

Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service



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About this inspection

This inspection is from our third round of inspections of fire and rescue services in England. We first inspected Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service in December 2018. We published a report with our findings in June 2019 on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how it looks after its people. Our second inspection, in autumn 2020, considered how the service was responding to the pandemic. This inspection considers for a second time the service's effectiveness, efficiency and people.

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

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

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

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

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








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





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


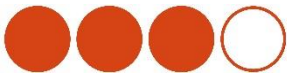




If we find shortcomings in the service, we will judge it as requires improvement.

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

Overview

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

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 Efficiency	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Making best use of resources	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Future affordability	 Good	Good

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

HM Inspector's summary

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

I am pleased with the performance of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue service in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks, although it needs to improve in some areas to provide a consistently good service. For example, the service has a large backlog of [home safety checks \(HSCs\)](#) from partner referrals. We found no effective plan to deal with this.

Across all areas of the service, evaluation is limited, and the service should identify ways to ensure more effectively the benefits of the service's work.

I am pleased to see that the service has made progress since our 2018 inspection. The service took our recommendations seriously and produced a comprehensive improvement plan to monitor progress. It has made improvements in all the areas we identified, with 20 out of 24 areas for improvement from the first round being resolved. This is a good example of what improvements can be made when a service focuses on the main findings of our inspection. Areas we have seen the greatest improvement in are protection and how the service looks after its people.

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

- introduction of new values and behaviours, with improved culture;
- increased provision for staff well-being;
- improved focus on equality, diversity, inclusion, and fairness;
- improvements in protection and operational response; and
- improved work with the community and partners to drive efficiencies.

Culture is improved and there are new values

The service has made improvements to its culture, with staff telling us directly and through our staff survey that this has improved since our last inspection. The service also has its own strong set of values that is underpinned by the [Core Code of Ethics](#).

Equality, diversity and inclusion is improved

The service has excellent governance arrangements for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Staff networks are valued and listened to, and we found evidence that staff have a good understanding of EDI. Nevertheless, the service is aware that it has more to do to reflect the diverse communities it serves.

Overall, this is a good performance by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue service, for both the communities it serves and its staff. It should now continue to make progress with the remaining areas for improvement whilst maintaining performance in other areas and we look forward to seeing how it builds on this success by our next inspection.



Roy Wilsher

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Response

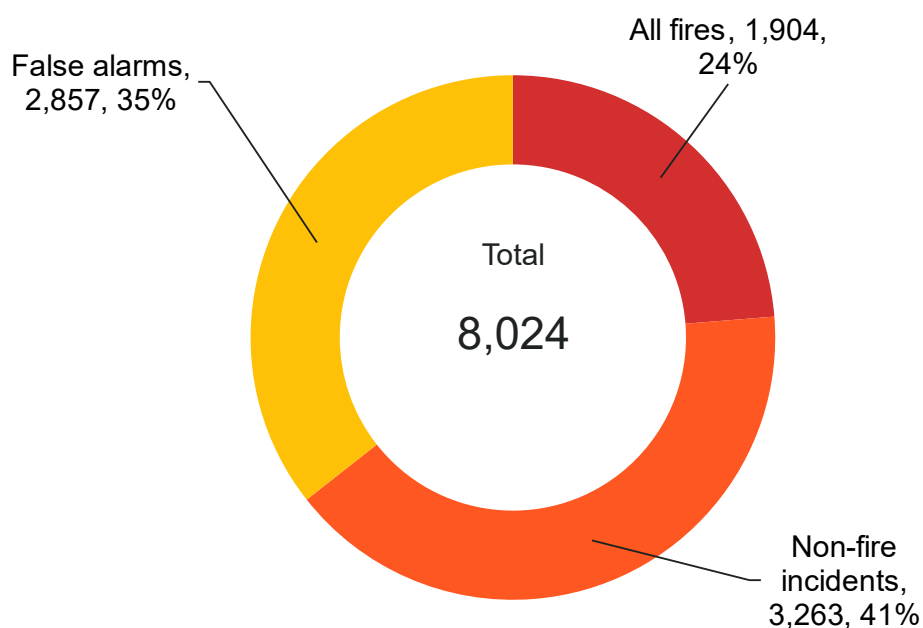
	Leicestershire	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 31 December 2021	7.24	9.82
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	7.88	4.47
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2021	2.62	1.70
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2021	88.4%	86.4%



Cost

Firefighter cost per person Year ending 31 March 2021	£19.11	£25.02
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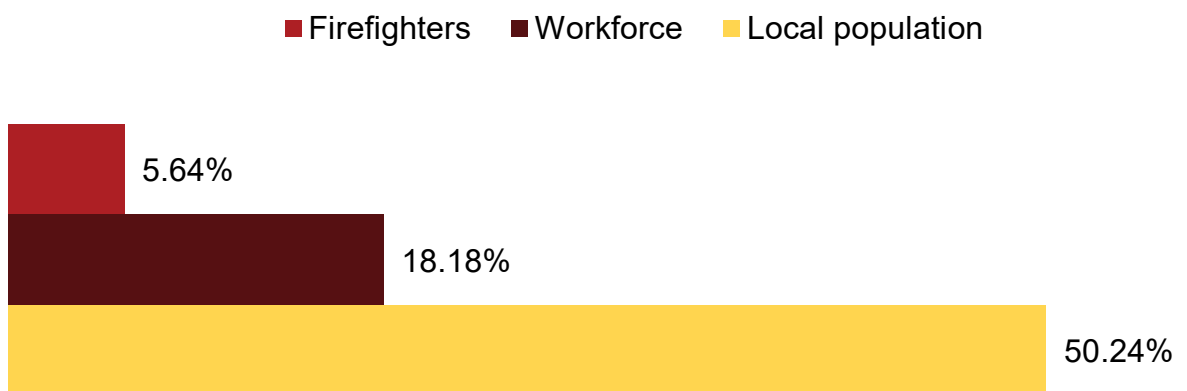
Incidents attended in the year to 30 June 2021





Five-year change in total workforce 2016 to 2021	-6.13%	-1.60%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	0.50	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2021	62.5%	64.4%

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



Percentage of population, firefighters and workforce who are from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2021



For more information on data and analysis throughout this report, please view the [‘About the data’ section of our website](#).

Effectiveness



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



Good

Summary

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

We are pleased with the progress that the service has made in going from 'requires improvement' to 'good'.

It has improved its understanding of protection and how it responds to fires, while maintaining a good service to the public with its understanding of risk and planning for major incidents. But improvements in how it evaluates and prioritises prevention activity are required.

In 2020, the service introduced [*Our Plan: Corporate and Integrated Risk Management Plan \(IRMP\) 2020–2024*](#). The plan contains five clear strategies, describes how the service will meet its aims and objectives, outlines the challenges and explains how the service plans to meet them.

We were pleased to see the service meeting on time its inspections of high-risk premises and carrying out effective and consistent quality assurance of its protection activity. This is an improvement since our last inspection.

Improvements have also been made in the safe management of incidents by incident commanders and the introduction of new mobile data tablets on fire engines so firefighters can access risk information quickly.

Although there are many positives in this area, the service should make sure that operational staff have read and understood any urgent risk information or [safety flashes](#); learning from operational incidents should be obtained and shared effectively; and the service should put in place a plan to address the backlog of [home safety checks \(HSCs\)](#) received from partner referrals.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Good (2019: Good)

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service is good at understanding risk.

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

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

The service is good at identifying and understanding community risk

The service has assessed an appropriate range of risks and threats after a thorough integrated risk management planning process. When assessing risk, it has considered relevant information collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and datasets.

The service is good at using risk data to create a community risk model. This shows where incidents are more likely to occur and clearly informs how the service best allocates its resources.

When appropriate, the service has consulted and undertaken comprehensive and constructive dialogue with communities, as well as businesses and voluntary groups to both understand the risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it. For example, the service uses these engagement sessions such as 'pop up events' in rural locations to generate [safe and well visits](#) and provide support to the community to reduce risk.

The integrated risk management plan 2020–24 is up to date and easy to understand

After assessing relevant risks, the service has recorded its findings in an easily understood [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#) with an annual action plan. These plans describe how prevention, protection and response activity is to be effectively resourced to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces, both now and in the future. The IRMP has seven clear priorities for the service up to 2024.

The annual action plan is clear on how the service plans to meet its aims and objectives, which are linked to the five corporate strategies.

We found the service is good at regularly reporting progress on its performance to the [combined fire authority](#).

However, even though the IRMP is driving service activity, there are areas of prevention that need to be improved.

The service gathers, maintains and shares a good range of risk information

The service routinely collects and updates the information it has about the people, places and threats it has identified as being at greatest risk. The service stores risk information well. Buildings are given a risk rating and a risk information record is created. We also saw how all high-rise buildings have had wall plates installed at the entrance to the building. These display building-specific information, for instance number of floors and number of stairs. They help firefighters formulate tactical plans quickly.

We found all risk information records to be in date and comprehensive. This information is readily available for the service's prevention, protection and response staff, which helps it to identify, reduce and mitigate risk effectively.

We were pleased to see good quality assurance in place when risk information records are created or updated.

Where appropriate, the service passes risk information on to other organisations well. For example, information about buildings that don't comply with fire safety regulations is shared with local authorities and building control teams.

The service should make sure staff read and understand urgent risk information

We found that the service sends a safety flash email to all operational staff that they must read. For example, information about an oxygen cylinder that exploded in another fire service.

We were disappointed to find that not all firefighters read the safety flashes. And the service can't be assured that its staff have read them. The service needs to improve the way it monitors that staff have read and understood urgent risk information.

The service is good at building understanding of risk from operational activity

The service records and communicates risk information effectively. It also routinely updates risk assessments and uses feedback from local and national operational activity to inform its planning assumptions. For example, the service identified an area which needed to be made more clear following feedback from two fires where fans were used to assist with putting the fire out. The risk to firefighters was identified early and the service acted by removing all fans from fire engines until further training was conducted.

The service makes good use of information from [national operational learning](#) from other fire and rescue services. We saw a good example of sharing learning from a fatal basement fire attended by another fire service and the establishment of effective basement fire training for all firefighters in the service.

The service has responded positively to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry

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

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service has responded positively and proactively to learning from this tragedy. The service has assessed the risk of each high-rise building in its service area.

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

Research study is informing prevention, protection and response

We were pleased to find the service working with the University of Leicester on a research report into multiculturalism and fire safety. We found this report to be a comprehensive analysis of the distribution of residential fires in an ethnically diverse urban area. The service has acted on its recommendations, some of which are:

- a person-centred approach to communication – providing information to members of the public that is tailored to their needs;
- how to better work with people from ethnic minority backgrounds; and
- how to train staff to be effective.

The report is helping the service work with diverse communities to find ways to build trust and confidence in the service in order to reduce risk.

Preventing fires and other risks



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

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

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

Area for improvement

The service should put in place a plan to address the backlog of home safety checks received from partner referrals.

Area for improvement

The service should provide training to partners to make sure they are receiving quality home safety check referrals.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity, so staff carry out home safety checks to an appropriate standard.

Area for improvement

The service should evaluate its prevention activity, so it understands what works.

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

The prevention plan aligns with the IRMP

Prevention falls under 'Safer Communities' in the corporate and IRMP, which is one of the service's five corporate strategies.

The service's prevention plan is good: the service is targeting those most at risk. And departmental and district plans at fire stations clearly detail how prevention activity is provided to the communities.

The service's teams work well together and with other relevant organisations on prevention, and it shares relevant information when needed. Information is used to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between the service's prevention, protection and response functions. For example, the service provided post-incident advice and support following a fatal fire in the community.

However, even though the prevention plan is good, it isn't communicated well. Firefighters told us they feel HSCs are all about quantity to meet service targets. And the senior leadership team told us they are about quality, not targets. The service should examine ways to make sure its HSC message is clear and engages the workforce.

No effective plan to deal with the home safety check referral backlog

There is a large number of referring partners, including East Midlands Ambulance Service and district nursing teams. The service would benefit from evaluating its partnerships to ensure each is targeting those people most at risk.

At the start of our inspection, we found a backlog of 725 HSCs from partner referrals, rising to over 1,000 at the end of our inspection. However, we found no plan to deal with the backlog or action to reduce the risk.

The backlog concerns high-risk homes in the community. The service's policy is for staff from the community educator team to deal with high priority visits. However, the team clearly can't cope with the demand. We were also disappointed to find senior managers unaware of the backlog.

Even though the service has a strong partner referral scheme, we found the service isn't training partners in how to complete an HSC referral to make sure partners are assessing risk correctly. And the service isn't carrying out any quality assurance or equality assessments to ensure no groups of people are at more risk than others.

The service should put a plan in place to evaluate the level of risk and then act using all available resources.

The service has adapted its prevention activities to the pandemic well

We considered how the service had adapted its prevention work during our COVID-19 specific inspection in October and November 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its public prevention work appropriately. Since then, we are encouraged to find that the service has continued to conduct doorstep HSCs on a risk-assessed basis, and to make follow-up telephone calls to ensure safety messages are understood.

Prevention activity is prioritised to risk

Prevention activity that is generated by the service is clearly prioritised using a risk-based approach towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. For example, the service targets those most [vulnerable](#) in their homes.

Homes containing one or more people aged 65 years or over with a disability get a visit. The community educator team carries out visits to the highest-risk homes and firefighters the lower-risk homes.

The service takes account of a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable individuals and groups. This includes NHS data, demographic information, vulnerability data from the local authorities and historical incident data. We found staff using a Microsoft Power BI dashboard to make informed decisions on where to conduct prevention activity and campaigns based on risk.

The service provides a range of prevention interventions in the community, such as:

- a person-centred approach to HSCs in line with [National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\)](#) guidance;
- school education work;
- a post-incident response following each fatal fire;
- collaboration with landlords of high-risk tenants;
- attendance at community safety boards;
- road safety initiatives, including using virtual reality technology; and
- youth engagement programmes.

Prevention training has improved

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure it appropriately trains staff to undertake prevention activity.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has trained all staff who carry out prevention work.

Staff told us they have the right skills and confidence to carry out HSCs and have received training to go the extra mile. This is when staff give extra advice on a case-by-case basis based on risk. We found good examples of advice on hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies.

Staff are good at identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified [safeguarding](#) problems. They told us they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. The staff we spoke to, including [on-call firefighters](#), were all able to tell us the actions they would take when responding to a safeguarding concern. The service has also provided safeguarding training to all staff since our last inspection.

The service works well with partner organisations

The service works with a wide range of organisations such as Leicestershire and Rutland County Councils, [local resilience forums \(LRFs\)](#), safeguarding and vulnerability boards, and community safety groups where organisations meet and collaborate to prevent fires and other emergencies.

We found good evidence of the service working with organisations in the community to educate and reduce risk, such as:

- campaigns on the increase in candle use due to the cost-of-living crisis, bonfire awareness and Diwali; and
- supporting the private rental sector concerning vulnerable tenants.

The service is good at tackling fire-setting behaviour

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people of different ages who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. For example, the service supports young people who have been through the criminal justice system due to fire-setting crimes.

When appropriate, it routinely shares information with other relevant organisations as a statutory partner on community safety boards across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to support the prosecution of arsonists. The service also supports partner organisations by providing anti-arson letterboxes when required.

Lack of evaluation and quality assurance

In our last inspection, we found the service's evaluation of its prevention work was an area for improvement.

We were disappointed to find limited evidence that the service evaluates how effective its prevention activity is to ensure it has a clear understanding of the benefits. For example, the service has invested in a road safety education vehicle that gives people a virtual reality experience. But there is limited evaluation and more needs to be done to understand what effect this is having on reducing road deaths.

The service performs no quality assurance of the standard of HSCs conducted by staff, to make sure that they are consistent across all fire stations and include all sections of the community. For example, staff told us they don't have the confidence to ask equality questions at HSCs. This is disappointing as this means equality data isn't being collected effectively to ensure all communities get equal access to prevention activity that meets their needs.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service is good 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 (RBIP) for enforcing the legislation.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it allocates enough resources to respond effectively and in time to statutory building control consultations.

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

The fire protection strategy is well integrated with the community risk model

The service's protection strategy is clearly linked to the risks identified in its corporate and IRMP. Protection falls under 'Safer Communities' in the plan, which is one of the service's five corporate strategies. The community risk model gives a broad view of risk at a local level which informs protection activity.

Staff across the service are involved in this activity, with information effectively exchanged as needed. We were pleased to see the service is currently training all front-line [watch](#) managers for the Level 3 Fire Safety qualification. They undertake low-level audits, the information from which is passed on to dedicated protection staff who take appropriate action, as required. Information is then used to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between the service's protection, prevention and response functions. This means resources are properly aligned to risk.

The service adapted its protection activity during the pandemic

We considered how the service had adapted its protection activity during our COVID-19 specific inspection in October and November 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its protection work well. Since then, we are encouraged to find that protection activity has continued, and operational staff and specialist protection and prevention staff are working together to reduce risk.

Protection activity is focused on the highest-risk premises

The service's RBIP is focused on the service's highest-risk buildings. We were encouraged to see resources were in place to effectively complete the programme ahead of schedule.

We were also encouraged to find all audits we reviewed were completed in the timescales the service has set itself, and all the audits had the correct risk rating applied. The service has set targets in 2023/24 to increase the number of audits, due to more buildings being built.

We found the service carried out 2.6 fire safety audits per 100 premises in 2020/21, which encouragingly is higher than the England average of 1.7.

All high-rise premises have been inspected

Audits have been carried out at all high-rise buildings the service has identified as using cladding that is similar to the cladding installed on Grenfell Tower. Information gathered during these audits is made available to response teams and control operators, enabling them to respond more effectively in an emergency.

The service has assessed the risk of each high-rise building in its service area.

Fire safety audits are completed to a good standard

We reviewed a range of audits of different premises across the service. This included audits as part of the service's RBIP, after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies, where [enforcement action](#) had been taken and at high-rise, high-risk buildings.

The audits we reviewed were completed to a high standard in a consistent, systematic way, and in line with the service's policies. Relevant information from the audits is made available to operational teams and control room operators.

The quality assurance process is effective

Quality assurance of protection activity takes place in a proportionate way. At the time of our inspection, an experienced fire safety officer reviews a fire safety inspector's audit and completes the sign-off, with the inspector receiving feedback. The service is enhancing this process when two new officers are qualified soon.

The service is good at collecting equality data from protection activity and evaluating it to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to the protection services that meet their needs.

The service is good at using its full range of enforcement powers

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers, and when appropriate, prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations.

In the year to 31 March 2021, the service issued 7 alteration notices, 184 informal notifications, 23 enforcement notices, 8 prohibition notices and undertook 2 prosecutions. It completed 6 prosecutions in the last 5 years from 2016/17 to 2020/21.

The service has increased its protection resources

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and RBIP.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. The protection team has increased from 9 to 16. The service now has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of the service's RBIP. This helps the service to provide the range of audit and enforcement activity needed, both now and in the future.

The service aligns staff training with nationally recognised standards. We found operational staff have received training in how to carry out fire safety checks in lower-risk premises. They spoke highly of the training they received, and specialist protection officers provide good support on a 24/7 basis.

The service also has a fire engineer and has arrangements to help neighbouring services to access engineer support when this is needed.

The service works closely with other enforcement organisations

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and routinely exchanges risk information with them. For example, we found that Environmental Health and Trading Standards shares information with the service during their inspections, such as building faults. The service then takes appropriate action.

The service responds to licensing consultations in a timely manner

The service responds to all licensing consultations on time, so consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. We were pleased to find that, in 2020/21, the service continued to respond to all licensing consultations within the required time frames.

The service needs to improve its response time to building consultations

The service doesn't respond to building consultations on time, so isn't consistently meeting its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. We are disappointed to find the service hasn't met this responsibility since 2016. For example, in 2020/21, the service received 684 building consultations and responded to only 598 (87 percent) in time.

The service works well with businesses

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure its staff work with local businesses to share information and expectations concerning compliance with fire safety regulations.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has built good links with businesses and the private rental sector, where we found good examples of effective collaboration.

The service proactively engages with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. It uses social media and its website to deliver messages about fire safety compliance. It has held seminars with local businesses to promote fire safety law.

We found the service has agreed to continue its support in managing five [primary authority schemes](#). These schemes allow businesses to receive, through a single point of contact in the service, professional and tailored advice on meeting fire safety regulations.

The service is an active and valued partner at [safety advisory group](#) meetings to ensure emergency plans are effective for small or large events, such as sporting events.

The service has reduced its attendance to unwanted fire signals

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure it has an effective system in place to address repeat false alarms.

We are pleased to have found an effective risk-based approach is now in place to manage the number of unwanted fire signals. In January 2022, the service introduced a new unwanted fire signal procedure, which clearly describes a phased approach to reducing unwanted fire signals through engagement and support.

The service works closely with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services as they share their [mobilising](#) system. We found a well-established call challenge procedure for any unwanted fire signals.

The service gets fewer calls because of this work. The number of false alarms attended in 2017/18 was 2,849 and in 2020/21 was 2,760. In the year to 31 December 2021, the service attended 2.58 false alarms per 1,000 population, which is below the England average of 3.97 per 1,000 population.

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

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

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

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

Area for improvement

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

Area for improvement

The service should review its response standard to ensure it is based upon an up-to-date assessment of risk.

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

Response resources are regularly reviewed

The service's response strategy is linked to the risks identified in its corporate and IRMP. Response is one of the service's five corporate strategies. Its fire engines and response staff, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to help the service to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources. For example, we saw good examples of fire engines and smaller tactical response vehicles being regularly moved around the service to ensure the widest operational cover is maintained.

Improvements to policy and training concerning tactical response vehicles

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should have a clear policy concerning the deployment of its tactical response vehicles. These vehicles are smaller and have fewer firefighters than a standard fire engine. The service told us this allows them to be more efficient when providing fire cover.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find that the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has revised the mobilising procedures effectively for tactical

response vehicles and has provided related training to [fire control](#) staff and firefighters. This includes incident command training.

The service is continually improving its response times

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standard in its IRMP. The service aims to attend all life-threatening incidents in an average of 10 minutes. The service is just outside its 10-minute standard: in 2020/21 the average was 10 minutes 15 seconds.

Home Office data shows that in the year to 31 December 2021, the service's response time to [primary fires](#) was 9 minutes and 55 seconds. This is similar to the average for significantly rural services. Primary fires are more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property.

We were disappointed to find the service's reasoning for its ten-minute response time is over a decade old; the service would benefit from revisiting this.

On-call availability could be improved

To support its response strategy, the service has 20 fire stations with 34 fire engines, including tactical response vehicles. It doesn't have an optimum fire engine model, however, to maintain the 10-minute response standard to life-threatening incidents. It has a plan in place to increase fire engine availability when levels drop to 10 across the service.

In 2020/21 overall fire engine availability was 88.4 percent, with [wholetime firefighters](#) at 99.1 percent and on-call at 76.9 percent.

Incident commanders are confident in their role

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure staff know how to command fire service assets assertively, effectively and safely at incidents.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has improved how it trains incident commanders, who are now assessed regularly and properly. They are either trained in-house or externally. All incident commanders complete re-validation every two years and, from the files we viewed, all were in date. This training helps the service to safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents that it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

As part of our inspection, we interviewed incident commanders from across the service. The incident commanders we interviewed are familiar with risk assessing, decision-making and recording information at incidents in line with national best practice, as well as the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#).

Control room staff are integrated into the service

We are pleased to see the service's control staff integrated into the service's command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. We were given examples of how fire control staff have been involved in training and major incident exercises with operational staff. We were also pleased to find that control staff were involved in structured debriefs after incidents.

Control room staff can provide fire survival guidance to multiple callers

The service has an effective partnership with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services. All three services share the same mobilising system, which means that, when necessary, they can take emergency calls for each other and mobilise resources.

The control room staff we interviewed are confident they could provide fire survival guidance to many callers simultaneously. This was identified as learning for fire services after the Grenfell Tower fire.

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

There are good processes in place to manage risk information

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

The information we reviewed was up to date and detailed. It could be easily accessed and understood by staff. Encouragingly, it had been completed with input from the service's prevention, protection and response functions when appropriate.

However, the quality assurance of cross-border risk information could be improved to ensure risk information held is up to date.

Improvements to portable tablets that hold risk information

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure its [mobile data terminals](#) are reliable so that firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has invested in new portable Toughbooks and iPads for all fire engines and officers. These are in addition to the mobile data terminals at the front of

fire engines. Risk information is now also stored on these tablets. Staff told us these improvements have made accessing risk information effective.

Operational learning isn't effective

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included large fires at domestic properties and commercial buildings.

We were disappointed to find that the debrief process lacks sufficient detail to encompass operational learning and that feedback from incidents isn't collected effectively. This means when operational learning is shared, it is missing information.

We were also disappointed to find, from the files we reviewed, the service isn't meeting its six-week target to complete a formal debrief.

We also found a backlog of actions from debriefs that aren't being progressed promptly. Learning is taking too long to be shared with the workforce. This means the service isn't routinely improving its service to the public.

However, we were encouraged to see the service is contributing to, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services or operational learning gathered from other emergency services. Learning is then communicated to the rest of the service.

The public are informed of ongoing incidents

The service has good systems in place to inform the public about ongoing incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. The service's communication team provides cover during the day and fire control staff have had training in communicating to the public during the night. This includes improved social media messaging and working well with LRFs to provide consistent messages to the public.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents



Good (2019: Good)

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

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

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

The service is well prepared to respond to 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 and the service has included these in its corporate and IRMP and management planning. For example, the service has good plans to respond to major incidents, including severe weather conditions, and is working well with LRFs to ensure these plans are co-ordinated and tested.

It is also familiar with the significant risks that could be faced by neighbouring fire and rescue services that it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. Firefighters have access to that risk information, but work needs to be done to ensure it is up to date.

Improvements to training for major and multi-agency incidents

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure it is well prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to a terrorist-related incident and that its procedures for responding are understood by all staff and are well tested.

Since our last inspection, we reviewed the arrangements the service has in place to respond to different major incidents, including high-rise buildings and marauding terrorist attacks (MTAs). Although the service doesn't have a specialist MTA team, it has trained all its operational staff in MTAs and aligned its staff to the latest joint operating principles.

We are pleased the service has addressed this area for improvement and now has good arrangements in place to respond to major incidents, which are well understood by staff.

The service works well with other fire and rescue services in emergencies

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. For example, it can mobilise resources to any incidents in the relevant service areas. As the service shares its mobilising system with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services, it can mobilise the other services' resources easily.

The service has additional formal arrangements in place with neighbouring services. It is intraoperable with these services and can form part of a multi-agency response. For example, we found the service working well with neighbouring services to establish a regional breathing apparatus working group.

Cross-border exercises are carried out

We were pleased to see the service incorporating cross-border exercises into its training programme. Fire stations have clear training plans in their district plans that state when cross-border training takes place with neighbouring fire and rescue services. This helps them to work more effectively together to keep the public safe.

However, learning from these exercises could be better recorded and shared.

Principles for working effectively with other emergency services are well understood

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure it is well prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to an incident and staff know how to apply JESIP.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with JESIP for working with other emergency services. This included training packages and assessments of the command of an incident to consider how well the principles were adhered to. We are pleased the service could provide us with strong evidence that staff can apply and consistently follow these principles.

The service works well with its local resilience forum

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with other partners that make up the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Resilience Forum (LLR Prepared). These arrangements include planning and preparations for major incidents under statutory regulations for [COMAH sites](#), as well as plans to mitigate risks identified in the community risk register.

The service is a valued partner and active member of several sub-groups, and the chief fire officer is a member of the LLR Prepared executive board. The service takes part in regular training events with other members of LLR Prepared and uses the learning to develop plans for responding to major and multi-agency incidents, for example a major power outage or a mass casualty road traffic accident.

The service keeps up to date with national learning

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

Efficiency



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



Requires improvement

Summary

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

We found that Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service has made some progress in efficiency since our last inspection.

There are now sufficient resources in prevention, protection and response; however, the service should consider how these could be used more effectively to achieve its outcomes.

The service understands its future financial risk and has made sound planning assumptions. Encouragingly, the service has plans to move away from the [day crewing plus](#) duty system.

The service's arrangements for managing performance don't always link resource use to the IRMP and the service's strategic priorities. There is a lack of performance oversight in some key business areas.

We found that the service comprehensively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations with other organisations. We are also pleased to see the service generating income from its estate. These were areas for improvement we identified in the last inspection.

The service still needs to test business continuity arrangements in some high-risk areas.

There are plans to improve the use of technology to improve effectiveness and efficiency, but these aren't fully realised yet.

Making best use of resources



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

Leicestershire 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 the services' risks and statutory responsibilities. Services should make best possible use of resources to achieve the best results for the public.

The service's budget for 2022/23 is £43.4m. This is a 7.4 percent increase from the previous financial year.

Area for improvement

The service should assure itself that all processes in place to support performance management are effective.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has appropriate business continuity arrangements in place which are regularly reviewed and tested that take account of all foreseeable threats and risks.

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

The service has plans to support objectives, but resources can be better used

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service needs to show clear reasoning for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities.

We are pleased the service has addressed this area for improvement. The service's financial and workforce plans, including allocating staff to protection and response, mostly reflect and are consistent with the risks and priorities identified in the IRMP.

The service has now produced a Risk and Resource Methodology 2020–24, which provides detail and reasoning on how the service delivers prevention, protection and response activities.

However, there is a weakness that needs addressing with how resources are allocated to some prevention activities. Resources could be better used to manage risk. For example, the backlog of [home safety checks \(HSCs\)](#) from partner referrals isn't being resourced effectively.

Some performance processes need to be reviewed

The service's arrangements for managing performance don't always link resource use to the IRMP and the service's strategic priorities. Some processes need to be reviewed.

The senior team meets regularly with department heads to monitor, review and manage service performance. Each quarter, the service's performance is scrutinised by the [fire authority](#) governance committee.

However, we found a lack of performance oversight in some key business areas, for example, the prevention backlog from partner referrals, which are high-risk homes in the community. The service should make sure that all processes in place to support performance management are effective.

The service is taking steps to make sure the workforce's time is as productive as possible. This includes implementing new ways of working. For example, the service has introduced Microsoft Power BI dashboards that are used by managers to drive prevention, protection and response activity. We found detailed fire station district plans that link to the IRMP and targets included are based on local risk.

Although the service has a relatively small, [on-call](#) workforce, we are pleased to see they are also carrying out prevention activity to reduce risk.

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

The service collaborates effectively with others

We are pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate, and routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. For example, the service works with Leicestershire Police and the East Midlands Ambulance Service to respond to incidents where it can reach people faster, gain entry and help individuals get attention sooner. The service also works closely with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services who share their [mobilising](#) system. Arrangements are in place for overflow emergency calls to be taken when the service has high demand.

Collaborative work is mostly aligned to the priorities in the service's IRMP. For example, the service collaborates effectively with organisations in the community to educate and reduce the risk of fires. But the service needs to improve the training provided to partners, so they assess risk correctly when making HSC referrals.

The service comprehensively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. We are pleased the service has addressed this area for improvement. It records all its collaboration activity and evaluation, and this work is monitored and reviewed at management team meetings every six months.

Testing of business continuity arrangements requires improvement

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service needs to prioritise implementing new business continuity plans and test them as soon as possible.

We were disappointed to find the service still has gaps in its continuity arrangements for areas where threats and risks are considered high. For example, the service would benefit from carrying out an exercise in a full evacuation of its control room. The service has also been slow to address contractual matters to allow [fire control](#) staff to work out of county during a business continuity incident.

However, business continuity plans for industrial action are good.

The service has sound financial management arrangements in place

Financial plans are built on sound scenarios. They help make sure the service is sustainable and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. For example, the city council scrutinises the budget and the fire authority has oversight.

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. And this scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money. For example, the fire authority reviews the service's expenditure on a regular basis. No weaknesses have been identified by the service's external auditors who review the service's financial management.

The service has made savings and efficiencies, which haven't affected its operational performance and the service it provides to the public.

The service is taking steps to make sure important areas, including estates, fleet and procurement, are well placed to achieve efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. For example, the service actively manages its ICT and estates contracts to provide value for money. National framework procurement is used in areas such as fleet and ICT, and the service monitors the use of its fleet and moves fire engines around to make the best use of them.

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



Good (2019: Good)

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

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

Area for improvement

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.

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

The service understands its future financial challenges

The service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its main or significant financial risks. For example, the service has planned to assign £1.7m from the 2024/25 budget to meet the expected costs from removal of the day crewing plus duty system. It has a preferred option for changing duty systems, which it intends to consult on as part of the community risk management plan consultation process in 2023/24. And it has plans to recruit more [wholetime firefighters](#) than it currently needs to manage this change.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic and prudent, and take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. These include council tax precept flexibility, which has enabled an increase of £5 (7.8 percent) for a Band D property in 2022/23. This will generate an additional £1.8m.

We are pleased to see that the service has identified investment opportunities to improve the service to the public. Its capital programme is funded from its revenue budget and covers estates, fleet, ICT and other equipment. It also plans to increase its estates' [reserve](#) using its revenue budget to fund improvements.

The service has a clear plan for its reserves

The service has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves. Several reserves are earmarked to mitigate financial risks and deliver on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations. The service plans to invest in a new learning and development facility and has plans to invest further in transformation projects that support the delivery of its corporate and IRMP.

The service makes good use of fleet and estate

The service's fleet and estate strategies have clear links to the corporate and IRMP. Both strategies exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The service is investing £5.2m in new operational vehicles including 12 fire engines and other smaller vehicles. This investment supports delivery of the fleet replacement programme.

The service has plans to refurbish Western, Eastern and Loughborough fire stations in 2022–23. These include improvements to facilities for female staff. In addition, £6m is earmarked for a new learning and development centre.

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

The service should use technology to improve efficiency

The service has an ICT plan for 2021–24, which sets out how the service will improve and innovate. The plan includes a roadmap to address the service's key ICT challenges over the next few years. We found the service has made some progress in delivering the roadmap, such as introducing Microsoft Power BI dashboards.

However, we found staff recording the same prevention, protection or response information twice in different systems. Also, we found manual audits being carried out to monitor staff overtime. These activities are affecting productivity.

The mobilising system used in control to send resources to operational incidents could be more efficient. The service is an active partner with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services in managing the current contract for the system. There is a tri-service project to purchase a new mobilising system.

The service recognises there is more to do to deliver on its plans. We look forward to seeing these improvements. The service should ensure its plans for innovation and ICT improvement are evaluated to make sure the benefits are being realised.

The service generates income from its estate

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure it fully exploits external funding opportunities and options for generating income, in particular that it is recouping costs for use of its premises by other emergency services.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It now has formal arrangements in place for sharing premises and renting space out to Leicestershire Police and East Midlands Ambulance Service. These lease arrangements clearly detail the rent and utility charges made back to the service.

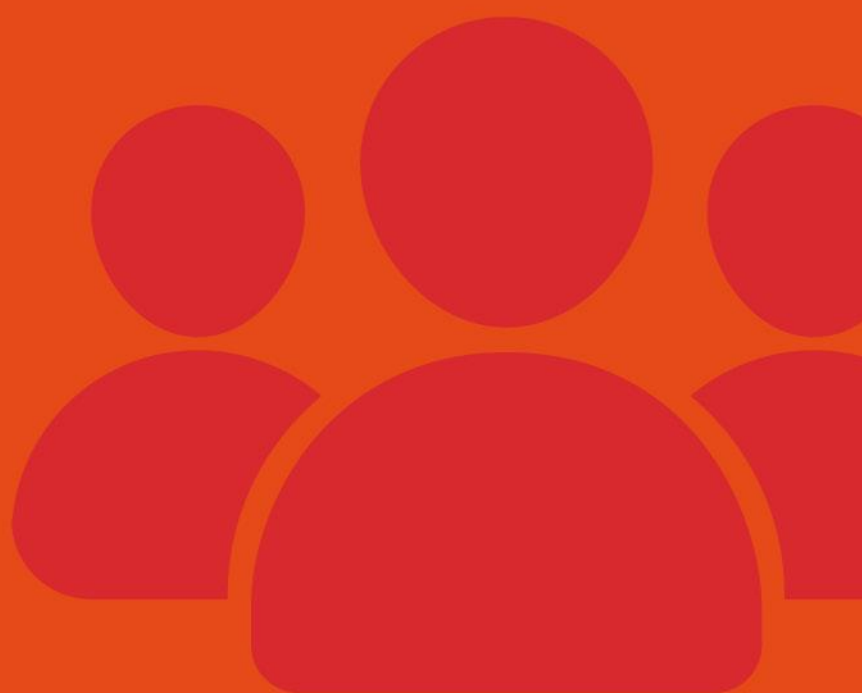
Trading company is under review

There is a fire trading company called Forge Health Limited. It provides occupational health services to small and medium-sized businesses and Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service. Forge Health employs no members of staff directly but instead uses Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service staff. It is charged for staffing costs based on the percentage of time that staff work for the company. And it is charged for other costs such as equipment and utilities.

The board of the trading company comprises two directors: one from the service and one from Leicestershire County Council. There is no up-to-date business plan. A previous business plan stated that a formal update of progress against financial forecasts, strategic objectives and risk would be reported to the fire authority annually. We found no evidence of this taking place.

At the time of the inspection, a review of the future of the trading company was taking place. This should include assurance that adequate governance and controls to safeguard against conflicts of interest are in place. It should also include assurance that the performance of Forge Health is subject to annual reviews so legal obligations and its duty to obtain value for money can be satisfied.

People



How well does the service look after its people?



Good

Summary

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

The service has shown a strong commitment to driving improvements since our last inspection and we are pleased with progress. But some areas need to continue to improve.

There has been a significant change in senior leadership since our first round of inspections. Staff have reported an improving culture and confidence in the senior leadership team to build effective relationships. The service has established its own values and behaviours, which staff are familiar with and which are in line with the [Core Code of Ethics](#).

Since our last inspection, the service has replaced appraisals with a new one-to-one performance management process. The service should fully evaluate this to make sure it is effective. The service has also made significant improvements to well-being provision for the workforce.

The service has introduced a new electronic system for recording staff competence. It should be evaluated to make sure it is effective and delivers the benefits anticipated.

The service recognises it needs to increase the diversity of its workforce. We are encouraged that it is joining the [National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\)](#) direct entry scheme from 2023.

We were pleased to see the service has improved its promotion processes since our last inspection.

There are clear policies on staff working secondary contracts. However, hours aren't regularly monitored, and some staff are working excessive hours.

Promoting the right values and culture



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

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

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

Area for improvement

The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure 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.

Values and behaviours are established, and culture continues to improve

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure its values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated at all levels of the organisation.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has introduced new values and behaviours. The values are professional, positive and honest, and they were chosen by the workforce. They are understood by staff, with 98 percent (155 of 158) of respondents who completed our staff survey telling us they are aware of the service's statement of values. We are encouraged by the cultural improvements the service has made since our last inspection.

We are also encouraged to see the new values being aligned to the Core Code of Ethics. We found they are being included in the new personal development discussions (PDDs) with all staff that replace the appraisal process.

Behaviours that reflect service values are shown at all levels of the service. We spoke to staff who agreed senior leaders are now more visible and approachable. This was reflected in our staff survey in which 83 percent (128 of 155) of respondents told us senior leaders maintain the service's values. And 78 percent (123 of 158) of respondents told us they feel confident their ideas or suggestions will be listened to.

We are encouraged to find a positive working culture throughout the service, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they encounter them. This was reflected in our staff survey in which 74 percent (117 of 158) of respondents told us they feel confident they can challenge and provide feedback to all levels in the service.

However, while most staff spoke positively of senior leaders, some staff told us some senior leaders don't maintain confidentiality. The service should make sure that confidentiality is always maintained.

There is good provision to support workforce well-being

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure staff have access to trauma support and counselling services.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement and has made significant improvements. It now has well understood and effective well-being policies in place that are available to staff. A significant range of well-being support is available to support both physical and mental health. For example:

- specialist trauma practitioners ([TRiM](#));
- 24/7 employee assistance;
- well-being dogs;
- well-being passports;
- peer support;
- occupational health;
- physiotherapy;
- a new absence policy to better support individuals;
- support for staff leaving the service; and
- neurodiversity support networks.

We are impressed with the provisions that are in place to promote well-being and how they are communicated to staff. This was reflected in our staff survey in which 98 percent (155 of 158) of respondents feel able to access services to support their mental well-being. And, encouragingly, 95 percent (150 of 158) of respondents are confident that well-being support would be offered following a traumatic incident.

The service has appropriate health and safety provision in place

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure it has an up-to-date health and safety policy and procedure and that staff understand these.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has commissioned a peer review of its health and safety policy and has acted on the outcomes to improve its health and safety provision.

Both staff and trade unions have confidence in the health and safety approach taken by the service. Our staff survey shows that 97 percent (153 of 158) of respondents feel their personal safety and welfare is treated seriously at work. And 98 percent (155 out of 158) of respondents feel they have the right equipment to do their job safely.

We are also pleased to see that the service has started a project to improve equipment and training for incidents where firefighters support ambulance staff with lifting members of the public to safety.

However, we did find that staff don't understand the [near-miss](#) procedure that is in place for firefighter safety. This is something the service should review.

Monitoring of working hours is poor

The service could do more to monitor staff working hours, including those of staff who have secondary contracts and staff who work overtime.

As of 31 March 2021, 27 percent of [wholetime firefighters](#) had secondary contracts with the service. The service has clear policies in place and staff are told that they should comply with them and not work excessive hours. But during our inspection we spoke to staff whose hours weren't regularly monitored. For example, we heard that rest periods before and after wholetime shifts aren't always adhered to by staff to maintain their [on-call](#) availability.

We also found monitoring of overtime is weak and examples of staff working excessive overtime hours. Overtime for the service significantly increased in 2021. The service should do more to ensure it effectively monitors and supports staff who work overtime.

Absence management processes are effective

As part of our inspection, we reviewed some case files to consider how the service manages and supports staff through absence including sickness, parental and special leave.

We found there are clear processes in place to manage absences for all staff. There is clear guidance for managers, who are confident in the process. Absences are managed well and in accordance with policy. HR staff provide additional support to managers, and staff we spoke to knew how to report absence and spoke positively about the support provided.

Overall, the service has seen a decrease in firefighter sickness absences over the 12 months between 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

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

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

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

The service has an effective understanding of current and future skill requirements

The service has good workforce planning in place for all roles. This makes sure skills and capabilities align with what is needed to effectively deliver the IRMP. The service also has a detailed people plan that gives clear details on the aims and objectives and how the service will achieve them.

Workforce and succession planning is subject to consistent scrutiny in the form of four working groups that meet to discuss requirements. Each working group has clear roles and responsibilities for attendees and there is a set agenda that must be followed. This allows any issues to be addressed and escalated promptly. Workforce planning considers many aspects, such as retirement profiles.

We are encouraged to see investment in 14 new roles, which have recently been approved. The investment will support the implementation of the people plan while adding resources to other areas to best address risk and workloads. We look forward to seeing the impact of these at our next inspection.

Improvements to how training records are accessed and monitored

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure its electronic system for recording and monitoring operational staff competence is accurate and accessible.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has introduced a new electronic system (Oracle) to manage staff competence by recording all training for all roles in a central place. Line managers use the system to ensure staff are up to date in risk-critical safety capabilities.

When we spoke to staff about the new system, they told us it is accessible but very new. The service should make sure the full implementation of the system is effective and delivers the benefits anticipated. We were also encouraged to find that staff can access old competency records whilst the service is making the transition to a new system.

Improvements to safety-critical training

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure staff are appropriately trained in safety-critical skills, such as incident command.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. We found all the records of staff skills and safety-critical capabilities that we viewed to be in date, including incident command. This means operational staff are trained and competent.

Staff told us that they could access the training – safety-critical and other training – they need to be effective in their role. This was reflected in our staff survey in which 87 percent (137 of 158) of respondents told us they receive sufficient training to do their job effectively.

We also found the service has a 36-month training planner, which provides a consistent way for operational staff to maintain competence and capability.

There is a positive culture for learning and development

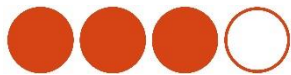
A culture of continuous improvements is promoted throughout the service and staff are encouraged to learn and develop. We are pleased to see that the service has a range of resources in place, such as:

- on-call firefighters having access to iPads they can take home to complete training;
- access to a mentor or coach; and
- online learning resources and access to external learning providers.

This was reflected in our staff survey in which 76 percent (120 of 158) of respondents told us they are satisfied with the level of learning and development provided.

We also found good examples of continuous professional development sessions, such as regular, informal, incident command chats between peers. We were encouraged to see supervisory managers being trained in nationally recognised fire safety qualifications to support protection activity. And a positive, no-blame debrief culture allows staff to discuss what went well and what can be learned.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

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

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

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

The service has improved the way it seeks feedback and challenge

The service has developed several ways to engage with staff on issues and decisions that affect them, such as staff surveys. The service has introduced a regular service-wide question time session with senior leaders, which staff told us is more of a two-way conversation.

We were encouraged to be told by staff that, since our last inspection, senior leaders are more visible. We also found the service takes on board feedback from staff. The reintroduction of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service badge on uniforms has been well received and we were told by staff that it has improved their sense of identity.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure that it has effective grievance procedures, and it should identify and implement ways to improve staff confidence in the grievance process.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has a new grievance policy and carries out engagement sessions with staff and representative bodies. The service should continue to build trust in the grievance process and ensure confidentiality is always maintained.

We were also encouraged to see a proactive approach by the service following several grievance cases that it has received. It has commissioned an independent cultural review, which will be led independently by Leicestershire City Council.

There are methods to build all-staff awareness of fairness and diversity, as well as targeted engagement to identify matters that affect different staff groups. For example, the service has several staff networks in place that are supported by the service and senior leaders. All of these feel empowered to make decisions. Representative bodies and staff associations reported that the service works well with them.

More needs to be done to remove bullying and harassment in the workplace

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

The service is consulting about a new bullying and harassment and discipline procedure, which will be published shortly. In addition, staff networks provide extra support.

Encouragingly, in our staff survey, 92 percent (145 of 158) of respondents told us they feel as if they're treated with dignity and respect at work.

During the inspection, staff told us they are confident in approaching their line manager or a trusted colleague to raise bullying, harassment and discrimination grievances, and disciplinary matters. However, we were told by some staff that they would choose carefully which senior leader they raise matters with.

Disappointingly, 8 percent (12 of 158) of respondents in our staff survey also told us that they have been subject to harassment and 7 percent (11 of 158) to discrimination over the past 12 months. The main reasons for those feeling harassed not reporting this behaviour were concerns about being victimised and labelled as a troublemaker. All of those who told us they feel discriminated against said it is from someone more

senior to them. The service needs to do more to build trust and confidence with staff reporting, so action can be taken. We look forward to seeing how the new policies remove barriers and improve trust.

The service recognises it needs to increase the diversity of its workforce

There is an open, fair and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for the fire and rescue service. The service provides [unconscious bias](#) training to managers and for those who sit on interview panels. The service has an effective system to understand and remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. Furthermore, the service evaluates each stage of its whole-time firefighter recruitment process and understands which stages of the process those from a protected characteristic aren't passing. Having identified an issue with female firefighters failing the [fitness test](#), the service now provides additional support to this group.

The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment processes so that they are fair and understood by potential applicants. For example, the service has trained staff who go out into the community to talk with diverse groups about how to remove barriers to joining the fire service.

The recruitment policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. Recruitment opportunities are advertised both internally and externally, including for middle and senior level roles. The service has trained its staff on what positive action means and we were encouraged to find that staff understand it.

The service has also made improvements in increasing staff diversity at some levels of the organisation. We were encouraged to see that, in 2020/21, of the 54 staff joining, 6 self-declared as being from an ethnic minority background.

Of the whole workforce, 5.2 percent are from an ethnic minority background (local population is 21.6 percent) and 18.2 percent are women. The service is aware it needs to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds into all roles including middle and senior level positions.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity, make its workforce more representative, and ensure diversity and inclusion are well understood and become important values of the service.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement by improving equality of opportunity and making its workforce more representative, even though more needs to be done.

The service has a good approach to equality, diversity and inclusion

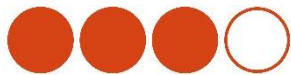
The service has improved its approach to EDI and is making sure it can offer the right services to its communities and support staff with protected characteristics. We are pleased to find excellent governance arrangements in place with EDI. The service has also conducted comprehensive EDI training across the workforce since our last inspection.

The service has an effective process in place to assess equality impact on existing and new processes. The equality impact assessments we reviewed were completed to a good standard and both internal and external equality groups were consulted.

EDI is also integrated into the recruitment and promotion process and reasonable adjustments are made where applicable. We found good examples of neurodiversity groups established in the service and support for existing staff who require reasonable adjustments.

We were also pleased to find that all the estate had been reviewed and improvements made to make sure it is inclusive.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

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

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

Area for improvement

The service should fully evaluate personal development discussions to ensure they are effective to manage staff development and performance.

Area for improvement

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

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

A new process is improving one-to-one performance management

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure it has an effective system in place to manage staff development, performance and productivity.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. We found the service is replacing the appraisal process with new PDDs. We were encouraged to find the new approach will incorporate the Core Code of Ethics and there will be regular development conversations more often between staff and line managers.

The service recognised a gap in supporting staff development during the transition from appraisals, so it has outsourced leadership consultants to support team development, culture and staff in promotion pools.

Some operational staff told us that during this transition to PDDs, there is currently limited development to prepare them for their next role. The service should ensure all staff are provided with development opportunities to prepare them for promotion or filling temporary positions outside formal processes. Support staff told us they have good access to development opportunities, including shadowing colleagues to help prepare for more senior roles.

The service is in the process of fully implementing PDDs and completing the training of all managers and staff. The service should carry out evaluation of PDDs to make sure they are effective.

We were disappointed to find, from our staff survey, 34 percent (54 of 158) of respondents haven't had an appraisal in the last 12 months. The service should ensure staff don't miss out on development conversations while it makes the transition to the new process.

The service has fair promotion and progression processes

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should ensure its selection, development and promotion of staff is open, transparent and fair.

Since our last inspection, we were pleased to find the service has addressed this area for improvement. It has put considerable effort into developing its new promotion and progression processes so they are fair and understood by staff. The process is now focused on competency and behaviours and has been consulted on with representative bodies.

We found the following improvements since our last inspection:

- Third-party interviewers are part of the interview panel to ensure independence.
- All interviewers are trained in unconscious bias.
- Candidates are issued a number to maintain anonymity.
- A digital platform is used to store applications.

In our staff survey, 72 percent (114 of 158) of respondents feel the promotion process is fair. And during our inspection most staff told us this. However, some staff do not share this view. The service would benefit from understanding this in greater detail and continuing to build trust and confidence in the new promotion process.

The promotion and progression policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles.

The service has effective succession planning processes in place that allow it to effectively manage the career pathways of its staff, including roles requiring specialist skills.

Selection processes are managed consistently with clear guidance and support for managers. However, some middle managers told us that completing the recruitment packs is affecting their capacity to conduct other activities. The service is aware of this and is working to make it less time consuming. We also found that temporary promotions to fill short-term resourcing gaps and firefighter transfers are managed fairly and transparently.

The service is improving how it develops leaders but has no high-performance pathway

The service has effective succession planning processes in place that allow it to manage talent into leadership roles. This is discussed during the PDDs with line managers to consider existing skills and talent for progression. For example, staff applying for promotion are placed in either a development pool or a talent pool. We found staff in these pools are supported with development plans to prepare them for the next role. However, some staff in the talent pool told us development plans can be slow. The service should make sure staff in promotion pools have development plans that progress quickly.

The service advertises all talent and leadership opportunities both internally and externally. We were encouraged to see it has plans to support the NFCC direct entry scheme into middle and senior management roles from 2023.

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders. Since our last inspection, we found no pathway for such staff. The service should make it clear what pathway and support is available for high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

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