing risk to the public.

Not all the audits we reviewed were completed in a consistent, systematic way or in line with the service's policies. We found no evidence of quality assurance.

We found limited evidence of the service making relevant information from its audits available to operational teams and fire control operators. Information isn't easily accessible, and we found evidence of information not being recorded and stored appropriately.

The service must improve its evaluation and quality assurance

The service carries out limited quality assurance of its protection activity. Therefore, the service can't assure itself that staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard. It recognises the need to improve its quality assurance and is looking to prioritise this by identifying additional capacity.

It doesn't have good evaluation tools in place to measure how effective it is or to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to protection services that meet their needs.

The service should make sure it continues to take enforcement action where appropriate

Since our last inspection, enforcement activity has declined. However, in the files we reviewed, we saw that the service had taken proportionate enforcement action when necessary.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, the service issued 1 alteration notice, 43 informal notifications, 5 enforcement notices and 3 prohibition notices, and undertook 0 prosecutions. It completed 2 prosecutions between 2017 and 2022.

We tracked these 52 enforcement actions and found that only 6 were deemed satisfactory following further audit.

The service doesn't have enough qualified staff to complete its risk-based inspection programme

While the service has made some progress, the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection remains: "The service should make sure there are enough qualified staff across the service to carry out fire safety audits competently."

Since our last inspection, the service has begun training its supervisory managers so that they are appropriately accredited to complete fire safety audits. The service also told us of increased productivity in the protection team, including an improvement in the number of audits completed when compared to last year.

However, the service should demonstrate that it has the capacity and capability to carry out inspection activity in line with its risk-based inspection programme.

We recognise the improvement and plans the service has made in this area. We look forward to seeing the difference this makes at our next inspection.

The service is adapting to new legislation

Since our last inspection, the [Building Safety Act 2022](#) and the [Fire Safety Regulations 2022](#) have been introduced to bring about better regulation and management of tall buildings.

The service is supporting the introduction of the [Building Safety Regulator](#).

The Fire Safety Regulations 2022 introduced a range of duties for the managers of tall buildings. These include a requirement to give the fire and rescue service floor plans and inform them of any substantial faults to essential firefighting equipment, such as firefighting lifts.

We found the service had some arrangements in place to receive this information, and it updates the risk information it gives its operational staff accordingly. For example, it has developed a building fire safety regulations section on the county council website. This informs people responsible for high-rise buildings of their requirements under the new law and provides the means for them to submit the required information.

The service could do more to work with local businesses and other organisations

The service works closely with some partner organisations to regulate fire safety, and it routinely exchanges risk information with them. For example, we found that the service worked closely with county council departments, including housing and high-rise, and building control. It also works with some private-sector landlords and property management companies.

However, the service could do more to work with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation and carry out joint enforcement and protection activity. The service has recognised this and has developed a business engagement plan, which includes provision for business fire safety advisers and improvements to the way it offers advice via its website.

The service should review arrangements to respond to building and licensing consultations

The service doesn't always respond to building and licensing consultations on time. This means it doesn't consistently meet its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, it only responded to 55.6 percent of building consultations in the required time frame (225 out of 405). This figure decreased from 88.3 percent in 2020/21 (318 out of 360).

In the year ending 31 March 2022, it responded to 73.4 percent of licensing consultations in the required time frame (130 out of 177). This figure decreased from 95.5 percent in 2020/21 (126 out of 132).

The service's new approach to reducing unwanted fire signals is yet to see results

In our last inspection, one area for improvement was that the service should make sure that it effectively addresses the burden of false alarms. The service has made some progress in this area, but this area for improvement remains.

This means fire engines may not be available to respond to genuine incidents because they are attending false alarms. It also creates a risk to the public if more fire engines travel at high speed on the roads to respond to these incidents.

The number of automatic fire alarm calls rose from 2,590 in 2019/20 to 2,796 in 2021/22. The number of these calls that the service attended rose from 39 percent (999) in 2019/20 to 43 percent (1,203) in 2021/22.

The service has reviewed its approach to how it manages the number of unwanted fire signals. We found that it had developed a new policy that helps it identify unwanted fire signals and work better with the community to reduce them.

We recognise that the service has made some improvements and look forward to seeing the results at our next inspection.

Responding to fires and other emergencies

Adequate

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate 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 areas.

Areas for improvement

The service should ensure its operational and control room staff have good access to relevant and up-to-date cross-border risk information.

The service should ensure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents.

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

Main findings

The service continues to review its response strategy to make sure it provides the best response to incidents

In our last inspection, one area for improvement was that the service should make sure its response strategy provides the most appropriate response for the public in line with its CRMP. Since then, it has published its strategy for prevention, protection and response. This clearly sets out the service's priorities for response and a commitment to provide a risk-based, effective and efficient response.

To support its response strategy, the service is carrying out a resource-to-risk review. This includes a review of its performance and response standards, which will help the service understand how best to use its resources to reduce risk. It includes providing rationale for the location of its fire engines and response staff and helps to make sure that the service can respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources.

We look forward to seeing the progress the service makes following completion of this review.

The service is reviewing its response standards

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standards in its CRMP.

The service doesn't always meet its standards and is currently reviewing these as part of its resource-to-risk review. Its standards state that it will get to all life-risk calls in ten minutes, 75 percent of the time for the first fire engine. The service told us that between April 2021 and March 2022, a fire engine arrived at life-risk or property incidents within agreed response standards 67.9 percent of the time. Home Office data shows that in the year ending 31 March 2022, the service's average response time to [primary fires](#) was ten minutes and nine seconds. This is slightly slower than the average response time of 9 minutes and 58 seconds for significantly rural services.

The service is focused on improving availability

To support its response strategy, the service aims to always have 100 percent of fire engines at [wholetime fire stations](#) available and 80 percent of fire engines at [on-call](#) fire stations available. The service doesn't always meet this standard.

The service's overall availability for 2021/22 was 79 percent, with wholetime availability at 91 percent and on-call availability at 67 percent. This is normal when compared to other services in England.

The service has an ongoing on-call availability project, which aims to help the service better understand challenges to the availability of on-call stations.

Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely

The service has trained incident commanders, who are independently assessed and accredited regularly and properly. This includes an annual health check and a full assessment every two years. The service told us that as of 31 March 2022, all incident commanders were within accreditation. This helps the service safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents 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. They were 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 \(JESIP\)](#).

The service is making improvements in the way its fire control function is managed

We were disappointed to find that the service's fire control staff weren't always included in its command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. However, we found that the service had reviewed its capacity and increased leadership within fire control. As a result, we found plans in place to improve fire control training and the management of risk information. We also found an increase in exercising, including testing of business continuity arrangements and the management of high-rise incidents including fire survival guidance. Overall, we were encouraged to find the service focused on improving and integrating its fire control function.

We were also pleased to find that the service was working towards improving its fire control IT systems and had a project in place to implement this.

The service is working to improve risk information available for firefighters

While the service has made some progress, the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection remains: "The service should ensure its operational and control room staff have good access to relevant and up-to-date cross-border risk information."

We found that the service shared risk information with neighbouring services and continued to work with them to request access to cross-border risk information. We recognise the work that the service has done. However, we still found there was limited access to relevant and up-to-date cross-border risk information.

We also found that the service had updated its mobile data terminals, which firefighters rely on for risk-critical information at emergency incidents. Staff could easily access and understand the information.

We sampled a range of risk information, including site-specific risk information, information given to firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings and information held by fire control.

The information we reviewed wasn't always up to date or detailed. It hadn't always been completed with input from the service's prevention, protection and response functions where appropriate. We found that the service had an interim approach to managing and updating risk information and that the current IT systems weren't efficient and didn't effectively share information between departments.

The service has recognised the importance of national operational guidance

Five years after the completion of the [national operational guidance](#) programme, it was disappointing to find that the service had yet to adopt its principles. By not aligning with national operational guidance, the service risks firefighters being unable to identify and eliminate the hazards that are present at incidents.

We were disappointed by the service's insufficient progress against its strategic gap analysis, including fire control.

The service should do more to adopt and align with national operational guidance to improve a co-ordinated response to the most high-risk incidents. It has recognised this and has recruited additional leadership and committed additional resources.

The service has failed to improve how it evaluates operational performance

We were also disappointed to find that the service had made limited progress in addressing the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection: "The service should ensure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents." As a result, the area for improvement remains.

As part of this inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included major incidents, fires in domestic and commercial properties, road traffic collisions, water rescue and other complex incidents and training exercises, such as high-rise and multi-agency training events.

We found some examples of safety-critical information and operational learning from incidents being communicated across the service. However, we also found inconsistencies in the learning that was identified and that the process was inefficient and slow. The service doesn't always act on learning it has or should have identified from incidents in a timely way. We consistently identified gaps in monitoring and found that staff didn't always engage fully in the process. Also, key functions such as fire control didn't always attend due to lack of capacity.

The service told us it is planning to introduce a digital debriefing system. We welcome this and look forward to seeing the improvement this will bring.

The service has an incident monitoring process designed to ensure the effectiveness of its operational command at an incident, including fire control. We found that this wasn't consistently followed and that staff were unclear about their roles and responsibilities.

The service should review its current processes for incident command monitoring and operational learning and make sure that they are fully understood and effective.

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

The service has some systems in place to inform the public about ongoing incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. For example, the service uses social media, and its website includes prevention messaging and advice. But these systems aren't comprehensive enough for the service to be sure the messages are reaching the public.

We found that, for incidents that significantly affect the public, the service worked with partner organisations including Warwickshire Police and the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#). This approach is managed through the county council communications support team. However, we found that the service didn't always receive communications support that helps it warn and inform the public in a proactive and effective way, particularly for ongoing incidents.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

Adequate

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

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

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has an effective method to share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place.

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

Main findings

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 community risk management planning. For example, it has major incident plans and site-specific operational plans for every high risk in the county. It has tested these plans and exercised against the risks at Kingsbury Oil Terminal in a multi-agency response. We also found that it had exercised against other risks, including power outage, railway incidents and terrorism.

However, the service doesn't always receive risk information from all of its neighbouring services. While it shares its own risk information and continues to request information from neighbouring services, not all have complied.

The method of sharing fire survival guidance information and the dedicated communication link should be effective

In our last inspection, we focused on how the service had collected risk information and responded to the Government's building risk review programme for tall buildings.

In this inspection, we have focused on how well prepared the service is to actually respond to a major incident at a tall building, such as the tragedy at [Grenfell Tower](#).

We found that the service had policies and procedures in place for safely managing this type of incident. Staff at all levels understand them, and we found evidence that some training and exercising had taken place to test them. We also found that the service had provided staff with online training; however, not all staff had completed this.

The service has run a series of multi-agency exercises at high-rise buildings. These exercises helped to inform its approach to managing a high-rise incident. We found that the service had evaluated these and shared learning.

We also found that the service had used its routine testing of incident commanders as an opportunity to focus on high-rise incidents. It has provided some specialist training for those responsible for managing fire survival guidance at an incident. And it has also used specialist high-rise training venues for training and exercising some of its operational crews.

However, at this type of incident, a fire and rescue service would receive a high volume of simultaneous fire calls. We found that the systems in place in the service weren't robust enough to receive and manage this volume of calls.

The service relies too heavily on paper-based systems, which are too open to operator error. They also mean that staff in fire control, at the incident and in assisting fire control rooms can't share, view and update actions in real time. These systems could compromise the service's ability to safely resolve a major incident at a tall building.

The service should make sure that it has an effective method to simultaneously share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place.

The service can work effectively with other fire services

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. The service has seven neighbouring services, and we saw evidence of routine cross-border working. 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 tested the use of [national resilience assets](#), such as its own mass decontamination unit and high-volume pump.

The service takes a proportionate approach to cross-border exercising

In our last inspection, one area for improvement was that the service should make sure it understands national and cross-border risks and is well prepared to meet such risks.

In this inspection, we were pleased to find that the service had increased its cross-border exercising and work with neighbouring fire and rescue services. We also found that the service had invited neighbouring services to exercise at some of its high-risk sites, including Kingsbury Oil Terminal, helping them work together effectively to keep the public safe.

The service completed 41 training exercises during 2021/22. These included multi-agency exercises, national resilience training exercises and training exercises with neighbouring services. This represents 123.7 exercises per 1,000 firefighters, which is the fifth highest rate of all fire and rescue services in England.

Incident commanders have a good understanding of JESIP

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with JESIP. Incident commanders are independently assessed and accredited. This includes an annual health check and a full assessment every two years. We found that JESIP formed an important part of these assessments.

The service could give us strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. This includes evidence of multi-agency exercising with neighbouring services, such as Warwickshire Police, West Midlands Ambulance Service and other specialist response teams, to test these principles.

We sampled a range of debriefs that the service carried out after multi-agency incidents and exercises. We were encouraged to find that the service was identifying any problems it had with applying JESIP and took appropriate, prompt action with other emergency services. We also found evidence of learning shared between emergency services and ongoing engagement.

The service works well with other partner organisations

The service has some arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with partners that make up the Warwickshire LRF. These include arrangements to supplement resources if needed.

The service is a valued partner organisation and leads on several key workstreams. The chief fire officer is the LRF co-chair, and the service also chairs the training, exercising and learning subgroup. The service 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. For example, events include national exercises to test responses to power outages, national rail exercises and multi-agency exercises that include responses to terrorist attacks and

high-rise incidents. We also found future plans to test responses to risks, including widespread flooding.

We found that fire control had robust testing arrangements in place for multi-agency communication and procedures.

The service keeps up to date with national learning

The service makes sure it knows about national operational updates from other fire services and joint organisational learning from other organisations, such as the police service and ambulance trusts. It uses this learning to inform planning assumptions that it makes with partner organisations. However, we found that it had been slow to identify and act on learning from some incidents.

Making best use of resources

Requires improvement

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at making best use of its resources.

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

The service's revenue budget for 2023/24 is £22.9m. This is a 4 percent increase from the previous financial year.

Areas for improvement

The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities set out in its [community risk management plan](#).

The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and that its time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in its community risk management plan.

The service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.

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

Main findings

The service is improving the way it achieves its objectives but needs to do more

In our last inspection, one area for improvement was that the service should show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect and be consistent with the risks and priorities set out in its CRMP.

Since our last inspection, the service has made some progress, but it still needs to do more. It has produced a prevention, protection and response strategy, which aligns with its risk analysis work and provides detail on how the service intends to achieve the objectives in its CRMP. It now uses an integrated approach across prevention, protection and response, which aims to maintain necessary emergency cover while targeting vulnerability and risk more effectively. We found that most staff understood this approach. But, at the time of inspection, the service wasn't adequately directing resources to meet its priorities and manage risk.

There remain weaknesses that need to be addressed. The service has restructured some departments and increased leadership and resources in others. For example, it has made changes to both its prevention and protection departments and put more managers in fire control and on some operational shifts. It has also added a senior manager role to support improvement and assurance. However, the service's workforce model still doesn't always allow it to carry out its core functions effectively and efficiently. There is evidence of under-resourced areas of the service, which lead to increased risk and affect staff welfare. Some staff we spoke to told us they have high workloads, and their teams don't have the capacity they need.

We were pleased to see that the service is evaluating its mix of crewing and duty systems, including analysis of its response cover. Following this review, the service will be able to show how it should deploy its fire engines and response staff to manage risk more efficiently. We look forward to seeing the results at our next inspection.

The service has a sustainable financial position. Its budget is part of the county council budget, and we found suitable financial controls through county council monitoring and scrutiny arrangements. These reduce the risk of misusing public money.

The service is taking steps to improve productivity but needs to do more

While the service has made some progress, the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection remains: "The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and that their time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in the IRMP."

The service's arrangements for managing performance are improving. It has introduced a new performance framework, which is aligned with its CRMP. However, the framework isn't currently driving front-line activity.

The service should do more to make sure its workforce is as productive as possible. We found that the service had put in place some new ways of working, but progress is slow. For example, the service is improving access to data and risk analysis for operational crews to target prevention, protection and response activity more effectively. However, few operational crews have fully adopted these new ways of working.

The service has taken steps to understand how firefighters spend their time across day and night shifts, as part of its resource-to-risk review. But it needs to do more to improve productivity.

The service has improved collaboration with others but still needs to do more to make sure evaluation is effective

While the service has made some progress, the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection remains: "The service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity."

Since our last inspection, we were encouraged to see an improved commitment to collaboration and that the service considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. It shares a set of collaboration principles with Warwickshire Police, and the two organisations now share some premises.

A notable collaboration project is the hospital-to-home partnership with public health, adult social care and local hospitals. It is funded by the Better Care Fund. The service visits patients discharged from hospital to help reduce risk to vulnerable members of the community that are statistically most at risk from fire.

The service also collaborates with public health on an initiative aimed at secondary school pupils. This covers skills such as emergency life support, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and how to use a public access defibrillator.

The service continues to have an effective collaboration with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service control, which provides resilience for both services. The service needs to make sure that this arrangement continues so that it has the resilience it needs to provide an effective fire control function.

The service accepts that it can improve its approach to benefits realisation and has committed to doing so. However, we aren't satisfied that the service monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations effectively to make sure they align with the priorities in its CRMP.

The service has improved its business continuity plans

In our last inspection, one area for improvement was that the service should make sure there is a testing programme for its business continuity plans, particularly in high-risk areas of the service.

We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection. We found that it had prioritised the review of its business continuity plans according to risk, including for critical areas such as fire control. Training and testing of the plans have taken place so that staff know the arrangements and their associated responsibilities.

The service has appropriate business continuity plans in place for industrial action. It has assured itself and can demonstrate that it has adequate resources for future periods of industrial action. The service has considered what business-critical skills it would need to maintain and has provided additional staff training.

The service has improved its financial management but should continue to focus on value for money

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. For example, budget managers are required to review the service's financial position regularly and prepare a monthly forecast. Expenditure is regularly reviewed through county council monitoring and scrutiny arrangements.

The service has made some savings and efficiencies, which have also supported its operational performance and the service it gives the public. It has introduced a virtual fire station, which has funded newly retired firefighters and incident commanders to work part-time covering fire engine availability. We have also seen an efficiency saving on overtime costs. In 2021/22, the overtime spend per head of workforce was £1,054, which was below the England rate of £1,505. This is a decrease from £1,439 in 2020/21, which was above the England rate of £1,187.

The county council has asked that during 2023/24, the service develops viable proposals to improve value for money, with any savings options to be considered for inclusion in future budgets. Since our last inspection, we found that the service had prioritised investment over saving, which is positive.

The service should make sure that any future savings and efficiencies don't have a negative effect on service improvement, operational performance and the service to the public. The service should also make sure that it has evaluated improvements and investments to make sure they provide benefit to the public as well as value for money.

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

Requires improvement

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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.

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure that its fleet and estates management programmes are linked to the [community risk management plan](#) and it understands the impact future changes to those programmes may have on its service to the public.

The service needs to assure itself that it is maximising opportunities to improve workforce productivity and develop future capacity through use of innovation, including the use of technology.

The service should make sure that its IT systems are resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible.

The service should make sure it has the right skills and capacity to successfully manage change across the organisation.

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

Main findings

The service understands its future financial challenges

As part of the county council, the service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. We saw evidence that funding is available to help the service to meet its priorities. A contingency budget held by the county council for inflationary pressures will be used to cover the effect of a higher-than-budgeted pay award in both 2022/23 and 2023/24.

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

The county council has approved additional investment in 2023/24 to help implement service improvement. The medium-term financial plan for 2023/24 identifies an investment of £0.8m. This is to fund a review of current strategies and processes for prevention activity and the identification of high-risk premises as well as the promotion of EDI in the workplace.

The service is expected to generate some savings through a review of services purchased from third parties and by purchasing instead of leasing some fire transport vehicles. It has plans to develop further savings options during 2023/24.

The service has clear arrangements for the use of reserves

The service doesn't hold its own reserves. The county council holds these. We found there was a robust process for the service to bid for reserves.

The service has been able to access funds that are set aside in the reserves, such as £750,000 for breathing apparatus replacement.

The service should make sure its fleet and estates are aligned with risk

While the service has made some progress, the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection remains: "The service should make sure that its fleet and estates management programmes are linked to the IRMP, and it understands the impact future changes to those programmes may have on its service to the public."

In this inspection, we found the service's fleet and estates provision to be inefficient. The county council charges the service for works and services. This doesn't always provide best value for money.

The service recently conducted a review of its estate to make sure that its facilities are fit for all its staff. Following this, it produced a prioritised schedule of improvement.

The service acknowledges that it needs to complete its current resource-to-risk review before it can review how best to align its estate and fleet with its CRMP.

We look forward to seeing how it will exploit the opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness that this will bring.

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement: “The service needs to speed up progress with its estates plans for training to ensure it is delivering effective and efficient training provision.”

We were pleased with the progress the service has made in this area. It has opened two training and delivery centres at Kingsbury and Stratford-upon-Avon and has progressed its planning for a new site at Rugby.

The service has made some improvement to its IT systems, but they are still not resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible

The service has made limited progress in addressing the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection: “The service needs to assure itself that it is maximising opportunities to improve workforce productivity and develop future capacity through use of innovation, including the use of technology.” As a result, the area for improvement remains.

With some funding from the county council, the service has improved its IT equipment, including desktops, laptops and conferencing facilities. It has also replaced its mobile data terminals, which provide firefighters with access to risk information. We found that these much-needed improvements provided staff with basic equipment to access information.

The service has also worked with staff to understand how it can improve what it refers to as its ‘digital engagement’, which it describes as digital enablement, digital communication and digital culture. It has started a project to consider how further changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its workforce.

The service has made limited progress in addressing the following area for improvement, which we identified in our last inspection: “The service should make sure that its IT systems are resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible.” As a result, the area for improvement remains.

We were disappointed that problems with technology still haven’t been resolved. We found evidence that many IT systems were out of date and didn’t work efficiently and effectively. We found that many systems were standalone and didn’t share data effectively between prevention, protection and response. And staff couldn’t always easily access the information they need to do their jobs.

However, we found that the service had a schedule of work to implement much-needed improvement to systems, including the replacement of its risk management system and command and control systems.

The service should make sure it has the right skills, capacity and resources in place to successfully manage change across the organisation. We found improvement and progress had been slow in some areas and there was often limited capacity and capability to bring about sustainable change.

The service considers some income-generation opportunities

The service considers some options for generating extra income, but it could show more ambition. It has identified future income generation by taking advantage of commercial training opportunities linked to the completion of its new training facilities. And it continues to work with commercial partner organisations to identify other opportunities to generate further income.

Promoting the right values and culture

Adequate

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate 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. Services should promote health and safety effectively, and staff should have access to a range of well-being support that can be tailored to their individual needs.

Area for improvement

The service should monitor overtime and secondary contracts to ensure working hours are not exceeded.

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

Main findings

Service values, behaviours and culture are aligned with the Core Code of Ethics

The service continues to have well-defined values, which staff understand. We found staff at all levels of the service showing behaviours that reflect service values. In our staff survey, we found that 96 percent (118 out of 123) of staff stated they are aware of the service's statement of values; 90 percent (106 out of 118) of staff agreed that their colleagues consistently model and maintain the service values. Furthermore, 89 percent (105 out of 118) of staff stated that line managers model and maintain the values.

We were encouraged by the cultural improvements the service had made. Staff we spoke to were positive about cultural improvements and trust in senior leaders. We spoke with staff that had recently joined the service who felt welcome and supported.

The service has implemented the Core Code of Ethics well and worked with staff to make sure they understand it. We found that the code and the service values and behaviours were included in policy and routinely included in staff engagement and communications.

Senior leaders act as role models. For example, 92 percent (109 out of 118) of staff responding to our survey agreed that leaders consistently model and maintain the service values. Staff that we spoke to told us that they have trust in senior leaders.

There is a positive working culture throughout the service, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they come across them.

The service is continuing to review its provisions for workforce well-being

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement: “The service should develop a wellbeing strategy and a system to improve understanding of health, safety and wellbeing.”

In this inspection, we were pleased with the progress the service has made in this area.

The service has well-understood and effective well-being policies in place, which are available to staff. Since our last inspection, the service has reviewed these and made improvements. The service has some well-being provisions in place to support the physical and mental health of staff, for example:

- 24/7 confidential support, 365 days per year.
- Free access to specialist professionals, including counsellors and mediators.
- Information and advice on a wide range of issues, including debt/finance, legal support, divorce/domestic situations and bullying.
- A managers' support line to help with difficult or complex personnel situations, conflict resolution, mediation, well-being and equality and discrimination.
- A well-being hub, which provides advice and resources to help staff manage their own well-being.

In addition, the service provides [critical incident](#) and post-incident support and well-being ambassadors who offer confidential peer support. However, we found that some of these roles were carried out on a voluntary basis and relied on the goodwill of staff.

We found that the service had worked with staff to promote its well-being provision. In response to our staff survey, 87 percent (107 out of 123) of staff agreed that they feel able to access services to support their mental well-being. Most staff we spoke to said they understand and have confidence in the well-being support processes available.

The service should continue to work with its workforce and understand what else is needed to support staff members' needs.

The service has improved how it manages health and safety

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement: "The service should ensure that recommendations from workplace accidents are monitored and actioned appropriately and in a timely manner." We also identified the following area for improvement: "The service should ensure it has a robust system in place to review and update its [risk assessments](#)."

Since then, the service has reviewed its policy for managing risk assessments and communicated this to staff. We found that the service had reviewed the capacity of the health and safety team and provided temporary resources to manage its backlog of health and safety reports.

In our staff survey, 98 percent (120 out of 123) of staff agreed the service has clear procedures to report all accidents, [near misses](#) and dangerous occurrences. We also found that the service had provided additional training and guidance to staff.

We found that the service provided accredited health and safety management training to managers at all levels.

The service should make sure that it continues to manage its risk assessments and health and safety reporting effectively and that it continues to have the capacity to do so.

The service should make sure that its process for managing working hours is effective

While the service has made some progress, the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection remains: "The service should monitor overtime and secondary contracts to ensure working hours are not exceeded."

Since our last inspection, the service has reviewed its secondary employment policy and now includes this in individual appraisals. The service has also improved its process for alerting officers if overtime is in breach of working hours. However, the service should make sure that staff are aware of this process and put in place robust and adequate oversight and assurance, especially for those staff that work dual contracts.

The service manages absence well

We found there were clear processes in place to manage absences for all staff. There is clear guidance for managers, who are confident in using the process. The service manages absences well and in accordance with policy.

Getting the right people with the right skills

Requires improvement

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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 CRMPs. It should set out their current and future skills requirements and address capability gaps. This should be supplemented by a culture of continuous improvement, including appropriate learning and development throughout the service.

Areas for improvement

The service should ensure it has the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out the [community risk management plan](#).

The service should ensure that it is able to record and monitor the training and competence of all its staff.

Innovative practice

Management apprenticeship helps staff develop leadership and management skills and apply them

As part of leadership training, the service has adopted a Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship in partnership with the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service. It is provided by Coventry University, so individuals obtain a degree by demonstrating and applying their skills and knowledge in the workplace. The apprenticeship supports leadership development and is aligned with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) leadership pathways.

Staff told us that the apprenticeship helps them develop important management skills and apply them in the workplace. We found examples where staff had contributed to or led change and improvement in the service and, as a result, improved services to the public.

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

Main findings

The service has made improvements to workforce planning but needs to do more

The service has made limited progress in addressing the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection: "The service should ensure it has the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out the integrated risk management plan". As a result, the area for improvement remains.

The service does some workforce planning, but it doesn't take full account of the skills and capabilities it needs to effectively carry out its CRMP. We found limited evidence that the service's planning allowed it to fully consider workforce skills and overcome any gaps in capability.

We found some evidence that the service was considering the capacity and capability it needs to make improvements and carry out its CRMP. It has restructured management and some departments and increased resources, including training supervisory managers in fire safety. It has plans to improve monitoring of workforce planning through better use of data. However, we also found under-resourced areas where improvement was slow.

The service doesn't effectively record and monitor the skills and capabilities of its staff

We were disappointed to find that the service had made limited progress in addressing the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection: "The service should ensure that it is able to record and monitor the training and competence of all its staff." As a result, the area for improvement remains.

We found that the service had good provision for risk-critical operational skills and routinely invests in accredited training for areas including incident command and health and safety. Most staff told us that they can access the training they need to be effective in their roles. Our staff survey found that 91 percent (112 out of 123) of staff agreed they have received sufficient training to effectively do their jobs.

However, we found that the service had a reactive approach to provision of some training without considering future maintenance of competency, monitoring or assurance. We found that not all staff had completed training and exercising in areas such as tall buildings, marauding terrorist attacks and safeguarding.

This approach means the service doesn't always identify gaps in workforce capabilities and resilience, and there is a risk staff may lack important skills for the future.

The service has invested in new systems to provide and monitor training and has started to trial these. We look forward to seeing the improvements these make once they are in use and have been evaluated.

Learning and development resources have improved, but some staff don't know how to access them

There has been some improvement in how the service supports the continuous learning and development of staff. For example, it has introduced additional learning opportunities, including leadership training and apprenticeships, and is improving access to online learning through a fire service-specific system.

As part of leadership training, the service has adopted a Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship. This is described above, under [innovative practice](#).

The service has a range of learning and development resources in place. However, some staff told us that they don't know how to access all the learning and development resources they need to do their jobs effectively. This is likely to affect what the service can offer the public.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Requires improvement

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

Creating a more representative workforce gives fire and rescue services huge benefits. These include greater access to talent and different ways of thinking. It also helps them better understand and engage with local communities. Each service should make sure staff throughout the organisation firmly understand and show a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. 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 it takes is meaningful.

Areas for improvement

The service should put in place mechanisms to engage with all staff and monitor how effective the mechanisms are.

The service should make sure it has robust processes in place to undertake [equality impact assessments](#) and review any actions agreed as a result.

The service should improve the way it collects equality data so it can better understand its workforce demographic and needs.

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

Main findings

The service has improved the way it seeks and acts on staff feedback but needs to do more

While the service has made some progress, the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection remains: “The service should put in place mechanisms to engage with all staff and monitor how effective the mechanisms are.”

Staff told us that senior leaders are visible and approachable and that they work with and listen to staff. Most staff show confidence and trust in leaders to continue to improve culture.

We were pleased to see that the service has developed several ways to work with staff on issues and decisions that affect them. This includes methods to build all-staff awareness of fairness and diversity as well as targeted initiatives to identify matters that affect different staff groups. These include:

- briefing and engagement sessions led by senior leaders;
- an online forum called ‘chat with the chief’;
- senior manager visits to stations and departments; and
- engagement sessions on equality and diversity.

Although the service has made improvements to the way it works with staff, we still found that some staff had limited confidence in the time the service takes to act or respond to concerns or feedback. As a result, staff don’t always feel their feedback or concerns have been listened to.

The service has improved the way it tackles bullying, harassment and discrimination

In our last inspection, one area for improvement was that the service should review how effective its policy on bullying, [harassment](#) and discrimination is in reducing unacceptable behaviour towards its staff.

Since then, the service has reviewed its policies. We found that these policies had been used effectively. The service has made sure staff are trained and clear about what to do if they encounter inappropriate behaviour. It has also provided managers with grievance and discipline training.

The service has a case review process, which aims to make sure cases are dealt with proactively and proportionately. The process includes senior managers, ensures consistency and makes sure actions are aligned with the Core Code of Ethics.

The service has also considered the recommendations of the [Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade](#) and started a full, independent review of its own culture.

Staff have a good understanding of what bullying, harassment and discrimination are and their negative effects on colleagues and the organisation.

In this inspection, 13 percent (16 out of 123) of staff told us that they have been subject to harassment and 11 percent (14 out of 123) to discrimination over the past 12 months.

The service needs to do more to address disproportionality in 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 taken steps to improve diversity and make sure its recruitment processes are accessible to applicants from a range of backgrounds. For example, the service has provided online awareness sessions, and staff were involved in a 'have a go' session for the community. The service directs its recruitment campaigns at under-represented groups and has recently appointed a community engagement officer. Staff are positive about this work. The service has worked with staff to make sure they understand its approach.

The service advertises recruitment opportunities both internally and externally, including on the National Fire Chiefs Council website, social media and its own website. However, it could do more to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds, including for middle and senior management roles.

The service still needs to do more to increase staff diversity. There has been little progress to improve ethnic diversity. In 2021/22, 3 percent (77 people) of new joiners self-declared as being from an ethnic minority background. The proportion of firefighters that are from an ethnic minority background decreased from 2.1 percent in 2020/21 to 1.7 percent in 2021/22. This is mainly because the number of firefighters from a White British background increased by 24 from 322 to 346. But it is also because the number of firefighters from an ethnic minority background decreased from 7 to 6. However, the service has made some progress in improving gender diversity. The proportion of female firefighters increased from 8.7 percent (36 people) to 8.9 percent (38 people) over the same period.

For the whole workforce, in 2021/22, 2.2 percent were from an ethnic minority background, compared to 17 percent in their local population and 8 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. And 19.1 percent were women, compared to 18.6 percent throughout all fire and rescue services.

The service has improved its approach to EDI

In our last inspection, a cause of concern was that the service wasn't taking a proportionate approach to promoting EDI in the workplace.

In this inspection, we found that the service had prioritised work on this cause of concern. We were satisfied that it had made sufficient progress against most of the recommendations in relation to this cause of concern, which is now discharged.

The service has improved its approach to EDI. It makes sure it can offer the right services to its communities and has improved the way it can support staff with [protected characteristics](#). For example, it recognises that its previous approach to promoting EDI disengaged staff. It has listened to their feedback and adopted a different approach; staff are positive about the communication they have received and told us that it has improved their understanding of positive action and equality and diversity. We found that staff were confident in being able to talk openly and honestly about issues. The service has appointed an EDI adviser who works with senior managers. It has also introduced EDI leads throughout the service, and staff spoke positively of these. The service should make sure that EDI leads have the capacity for change and improvement.

The service has carried out a culture review. Staff we spoke to were aware of this work, and we found evidence that the service was considering its response to the findings. It should make sure that it communicates and promotes the outcomes of this work to staff.

Staff are positive about the Core Code of Ethics, and we found the service had included it as part of its new approach to EDI.

The service still needs to improve its understanding of staff diversity

The service has worked with staff to improve their understanding of why the service collects data on ethnicity, why this is important and what the service will do with it. However, we were disappointed to find that some staff still hadn't declared their equality data. We also found examples of staff deliberately recording misleading information. The service will want to explore the reasons behind this and take appropriate action to address them.

In 2021/22, unknown ethnicity made up 15.8 percent of the workforce, compared to the England rate of 8.8 percent. The service should continue to improve the confidence of staff in reporting equality data so that it can better understand the diversity of its workforce and make sure it has the right provisions in place to support staff members' needs.

In our staff survey, we found 92 percent (113 out of 123) of staff agreed that they have access to gender-appropriate workplace facilities. Furthermore, we found that the service had commissioned an independent review of its property. This is so it can make sure that staff have suitable facilities and provisions and that improvements have been prioritised and planned. We look forward to seeing these improvements for staff.

Although the service has a process in place to assess equality impact, it doesn't properly assess or act on the impact on each protected characteristic. From the records we viewed, we found that assessments were rarely completed in detail, and we found limited evidence of changes as a result of these. The service recognises this and has plans to improve.

Managing performance and developing leaders

Requires improvement

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at managing performance and developing leaders.

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

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure its selection, development and promotion of staff is open and fair.

The service should make sure it has mechanisms in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation.

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

Main findings

The service has reviewed the way it manages performance

The service has reviewed the way it manages performance to allow it to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff. For example, appraisals are an important part of this process, and they link to team and departmental plans to make sure the service can achieve its CRMP priorities.

The service showed us an improvement in the number of completed appraisals, but due to difficulties with recording systems, it is hard to make sure all staff have completed these. In our staff survey, only 76 percent (94 out of 123) of staff told us that they have had a formal appraisal in the last 12 months.

Most staff reported that they have regular, meaningful discussions with their managers. In our staff survey, 86 percent (106 out of 123), of staff told us they have discussed with their manager in the last year how well they are performing at work. However, 14 percent (17 out of 123) of staff told us they have never discussed with their manager how well they are performing at work.

Staff still don't feel that promotion and progression are fair

While the service has put considerable effort into working with staff and reviewing its promotion and progression processes, it hasn't made enough progress since our last inspection to make sure staff see them as fair. Therefore, the area for improvement that we first identified in 2018/19 remains: "The service should make sure its selection, development and promotion of staff is open and fair."

In our staff survey, 58 percent (71 out of 123) of staff told us that the promotion process in the service is fair.

We found that the service's approach to promotion and progression had an increased focus on values and is aligned with the Core Code of Ethics. We welcome this. However, we saw inconsistencies in the way selection and promotion processes are completed. This undermines the perception of fairness that staff have in these processes.

The service is using temporary promotions while it completes its review of processes.

The service should do more to diversify leadership

The service has made some progress in improving the diversity of senior leaders. It knows it needs to go further to increase workforce diversity, especially in middle and senior management. It should review its plans to address this and how it can further encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds.

The service has successfully advertised positions and filled them with external candidates and continues to look for opportunities to make its workforce more representative.

The service needs to do more to develop leadership and high-potential staff at all levels

While the service has made some progress, the area for improvement that we identified in our last inspection remains: “The service should make sure it has mechanisms in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation.”

There has been some progress since our last inspection, but the service recognises the need to improve the way it actively manages career pathways of staff, including those with specialist skills and those with potential for leadership roles. The service has considered how it can put in place more formal arrangements to identify and support members of staff to become senior leaders. We have seen an improvement in the leadership training available to staff.

The service has trained several staff in coaching and introduced a coaching portal available to all staff via its intranet.

It has committed resources to managing a project to implement formal talent management arrangements. We look forward to seeing the improvements this will bring.

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