

Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service



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About this inspection

This is our third inspection of fire and rescue services in England. We first inspected Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service in July 2018, publishing a report with our findings in December 2018 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 Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

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








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





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




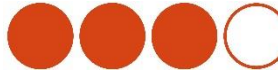
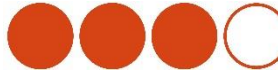

If we find shortcomings in the service, we will judge it as requires improvement.

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

Overview

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

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

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

HM Inspector's summary

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

I congratulate Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service on its excellent performance in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks.

We were pleased to see that the service has made progress since our 2018 inspection.

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

- The service has improved consultation with the public and internal and external interested parties about its community risk management plan (also known as an [integrated risk management plan](#)).
- The service has made some progress in making sure it allocates enough resources to its prioritised, risk-based inspection programme. However, it is too early to see how effective the programme will be. I look forward to seeing how this develops when the new team structure is fully in place.
- Overall, the service has developed a good understanding of its future financial challenges. It has also identified savings and investment opportunities to improve its service to the public.
- Since our last inspection, the service has developed a talent management process. Staff are starting to realise the benefits of this.

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



Matt Parr

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Response

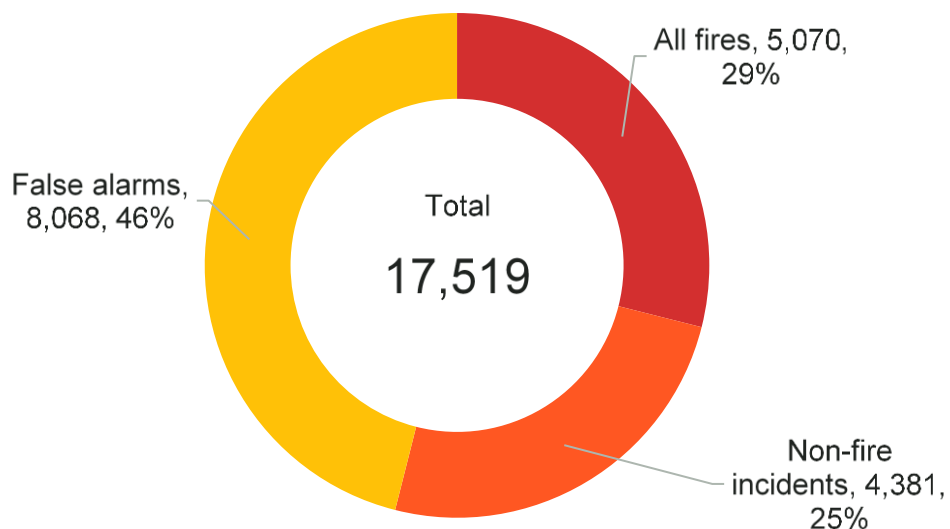
	Lancashire	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 30 June 2021	11.56	9.36
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	6.59	4.47
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2021	1.68	1.70
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2021	94.4%	86.4%



Cost

	Lancashire	England
Firefighter cost per person Year ending 31 March 2021	£25.62	£23.73

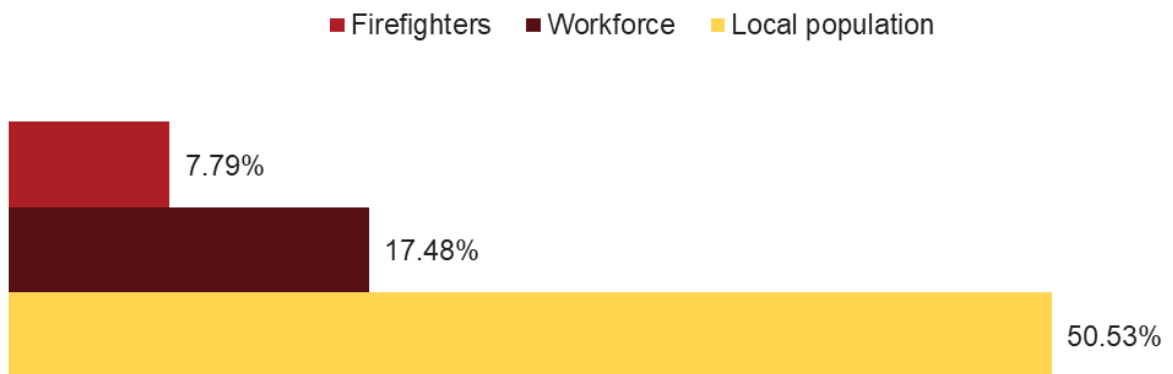
Incidents attended in the year to 30 June 2021



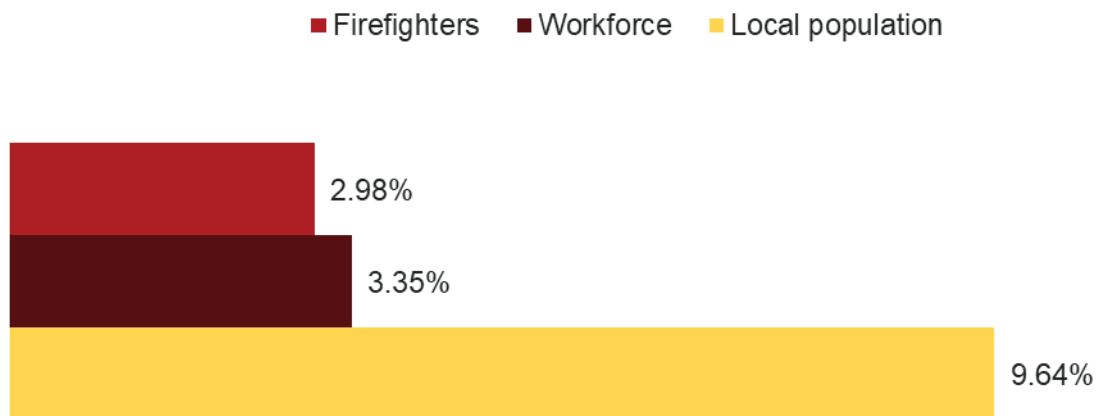


Five-year change in total workforce 2016 to 2021	3.19%	-1.60%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	0.70	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2021	59.0%	64.4%

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. Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness is good.

We are pleased with the progress that Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has made in effectiveness.

Since our first visit in 2018, the service has improved the way it consults internal and external interested parties and the public on its community risk management plan (CRMP), formerly known as an [integrated risk management plan](#).

We were pleased to find that the service had agreed a new unwanted fire signal policy with the [fire authority](#) since our last inspection, but at the time of this inspection it hadn't been implemented. We look forward to seeing the effect this has on false alarms.

The service has also made some progress in making sure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised, risk-based inspection programme. However, at the time of this inspection, it hadn't yet recruited staff for all of the roles, so it was too early to see how effective this structure will be.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Good (2018: Good)

Lancashire 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 has worked with the local community to build a comprehensive profile of risk

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

The service has consulted and undertaken constructive discussions with communities and others, such as local flood action groups, the pan-Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board, and community safety partnerships, to both understand the risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it.

The service has improved the way it communicates with the public and internal and external interested parties about its CRMP. The service uses the In the Know email network to consult with its communities. This is a free service that members of the community can sign up to. Through this, the service, the local authorities and other organisations, including the police, can tell them about events and incidents in their area. It received over 1,700 responses to the consultation.

The service has an effective CRMP

After assessing relevant risks, the service has recorded its findings in an easily understood CRMP. This plan describes how prevention, protection and response activity is to be effectively resourced to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces, both now and in the future.

The service's CRMP for 2022–27 sets out how it aims to:

- prevent fires and other emergencies from happening;
- protect people and property when emergencies do happen;
- respond to fires and other emergencies quickly and competently;
- support its staff so they can focus on making Lancashire safer; and
- get value for money from its resources.

Lancashire Fire Authority monitors the service's performance and progress. It measures these against the priorities outlined in the service's CRMP.

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's processes and systems include:

- gathering information during familiarisation visits to high-risk premises;
- working with building owners to put measures in place to reduce fire risks;
- working with organisations and businesses to identify short-term risks in the county, for example at sporting events and festivals; and
- recording risk information about [vulnerable](#) members of the community, including hoarders, to support its response in the event of an incident.

This information is readily available for the service's prevention, protection and response staff, which helps it to identify, reduce and mitigate risk effectively. Staff can access the information in a range of ways, including through [mobile data terminals](#) on fire engines, by email, and through the online learning system.

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

Feedback from operational activity informs the service's understanding of risk

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.

Since our last inspection, the service has created a new [hot debrief](#) app that can be used on tablets. This has increased the number of debriefs being completed. It has also improved operational learning. The service uses its debriefing process to identify learning that may contribute to [national operational learning](#). For example, it worked with a local housing authority to understand the risks of composite fence panels and how a fire could spread from them. This information was then shared nationally.

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.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has responded positively and proactively to learning from this tragedy. At the time of this inspections, the service was on track to assess the risk of each high-rise building in its service area by the end of 2021.

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.

Preventing fires and other risks



Good (2018: Good)

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is good 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 evaluate its prevention activity, so it understands what works.

Innovative practice

The service has developed a preferred partners list of organisations, which it reviews to make sure that people most at risk have been identified.

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

The service's prevention plan aligns with its CRMP

The service's prevention plan is clearly linked to the risks identified in its CRMP.

It identifies four important areas of work based on risk within the community:

- start safe, which teaches children fire safety;
- live safe, which focuses on home safety advice such as electrical devices and cooking;
- age safe, which promotes dementia awareness and supports vulnerable older people; and
- road safety.

The service shares information internally and works well with relevant organisations on prevention. It passes on relevant information when needed. Information is used to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between the service's prevention, protection and response teams.

Since our last inspection, the service has introduced a post-incident log, which collates incident information from the response, prevention and protection teams.

The service has adapted its prevention approach because of the pandemic

We considered how the service had adapted its prevention work during our COVID-19-specific inspection between 28 September and 8 October 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 learned from this, and has listened to feedback. As a result, it now offers in-person and virtual presentations, making them more accessible.

The service targets its home safety visits at the people at most risk

Prevention activity is clearly prioritised using a risk-based approach towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. The service's contact centre assesses the need for a [home fire safety check \(HFSC\)](#) by eligibility criteria, such as age, smoking habits, mental health and any vulnerabilities the person may have.

The service takes account of a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable individuals and groups. The service has developed a preferred partners list of organisations. These organisations refer individuals who would benefit from HFSCs to the fire service. The service reviews these referrals to make sure that people most at risk have been identified. It gives each organisation a score based on how accurate the referrals are. If the organisations are referring low-risk people, the service either gives them training to improve the quality of their referrals or removes them from the list.

Staff have the appropriate training to carry out prevention activities

Staff told us they had the right skills and confidence to carry out HFSCs. These checks cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies.

All staff are given training on fire prevention. New staff have one week of prevention training during their recruitment course. This training is supported with online learning packages. Staff also have access to their local prevention team, which can advise on, or complete follow-up visits to, more complex cases.

The service is good at safeguarding vulnerable individuals

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified [safeguarding](#) problems. We found that safeguarding training was mandatory, and staff told us they felt confident and were trained to act appropriately and promptly. They were able to tell us the signs of vulnerability. They were also able to tell us what actions they would take to respond to a safeguarding concern, including the referral process.

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

The service works with a wide range of other organisations such as Lancashire Police, local authorities, and the Lancashire Road Safety Partnership to prevent fires and other emergencies. A fire officer from the service also led the work nationally on road safety.

We found good evidence that it routinely referred people at greatest risk to other organisations that may be better able to meet their needs. These organisations include the NHS and other social care providers. Arrangements are also in place to receive referrals from others.

If necessary, the service offers a safe and well component to HFSCs. This can identify additional risk factors and vulnerabilities, such as social isolation, mental health and dementia, which not only increase the risk of fire, but may also affect an individual's health and wellbeing. Referrals can then be made to NHS and social care providers.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses the information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention activity. The service is proactively involved in joint campaigns with the adult and children's safeguarding board partners. It is currently working with Trauma Informed, a government-funded project which aims to reduce violence.

As we noted in the 2020 COVID-19 inspection, the service is now working more closely with other members of the Lancashire [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#). Organisations in the LRF have told us that, as a result of the pandemic, the fire service is seen as a more active and trusted partner.

The service has effective procedures for 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. This includes school visits, a Prince's Trust programme and working with the community safety partnerships.

When appropriate, it routinely shares information with other organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists. The service works with other organisations, including the police, to share information and support a multi-agency approach.

The service should evaluate all its prevention activities

We saw some evidence that the service evaluated how effective its activity was in making sure all its communities have equal access to prevention activity that meets their needs, such as road safety activities and Bright Sparks, a fire safety package for young children that is presented in schools. However, not all prevention activities had been evaluated. As a result, the service is missing opportunities to improve how it helps the public.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Good (2018: Good)

Lancashire 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 for enforcing the legislation.

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.
- 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 protection plan outlines the service's main risks

The service's protection plan is clearly linked to the risk it has identified in its community risk management plan.

Staff across the service are involved in this activity, with information effectively exchanged as needed. For example, the service is trialling having [wholetime](#) operational staff carry out fire safety checks at lower-risk premises. Protection issues are gathered and shared through the post-incident log. Information is in turn 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 activities positively during COVID

We considered how the service had adapted its protection activity during our COVID-19-specific inspection in September and October 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its protection work well. Since then, we are encouraged to find that the service's protection activity has continued, and some wholetime operational staff and specialist protection staff are continuing to carry out face-to-face visits.

Protection activity is focused on the highest-risk buildings

Since our last inspection, the service has reviewed its risk-based inspection programme, which is focused on the service's highest risk buildings. The service told us it has identified 7,440 premises as high risk. These include buildings with overnight accommodation. Specialist fire safety staff will inspect these over a three-year cycle.

The service isn't currently on track to inspect these premises in line with its risk-based inspection programme. It plans to put in a new staffing structure to meet the demand. The structure has been approved by the fire authority, but at the time of inspection the department still had several vacancies.

Safety audits of high-rise buildings are on track

Audits have been carried out at all high-rise buildings the service has identified as using cladding that is like 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.

At the time of inspection, it was on track to visit all the high-rise, high-risk buildings it had identified in its service area by the end of 2021.

The service carries out fire safety audits to a high standard

We reviewed a range of audits of different premises across the service. This included audits as part of the service's risk-based inspection programme, 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.

Limited quality assurance is carried out

We found that there was no quality assurance of the service's protection activity taking place. The service recognises this. The new staffing structure will introduce six new posts and a new process. This will increase capacity to assure the quality of the fire safety checks and audits that take place.

Some protection activities are evaluated

The service has some evaluation tools in place to measure its effectiveness or to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to protection services that meet their needs. For example, it carries out business owner surveys, and, where joint action has taken place, it evaluates its results with the other organisations that were involved.

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 2 alteration notices;
- issued 243 informal notifications;
- issued 38 enforcement notices;
- issued 3 prohibition notices; and

- undertook one prosecution.

It completed 16 prosecutions in the past 5 years, from 2016/17 to 2020/21.

The service has recently increased its protection resources

Our 2018 inspection included an area for improvement for the service to make sure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised risk-based inspection programme. The service has made some progress on this. It has reviewed its structure within the protection team but, although there has been a recent increase in protection staff and funding, it is too early to see how effective this will be. At the time of this inspection, the protection department restructure had yet to be completed. As a result, this is still an area of improvement for the service.

The new structure ensures that staff get the right training and work to appropriate accreditation. The service aligns staff training with nationally recognised standards. The service has three fire engineers available in-house. Out-of-hours protection advice is available through a fire safety officer who is either on duty or can be re-called to duty.

We look forward to seeing the full effect of the new structure when it is fully in place.

The service works closely with other organisations

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and routinely exchanges risk information with them. For example, the service worked with local authority housing and the Care Quality Commission to carry out enforcement activity at a care home.

The service doesn't respond to building consultations on time

The service doesn't always respond to building consultations on time, so doesn't consistently meet its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. Since our last inspection, the percentage of responses completed within the timeframe has fallen from 94.1 percent in 2018/19 to 76.3 percent in 2020/21. The service is aware of this, and the new protection structure includes a new building consultation team. This should help it improve performance.

The service works well with businesses

The service proactively engages with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. The service has a business support plan to make sure it supports the right areas. Its website gives businesses access to fire safety advice. The service also has business fire safety advisors who work with the Chamber of Commerce and businesses.

The service has been slow to reduce the number of false alarms it attends

Since our last inspection, the service has been slow to implement an unwanted fire signal policy. This means that engines may be unavailable 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 roads to respond to these incidents.

In 2020/21 the service was still responding to a large percentage of false alarms. The service has now agreed a policy that will be in place from April 2022. The new policy should mean greater consistency with its neighbouring fire services in responding to false alarms.

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Good (2018: Good)

Lancashire 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 that [fire control](#) has direct access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.

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

The service links its response resources to identified risks

The service has reviewed its response plan. The plan is linked to the risks identified in its new CRMP. 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. The service is about to complete an emergency fire cover review, which may align resources further.

The service uses software that helps it to make sure there are always enough fire engines available to respond to incidents. When fire engines respond to an incident, the software suggests which fire engines should be moved from their base locations to maintain cover throughout the service's area.

The service meets its targets for the time taken to respond to incidents

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standards in its CRMP. This says that a critical fire should be attended by a fire engine based on risk, with the first engine arriving in 6, 8, 10 or 12 minutes, depending on the type of incident.

The service consistently meets its standards. Home Office data shows that in the year to 31 March 2021, the service's response time to [primary fires](#) was 7 minutes and 42 seconds. This is slower than the average time for predominantly urban services.

The service hasn't met its availability targets

In 2020/21, the service didn't meet its availability targets for wholetime day-crewed fire engines (99.3 percent availability compared to its target of 99.5 percent) or on-call fire engines (90.4 percent availability compared to its target of 95 percent). But the service recognises that its targets are aspirational and are above the national average.

The new CRMP will evaluate the service's crewing arrangements as part of its emergency fire cover review in 2022.

Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely

The service has trained incident commanders who are assessed regularly and properly. Each commander has an assessment every two years. This 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 were familiar with risk assessing, decision-making and recording information at incidents in line with [national operational guidance](#), as well as the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#).

Control staff are involved with the service's debrief activity

We are pleased to see the service's [fire control](#) staff integrated into the service's command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. For example, the control room manager is invited to debriefs. The use of virtual team meeting software has helped control staff to attend more often as they can maintain cover in the control room.

Fire control can give fire survival guidance to multiple callers

The control room staff we interviewed were confident they could provide fire survival guidance to many callers simultaneously. This was identified as learning for fire services after the Grenfell Tower fire. Fire control has arrangements in place to communicate with other control rooms and for calls to be diverted, if the need arises.

Fire control also has good systems in place to exchange real-time risk information with incident commanders, other responding organisations, 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.

Staff can easily access risk information

We sampled a range of risk information, 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.

We saw examples of temporary risk information being given to staff. For example, for a rally car race that will travel through the moorland in 2022, risk assessments have been completed by the wildfire team. All short-term risk information is available via mobile data terminals on the fire engines.

But the service could improve the way it shares risk information with other organisations, particularly with North West Fire Control, which is the central fire control for four fire services.

Effective operational debriefs are carried out

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

We are pleased to see the service routinely follows its policies to assure itself that staff command incidents in line with operational guidance. Internal risk information is updated with the information received.

Since our last inspection, the service has developed an app to complete debriefs. The app is available via a tablet on fire engines. It has significantly increased the number of debriefs being completed.

We saw evidence of useful information being shared throughout the service through bulletins. The bulletins are based on the operational debriefs for incidents attended by the service's staff. Staff must confirm that they have read these bulletins. They do this through the 'maintenance of competence' IT system.

We are encouraged to see the service is contributing towards, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services or operational learning gathered from other emergency service partners.

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

The service has good systems in place to inform the public about continuing incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. These include using social media and its own website. The communications team has a rota to make sure that these platforms can be updated at any time of the day and night. The service also has processes to share information with the public in place with the LRF.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents



Good (2018: Good)

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

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

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

The service is prepared for major and multi-agency incidents

The service has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. These risks are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its integrated risk management planning. For example, it has made plans to deal with large-scale flooding and wildfire incidents.

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. The North West Fire Regional Working Group collaborates to share information and prepare exercises. For example, exercises have been planned for marauding terrorist attacks (MTAs) and high-rise incidents in Greater Manchester.

Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. And operational staff have access to risk information for areas up to 10 kilometres into neighbouring FRSs.

The service has conducted limited multi-agency exercises

The pandemic has affected the number of multi-agency exercises the service has been involved in. But even with the pandemic taken into consideration, the service has completed fewer exercises than the national average.

The service can effectively respond to major and multi-agency incidents

We reviewed the arrangements the service had in place to respond to different major incidents, including MTAs.

The service has good arrangements, which are well understood by staff. For example, fire control staff are familiar with what to do when a major incident is declared. They also know how to request [national resilience assets](#). In the event of a major incident, a tactical advisor will be assigned to support fire control and to liaise between fire control and the scene of the incident.

The incident commanders we spoke to were confident in their ability to manage multi-agency incidents and work with other emergency organisations.

The service works well with other fire services

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. For example, it has a drone that was used to help at an incident at Heathrow Airport. It is intraoperable with these services and can form part of a multi-agency response.

The service has successfully deployed to other services and has used national assets such as the service's [urban search and rescue](#) team, which supported Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service to rescue someone stuck at height on an industrial chimney. Learning from this incident included working with helicopters and extended reach capabilities.

Cross-border exercising takes place

The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services so that they can work together effectively to keep the public safe.

These exercises are generally organised either by staff at fire stations located near the county's border or by the regional training working group. But completion of this plan has been affected by the pandemic.

The plan includes the risks of major events at which the service could foreseeably give support or request assistance from neighbouring services. We were encouraged to see that feedback from these exercises was used to inform risk information and service plans.

Incident commanders have a good understanding of JESIP

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in, and were familiar with, JESIP. Commanders were familiar with, and had access to, aids to explain the joint decision-making model. JESIP training also forms part of the commanders' twice-yearly command assessment.

The service works well with other organisations

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with other partner organisations that make up the LRF. These arrangements include working with other organisations to prepare multi-agency response plans for high-risk sites.

The service is a valued partner and is represented in the LRF's strategic and tactical co-ordinating groups and sub-groups. Its response to the pandemic has strengthened its relationship and reputation within the LRF. During the initial stages of the pandemic, the service co-ordinated PPE, and it has vaccinated more people than any other fire and rescue service.

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 blue light partners, such as the police service and ambulance trusts. This learning is used to inform planning assumptions that have been made with other organisations.

The service's commitment to national operational learning is further shown by its chief fire officer's role as one of the vice-chairs of the [National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\)](#). Other Lancashire fire officers also lead on NFCC programmes of work, such as road safety, and working patterns.

Efficiency



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



Good

Summary

An efficient fire and rescue service will manage its budget and use its resources properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to the risks and priorities identified in its [integrated risk management plan](#). 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. Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency is good.

Since our last inspection, the service has focused on increasing the number of staff in its most important areas of work, to improve performance. It has also introduced more efficient ways of working.

The service has arrangements for managing performance and productivity. It has clear performance indicators and targets that link to the CRMP. These show how it is making the best use of its resources and achieving its priorities.

The service is doing more work with other emergency services and aims to save money through this approach. Since our last inspection, its oversight of this collaborative work has improved, but it needs to make sure it evaluates how effective and efficient it is.

The service has created a new digitalisation team, with the aim of improving efficiency and increasing its use of data to inform decisions. The team will also help it to comply with national requirements such as General Data Protection Regulation.

Although the service had continuity plans in place, our inspection highlighted that they needed reviewing, and that regular testing wasn't being carried out. The service was aware of this, and was in the process of increasing resources in this area.

Making best use of resources



Good (2018: Good)

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

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

The service reported its budget for 2021/22 as £58.5m, a 2 percent increase from the previous financial year.

Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure there is a testing programme for its business continuity plans, particularly in high-risk areas of service.
- 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.

The service has enough resources to achieve the objectives in its CRMP

The service's financial and workforce plans, including allocating staff to prevention, protection and response, reflect and are consistent with the risks and priorities identified in the CRMP. The service has allocated more resources to its protection department and, at the time of inspection, had started a review of its emergency cover, including its fire stations, fire engines and duty systems.

Plans are built on sound scenarios. They help make sure the service is lasting and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. The executive board and the [fire authority](#) have oversight of the service's budget, to make sure public money is being used appropriately.

The service is improving productivity and ways of working

We are pleased to see that the service's arrangements for managing performance clearly link resource use to the CRMP and the service's most important and long-term aims. The CRMP is supported by an annual plan. The plan has several important performance measures, which are monitored quarterly through management meetings. Station and department plans align to the new CRMP, and most staff were aware of their station or department's recent performance figures.

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 uses an app that monitors availability of firefighters and fire engines in

real time. This means the service can crew fire engines differently when there isn't a full crew available, for example sending fewer firefighters to smaller incidents such as rubbish fires. We saw performance data that showed the service had good availability of fire engines and low use of overtime, compared to other fire and rescue services.

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 mixture of remote and office working.

The service is effective at working with others, but could do more evaluation

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since the last inspection.

We are pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate, and routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. The service is part of the Blue Light Collaboration board, with Lancashire Police and the North West Ambulance Service. The aim is for the organisations to work together to explore opportunities for future collaboration. During our inspection we visited Lancaster's new community fire and ambulance station, a joint facility for the service and the North West Ambulance Service.

We found that the service monitored, reviewed and evaluated the benefits and results of some of its collaborations, but not all of them. Some collaborations haven't been evaluated to establish the benefits they offer and whether they are providing value for money. As a result, this remains an area of improvement for the service.

The service should make sure its continuity plans are tested

While the service has good continuity arrangements in place for areas where threats and risks are considered high, the plans aren't regularly reviewed and tested. This means that staff may not be fully aware of the arrangements or of their responsibilities. The service is aware and has recruited another member of staff to carry out this work.

The service shows sound financial management

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. The service also has external auditors who review the service's financial management and its long-term plans.

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 uses several pre-negotiated contracts to buy goods and services, and it will use the results of the emergency fire cover review in 2022 to review its estates and fleet plans.

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



Good (2018: Good)

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

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

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

The service understands its future financial challenges

The service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its significant financial risks. 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. The service plans for the possible future effect of changes in areas such as government funding, business rates, pension costs and pay, which could lead to less money being available.

Although the service has a good track record of generating savings, at the time of inspection it had limited plans showing how the service would make savings or generate further income in the future.

The service has a clear plan for its reserves

The service has a sensible and long-term plan for using its [reserves](#). It plans to use them to cover shortfalls in the revenue budget and to fund the purchase of large assets such as an all-terrain vehicle and a Stinger fire engine.

Fleet and estates plans aren't yet aligned to the new CRMP

The service's estate and fleet plans haven't been reviewed since the new CRMP was approved. However, the service does have plans to review them alongside the results of the emergency fire cover review, to make sure the review's recommendations are implemented.

The service has recently upgraded its training centre. This links to its CRMP and to its objective of supporting staff by prioritising their training and development so that they can fulfil their roles.

The service invests in technology to support change and improve efficiency

The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. The service has developed several apps that are available to firefighters on their tablets. These apps have improved the efficiency and productivity of fire crews.

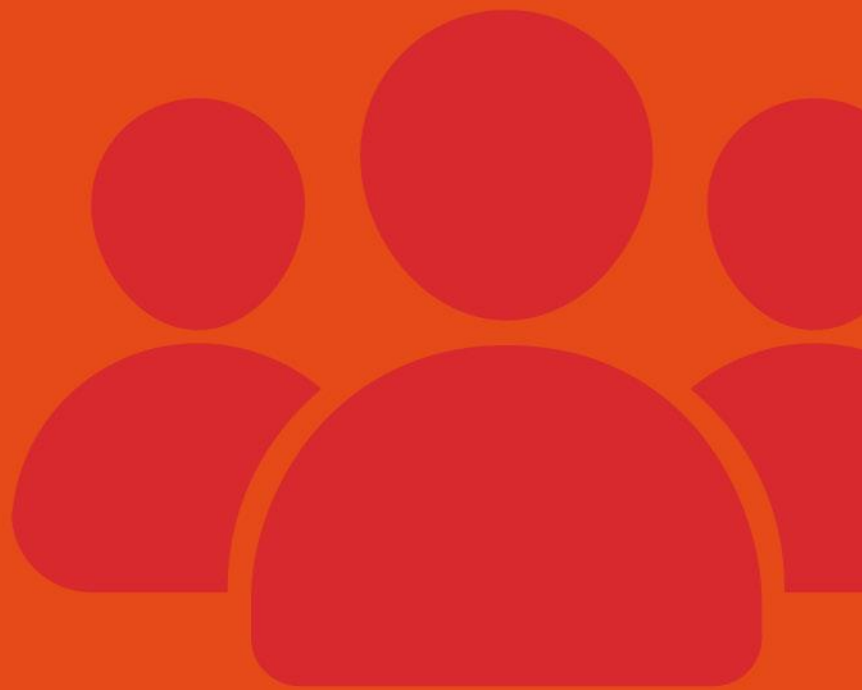
The service has also created a new digital team, which seeks to use new technology on mobile devices to further increase efficiency and to increase its use of data to inform decisions. For example, it has introduced a new performance management dashboard.

Since the pandemic, the service has been using technology to support staff to work at the most appropriate location, whether that is at home or at the fire service.

The service takes advantage of opportunities to secure external funding

The service actively considers opportunities for generating extra income. Where appropriate, it has secured external funding to invest in improvements to the service provided to the public. For example, the service has secured government funding linked to the response to the Grenfell Tower fire. It used this funding to support the protection department and to purchase equipment such as smoke hoods and thermal imaging cameras. It has used funding to recover costs for items such as protective equipment, staff costs and IT equipment that arose during the pandemic.

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, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is good at looking after its people.

We are pleased to see the service has continued to work on creating a culture that is in line with its values and aligned to the UK [national code of ethics](#) for fire and rescue services. Throughout this inspection we were told by staff again and again that they were proud to work for Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

The service continues to make sure that recruitment processes are improving its workforce's diversity by taking positive action. It has increased the diversity of its assessment panels so that they better represent the people the service is trying to attract.

Our inspection found that there was a significant range of wellbeing support available to support staff's physical and mental health, and that staff were aware of how to access this support. The service continuously monitors and adapts this support to make sure it is meeting the needs of staff.

We were pleased to see that since our last inspection the service had made some progress in the way it supports the development of leadership and high-potential staff. It has a new talent management plan, with progression pathways and an appraisal process to identify talent.

Promoting the right values and culture



Outstanding (2018: Outstanding)

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is outstanding at promoting the right values and culture.

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

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

The service has well-defined values and communicates well with staff

The service continues to have well-defined values that are understood by staff. Our staff survey showed that 98 percent of respondents (242 out of 246) were aware of the service values. Behaviours that reflect service values are shown at all levels of the service. During our inspection, we were consistently told by staff that they were proud to work for Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service. The service has completed work to align its values to the new UK national [code of ethics](#) for fire and rescue services.

Our survey showed that 80 percent of respondents (197 out of 246) thought the service was effective at providing a positive culture that reflected its values. However, our staff survey showed that 32 percent of respondents (78 out of 242) felt that senior leaders didn't consistently model and maintain the service's values.

We found that staff felt they were able to give feedback to the service, and that changes were made as result. The service has several ways it communicates with staff, including senior leadership visits and the staff respondents. There is also a virtual noticeboard where staff can ask questions or leave comments, and where leaders can respond to them. However, our staff survey showed that 38 percent of respondents (93 out of 246) weren't confident in the ways to feedback at all levels.

There is a positive working culture throughout the service, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they encounter them. Staff we spoke to during the inspection were confident to challenge inappropriate language or behaviours and felt the service would support them.

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

The service continues to have well understood and effective wellbeing policies in place that are available to staff. A significant range of wellbeing support is available to support both physical and mental health. The service received an award for personal resilience from [Oscar Kilo](#). It has held sessions for staff on:

- the Employee Assistance Programme;
- [trauma risk management](#);
- muscular skeletal injury;
- suicide awareness; and
- the use of therapy dogs.

In our staff survey, 98 percent of respondents (242 out of 246) reported they were able to access services to support their mental health. But the results also showed that 19 percent of respondents (46 out of 246) had never had a health and wellbeing discussion with their manager. The service should make sure it is continuing to meet the needs of its staff.

Health and safety arrangements are effective

The service has effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures in place.

Both staff and representative bodies have confidence in the health and safety approach taken by the service. In the staff survey, 96 percent of respondents (235 out of 246) said they were satisfied that their personal safety and welfare were taken seriously at work. Surveys by representative bodies found that staff felt they were involved in decisions about health and safety matters.

The service could do more to monitor staff working hours, including for those who have dual contracts. Staff are told that they should comply with working time regulations and shouldn't work excessive hours. But although we found that the service had a very small proportion of staff with two contracts and that its levels of overtime were low, and although our staff survey showed that 96 percent of respondents (235 out of 246) felt their personal safety and welfare was taken seriously, we didn't see robust arrangements for line managers to monitor the working hours of their staff. This is something the service should review.

The service has processes in place to support absence management

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

We found there were 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. Staff told us that managers make regular contact with staff who aren't at work due to sickness.

Overall, the service has seen a small increase in short-term staff absences over the 12 months between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (1.64 days lost per [wholetime](#) worker compared 1.17 days). However, long-term absence fell significantly during the same period.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Good (2018: Good)

Lancashire 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](#), 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 makes sure that the skills and capabilities it needs are available

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has good workforce planning in place. This makes sure skills and capabilities align with what is needed to effectively carry out the CRMP.

Workforce and succession planning is subject to consistent scrutiny in the form of regular meetings with all departments to identify current and future gaps in workforce capacity and capability.

Most staff told us that they could access the training they needed to be effective in their role. The service's training plans make sure they can maintain competence and capability effectively. Staff can use the service's 'maintenance of competency' system to access current training and to learn about future opportunities. Ninety percent (221 of 246) of respondents to the staff survey agreed that they had received enough training to do their job effectively.

The service monitors staff competence via a competency training system. The service updates its understanding of staff's skills and risk-critical safety capabilities in line with its policies with regards to refreshing and updating skills, and in line with [national operational guidance](#). It also has annual development reviews with staff, to identify their training needs. This approach means the service can identify gaps in capabilities and resilience, and can make sound and financially sustainable decisions about current and future needs.

The service's training department makes sure it can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, all operational staff have mandatory assessments to make sure they maintain their most important skills, in line with the

service's policies. We reviewed competency records that showed that most staff were up to date with their main skills.

The service supports staff with learning and development

A culture of continuous improvements is promoted throughout the service and staff are encouraged to learn and develop. For example, the service has invested in breathing apparatus training and facilities at the training centre.

Most staff told us that they could access a range of learning and development resources. Overall, 84 percent of staff (207 of 246) who responded to our survey said they were satisfied with the level of learning and development that was available. This allows them to do their job effectively. A lot of the learning is provided online. Staff can cover topics such as [safeguarding](#), and equality and diversity.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Good (2018: Good)

Lancashire 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 works with staff on matters that affect them

The service has developed several ways to engage 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 engagement to identify matters that affect different staff groups. The service sends out routine bulletins and publishes news on the intranet, as well as running a programme of in-person visits and virtual dial-ins.

The service has various staff networks in place, including:

- the LGBTQ+ group;
- the race and religion group;
- the women and families group;
- the disability group; and
- the neurodiversity group.

Representative bodies and staff associations reported that the service engaged with them well and meaningfully.

The service carries out its own staff survey twice a year, and questions staff on several topics to canvas their views, for example gathering feedback after some sessions on wellbeing were held for all staff. During this inspection, staff told us they were happy with the ways they could give feedback. Many referred to the virtual 'shout out' noticeboard where they could post questions that were then discussed and answered.

The service is good at tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination

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

In this inspection, 8 percent of respondents (19 out of 246) told us they had been subject to harassment and 13 percent (32 out of 246) to discrimination over the past 12 months.

Most staff survey respondents are confident in the service's approach to tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination, grievances and disciplinary matters. The service's bullying and harassment procedure was developed in consultation with the representative bodies, staff networks and the equality steering group. The equality and inclusion policy also explains different types of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying, and gives examples of these behaviours.

Investigations and disciplinaries are dealt with by managers who have been trained in grievance procedures. They are supported by the human resources department. The numbers of disciplinaries and grievances are reported regularly to senior managers, who review them.

The service acts positively to improve diversity within recruitment

There is an open, fair and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for the fire and rescue service. Recruitment opportunities are advertised both internally and externally, which has encouraged applicants from diverse backgrounds, including into middle and senior management roles.

The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment processes so that they are fair and understood by potential applicants. It runs several positive action events, such as 'have a go' day, as well as social media campaigns. It also works face to face with representatives from the community.

The service is working to remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. For example, it is providing unconscious bias training for interview panels and ensuring that the panels are more representative of the applicants the service is trying to attract. The recruitment policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. In 2021, the fire service's firefighter recruitment department recorded that:

- 11 percent of applicants were women;
- 6 percent of applicants were from ethnic minority backgrounds;
- 4 percent of applicants declared a disability; and

- 11 percent of applicants identified as LGBTQ+.

The service has made some improvements in increasing staff diversity at all levels of the organisation. In 2020/21, of the whole workforce 3.4 percent are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is similar to the levels of 5 years ago. However, 17.5 percent are women, which is a 4.1 percentage point improvement on 5 years ago.

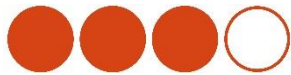
The service has a good approach to equality, diversity and inclusion

The service has a good approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, and is making sure it can offer the right services to its communities and support staff with protected characteristics. The service's chief fire officer is chair of the equality and inclusion steering group, which is supported by the staff networks. The networks promote activity in the service, raise awareness, and support staff and the service to test new ideas and activities.

The service identifies diversity and inclusion as a priority in its CRMP. It trains all staff on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Although the service has a process in place to assess equality impact through equality impact assessments (EQIA), the effect on each protected characteristic isn't properly assessed or acted on. We found that not all EQIAs were completed and that the process lacks quality assurance. The service is aware of this. In 2021, it trained managers on EQIAs.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Good (2018: Good)

Lancashire 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.

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

The service manages individuals' performance well

There is a good performance management system in place, which allows the service to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff. The service has recently moved the appraisal process online.

Through our staff survey, most respondents reported that they had regular discussions with their manager and that these were meaningful, with 69 percent of respondents (151 out of 219) stating they found the personal development discussions useful.

Each staff member has individual goals and objectives, and regular assessments of performance. Staff feel confident in the performance and development arrangements that are in place.

The service's promotion and progression processes are fair and understood

The service has put considerable effort into developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair and understood by staff. 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 that need specialist skills. Since our last inspection, the service has created new career pathways in the protection department.

Selection processes are managed consistently. We found that most applicants had been given feedback following the promotion process, and the service had kept records of how the decisions were made. Temporary promotions are used appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps.

In our staff survey, 60 percent of respondents (148 out of 246) agreed that the promotion process was fair.

The service has improved the way it supports the development of leadership and high-potential staff

The development of leadership and high-potential staff was highlighted as an area for improvement in our last inspection, and some progress has been made since then.

The service has a new talent management process in place that allows it to manage high-potential staff into leadership roles. The process is linked to the appraisal system. As part of the appraisal, staff have a career conversation with their manager. This conversation can contribute towards future promotion. This process will be used for individuals who display the right skills, leadership and capability.

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