HMICFRS

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

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

An inspection of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Contents

About this inspection

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

In carrying out our inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services in England, we answer three main questions:

1. How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?

2. How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?

3. How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

This report sets out our inspection findings. After taking all the evidence into account, we apply a graded judgment for each of the three questions.

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:
- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

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

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

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

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

Service in numbers

Public perceptions

	Oxfordshire	England
Perceived effectiveness of service Public perceptions survey (June/July 2018)	86%	86%

Response

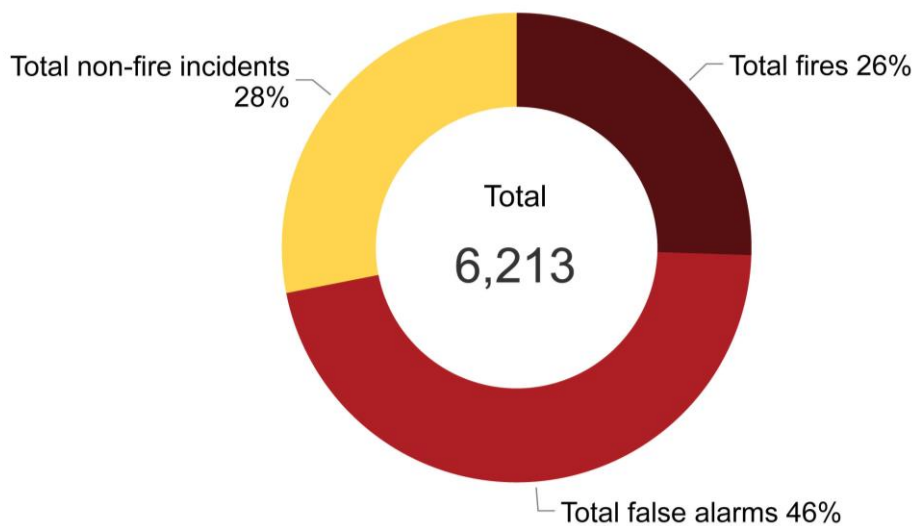|	Oxfordshire	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 September 2018	9.1	10.5
Home fire risk checks carried out by FRS per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2018	3.3	10.4
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises 12 months to 31 March 2018	1.8	3.0

Incidents attended in the 12 months to 30 September 2018

Total non-fire incidents 28%

Total fires 26%

Total
6,213

Total false alarms 46%

£ Cost

	Oxfordshire	England
Firefighter cost per person per year 12 months to 31 March 2018	£21.79	£22.38

Workforce

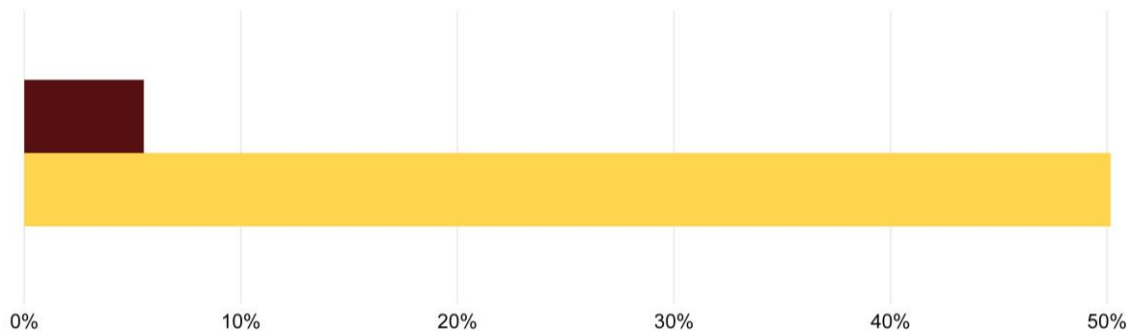|	Oxfordshire	England
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population As at 31 March 2018	0.6	0.6
Five-year change in workforce As at 31 March 2013 compared with 31 March 2018	-19%	-14%
Percentage of wholetime firefighters As at 31 March 2018	53%	70%

Percentage of female firefighters as at 31 March 2018

● Female firefighters ● Female residential population

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

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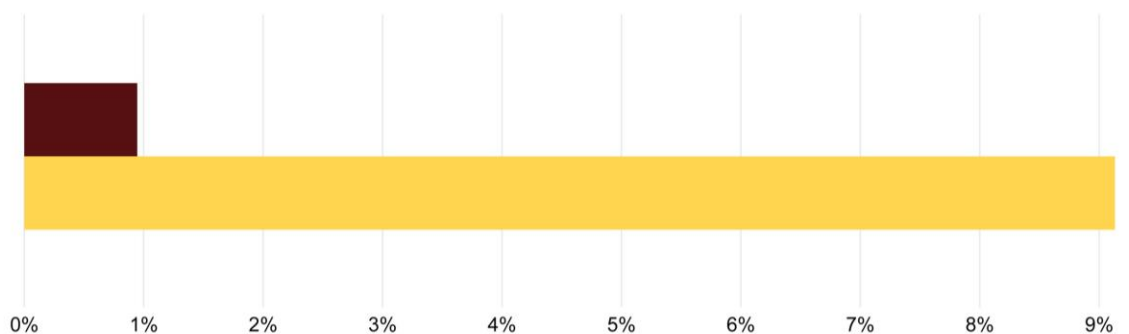
Please refer to annex A for full details on data used.

Overview

Effectiveness	●●●○	**Good**
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	●●○○	Requires improvement
Preventing fires and other risks	●●●○	Good
Protecting the public through fire regulation	●●●○	Good
Responding to fires and other emergencies	●●●○	Good
Responding to national risks	●●●○	Good
Efficiency	●●●○	**Good**
Making best use of resources	●●●○	Good
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	●●●○	Good
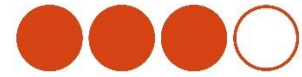
👥 **People**	●●●○ **Good**
Promoting the right values and culture	●●●● Outstanding
Getting the right people with the right skills	●●●○ Good
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	●●●○ Good
Managing performance and developing leaders	●●○○ Requires improvement
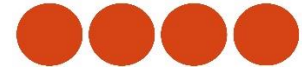
Overall summary of inspection findings

We are pleased with the performance of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure. But it needs to improve in some areas to give a consistently good service.

The service is good at keeping people safe. We judged it to be good at:

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

But it requires improvement at understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies.

Oxfordshire FRS is good at providing an efficient service. It is good at making the best use of resources and at providing an affordable service.

The service is good at looking after its people. In particular, we judged it to be outstanding in how it promotes the right values and culture. And it is good at getting the right people with the right skills and at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity. But it requires improvement at managing performance and developing leaders.

Overall, we commend Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service for its performance. This provides a good foundation for improvement in the year ahead.

Effectiveness

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

Good

Summary

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

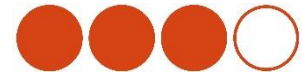The service has a good understanding of the level of risk it faces. It has an effective risk management plan and works with partner organisations to refresh its action plan every year. However, its records about the risks firefighters face in some buildings and sites are out of date.

The service has an ambitious programme of prevention work and fire safety checks. It works closely with vulnerable groups and provides good training on road safety.

The service has reviewed its fire safety audits. They now focus on the buildings that are most at risk from fire. It has reduced some low-level audits and increased the size of its fire safety team. It uses its enforcement powers effectively and where they are needed. It has tried to reduce the number of false fire alarms, but the number of false alarm incidents attended has notably increased since 2015/16.

Oxfordshire FRS has a good response time to emergency calls and for the year ending 31 March 2018, the service's average response time to primary fires was in line with other predominantly rural services. It manages emergency calls by working with the services in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. But more staff need to be confident about retrieving information from fire engines' mobile data terminals.

Incident commanders were well trained and clear about when they could take action and when they needed to refer to senior managers. The service uses the council's press office to give out public information and publicise larger emergency incidents. We found a mixed approach to reviewing incidents and sharing what is learnt.

The service has clear plans to prepare for a major incident, particularly at large and complex sites. It works closely with neighbouring fire services to allow for a joint operational response.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

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Requires improvement

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.

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

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

Understanding local and community risk

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has developed a wide-ranging local and community risk profile. The service prepared the risk profile to support its five-year community risk management plan (CRMP) 2017–2022. It publishes its refreshed action plan every year.

The service consults interested parties about its CRMP and annual action plans, and for its 2018–2019 consultation it received 66 responses.

The service collects a wide range of data to inform its risk profiling. This includes information about age, ethnicity and deprivation, health and welfare and forecasts of changes in population. It shares information with the council, the NHS and other Thames Valley partner organisations such as the police, other fire services and the local resilience forum (LRF). Oxfordshire FRS's staff work closely with these other organisations at district level, to understand new and changing risk patterns in the local area.

The service is working closely with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to refine its risk modelling. This includes investing in geographical-modelling computer software. The service will use this work to feed into the next annual refresh of its FRS risk profile.

The service fully understands risks in the area it serves. In addition to supporting the CRMP, the service uses the risk profile to decide which areas and vulnerable groups of people should be the focus of its risk reduction work. Station plans link to district plans. Station managers gather local risk information by attending community safety partnership meetings and joint tasking and co-ordination meetings. This is

added to centralised data on vulnerability to work out which people and places should be classed as vulnerable to fire.

Oxfordshire FRS used its risk profiling and modelling to provide evidence to support building a new fire station at Carterton. Its business case used forecasts of increased housing, growth in commercial activity in the town and a wider demographic to recruit from compared with neighbouring stations. The new station began operating in December 2018.

Having an effective risk management plan

Oxfordshire FRS's CRMP 2017–2022 sets out clear, high-level plans to manage and reduce risk in the area it serves. The plan identifies current and forecast risk. It links this to its work in prevention, protection and emergency response.

The service uses a risk assessment methodology that is supported by a [PESTELO](#) assessment, which all heads of department carry out to identify risk. It also takes account of the Thames Valley LRF's community risk register and assesses it against the service's emerging risks. The Community Risk Management Action Plan gives details of specific projects for the current year. The service meets the requirements laid out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England by carrying out the updated management action plan. The action plan summarises the service's principal risks. These include changes to the size and age profile of the population, growth in housing and employment, and increased transport.

The service is aiming to:
- reduce death and injury from fires and other emergencies;
- cut the number of fires and other emergencies;
- reduce business and commercial losses from fire; and
- protect the natural environment and heritage buildings in Oxfordshire.

The service is developing a wider prevention plan. It is also building closer working relationships with public health and linking into wider council corporate priorities, which are: thriving people, thriving communities and a thriving economy.

Maintaining risk information

Oxfordshire FRS uses the latest operational incident data for its annual CRMP update. During our inspection, we found different levels of understanding about how consistently the service uses the results of its debriefs and learns from operational incidents to validate and test its risk profile.

Firefighters collect information about certain buildings and permanent and temporary risks to operations. This helps pre-plan firefighting. The resulting site-specific risk information (SSRI) is held on mobile data terminals in fire engines. The service has decided to hold both electronic and paper records on fire engines and at stations. Throughout our inspection we found different versions and out-of-date records. The service has a management plan to address this problem, but it should tackle these inaccuracies as a matter of urgency.

We saw that Oxfordshire FRS has effective ways to update staff, particularly firefighters, with new and changed information about risk. It gives this information verbally during briefings at the change of shifts. Health and safety information is sent by email, with individual training records annotated to show whether the message has been read. The service has a senior manager who sits on the LRF community safety assessment group. This group meets twice a year to discuss and plan for managing national and local risks.

Preventing fires and other risks

Good

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at preventing fires and other risks. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

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

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

Prevention strategy

Oxfordshire FRS has set a particularly ambitious community safety (prevention) strategy, building on its 365 Alive programme. The service has run the programme since 2006. Its current strategy has the following objectives for 2016–2022:

- 6,000 more people alive due to our prevention, protection and emergency response activities;
- 85,000 children and young adults (including looked after children) to be better educated to lead safer and healthier lives; and
- 37,500 vulnerable children and adults helped to lead more secure and independent lives through safe and well visits.

Three initiatives focus on demographic groups that the service identifies as being at greater risk of harm from fire or other incidents. They are:

- an education programme helping children and young people live safer and healthier lives;
- safe and well visits to support the most vulnerable adults and children; and
- a more generalised programme of community safety interventions.

Local managers can manage risk in their area to support this strategy. As part of his role within Oxfordshire County Council, the chief fire officer is responsible for a range of services, which contribute to achieving the strategy and its targets. These include road safety, trading standards, emergency planning and Gypsy and Traveller services.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service carried out 3.3 home fire safety checks per 1,000 population. As at 31 March 2018, home fire safety checks in the service included identifying potential fire risks, acting to reduce fire risks, making sure working smoke alarms are fitted, advice on social welfare, health prevention, advice on slips, trips and falls, and advice on scams and doorstep crime. The service refers to home fire safety checks as safe and well visits. We were unable to consider the success of the safe and well activities as the service has not evaluated these since the national pilot evaluation. Oxfordshire FRS was part of this pilot scheme. The service is reviewing prevention work as part of the 2019–2020 CRMP action plan.

Promoting community safety

Oxfordshire FRS has several programmes to support its prevention strategy. Safe and well visits help vulnerable people at home. Firefighters and specialist staff visit people in their homes. As well as assessing risk from fire, staff also look for broader signs of risk and vulnerability, for example slips, trips and falls, and people with difficulties caring for themselves. They will tell partner organisations about people who need more help through making a safeguarding referral or referring on to more specialist support.

The service prevention team works with a wide range of partners including a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), the social and health care team, mental health teams, a clinical commissioning group (CCG), Age UK and district nurses. We were shown recent examples of referrals that had achieved positive results.

The service provides Phoenix and fire cadet schemes to support children and young people as they grow up. The week-long Phoenix course aims to develop life skills in young people with troubled backgrounds. Fire cadets is a youth group run in fire stations for young people aged from 12 to 18.

The Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service safety centre is an interactive learning experience for children that takes place at Rewley Road fire station. It has several realistic safety scenarios such as bedrooms, a person on a railway line, and social media. The centre is a registered charity and works with school children, mainly in year 6. The service told us that 4,754 year 6 students from 165 state schools in the county attended its Junior Citizens sessions last year.

The service has trained staff in vulnerability and safeguarding work. We found staff across the service knew how to recognise these problems and refer people on to other agencies. The service also has access to Oxfordshire County Council's adult and social care database. Its trained community safety staff will query the database prior to visits and update the system with the outcomes of visits. Staff will also create new records if the person has had no previous involvement with the service.

Road safety

Oxfordshire FRS is responsible for providing road safety information and training on behalf of the county council. The service is prioritising four particularly vulnerable groups until 2022. These are:

- motorcyclists, particularly those aged 34–55;
- cyclists;
- pedestrians; and
- young drivers aged 17–24.

The service works with partner organisations and with a range of audiences to implement its road safety programme. The cycling proficiency scheme develops road safety awareness and safe riding skills in younger cyclists. Biker Down is a national initiative run by bikers for bikers. It is aimed at riders but is also suitable for passengers. The workshop gives bikers the skills to keep themselves safe, give specific first aid and protect an injured motorcyclist at the scene of a crash.

As a member of the Thames Valley Road Safety Forum, the service helps promote and improve road safety. Recent campaigns included cycling safety, drink and drugs awareness and use of seatbelts. In partnership with the other emergency services across Thames Valley, the service will run the annual Safe Drive Stay Alive initiative in Oxfordshire with over 5,000 young drivers. The forum, along with the service, evaluates initiatives and uses marketing analysis to target specific audiences.

Protecting the public through fire regulation

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Good

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

Areas for improvement
- The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.

- The service should ensure it addresses effectively the burden of false alarms (termed 'unwanted signals').

All fire and rescue services should assess fire risks in 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.

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

Risk-based approach

We found that the service has recently revised its risk-based audit programme to focus on the buildings that are assessed as posing the greatest risk to life from fire. In the year to 31 March 2018, the service carried out 1.8 fire safety audits per 100 known premises (which equates to 349 audits). This compares to the England rate of 3.0 over the same period. Of the 349 fire safety audits the service carried out in the year to 31 March 2018, 67 percent were satisfactory.

The service has increased resources in its fire safety (protection) team after recognising that it was not able to manage its current workload. As at 31 December 2018, the service was training an additional four staff members dedicated to protection activity. Operational firefighters do not carry out protection audits.

The service has recently reviewed its risk-based inspection programme. It used several methods to identify and prioritise risk. This included using an approach developed by another fire and rescue service to prioritise every business within Oxfordshire. This system gave a risk rating for each of the premises, based on the likelihood of fire. The service has defined its high risks. They are sleeping accommodation, vulnerability (elderly, young, bedridden people), fire engineered buildings, named premises (such as heritage buildings), buildings with tactical fire plans and premises that are beyond the service's 14-minute attendance times. The service has laid out its new targets for risk-based inspections. It will currently meet the targets set against its three-year cycle. In the year to 31 December 2018, the service audited 125 of the 327 high risk premises it had identified. The service meets all its building control applications within the statutory consultation period.

The service also carries out audits reactively. These follow fire safety complaints, fires in regulated buildings and reports of unwanted fire alarms. Historically, carrying out these visits seriously reduced the service's ability to undertake proactive work in the highest risk buildings. The service has recognised this problem. It has taken steps to reduce some low-level audits, increase the size of the fire safety team and re-balance the team's workload. We found evidence to show this is bringing about improvements. There are plans for new staff to join the team and the number of proactive audits is increasing. We look forward to seeing the new structure fully implemented.

Enforcement

Oxfordshire FRS's enforcement policy is based on nationally-agreed principles of better regulation. Wherever possible, the service works to support businesses to resolve fire safety concerns.

The service works closely with a business to agree an action plan where significant fire safety problems are identified. This benefits the business and the service, offering a cost-effective way forward without formal enforcement action. Where a business does not engage, the service will take enforcement action to make sure the building is safe.

The service has co-located one of its protection teams with the building control team in Cherwell District Council as a trial to bring about closer working relationships between the two services. The service takes a proportional approach to enforcement. It has secured 10 successful prosecutions, issued 30 enforcement notices and 22 prohibition

notices in the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018. Overall, we found Oxfordshire FRS uses its enforcement powers proportionately and effectively.

Working with others

Oxfordshire FRS's approach to reducing the number of unwanted automatic fire alarm systems is well established. The service audits buildings that have repeated false fire alarms. Fire safety inspectors work closely with the building manager, supporting them to identify the cause of the false alarms so they take steps to prevent repeated alarms. They will also encourage the manager to improve the fire alarm system management and introduce a filtering procedure to check the cause of an alarm before making an emergency call to the fire service. However, the rate of false alarm incidents attended per 1,000 population has increased in Oxfordshire from 3.7 in the 12 months to 31 March 2016 to 4.3 over the same period in 2018. The service should investigate this rise against its current work.

We found limited evidence that the service works with businesses, with examples being care home managers and safety management staff at Oxford University colleges. However, we found that work to support business was too often reactive. The service recognises that this is an area that requires further work. We look forward to seeing what improvements it achieves in future inspections.

The service has worked with Oxford City Council to fit all its high-rise residential blocks with sprinklers, redesigning the original proposal which did not include this.

Responding to fires and other emergencies

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Good

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

Areas for improvement
- The service should ensure it has effective systems in place to reliably understand the operational capabilities of resources available to respond to incidents.

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

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

Managing assets and resources

The service has set a response standard for emergency calls. It aims to arrive at 80 percent of emergencies within 11 minutes and 95 percent of emergencies within 14 minutes. The service reported that between 1 April 2018 and 31 December 2018 it had met its targets with:

- 90 percent of all emergency incidents responded to within 11 minutes; and
- 96 percent of all emergency incidents responded to within 14 minutes.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the service's average response time to primary fires was 10 minutes and 38 seconds. This is in line with the average response time for other predominantly rural services.

Oxfordshire FRS's resource management team pre-plans operational cover against any known gaps in providing services. The service also operates a fully-staffed roving pump that it can deploy across the county to fill any gaps during daytime hours. The service manages its daily operational fire cover proactively and has a minimum requirement of four firefighters on each fire engine. It has carried out planning assumptions based on a simultaneous deployment of six and eight fire engines at two separate incidents.

The service aims to have 100 percent availability of all pumping appliances. However, between April 2018 and December 2018, the overall average pump availability ranged from 66 percent to 73 percent. This was mainly due to lack of availability of on-call pumps.

Thames Valley Fire Control Service is a partnership for managing emergency calls across Royal Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The three services will respond across borders, irrespective of where the incident occurs. The control service is based at Royal Berkshire's headquarters and staff are employees of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The three services have agreed on standard pre-determined attendances (PDAs) for most incidents, including high-rise, confirmed and thatched-roof fires. Control staff have discretion to vary the PDAs based on information given by the caller.

We found that the breathing apparatus skill for firefighters on the fire control system does not update from its staff availability system. This is unlike the officer-in-charge and the driver skill. This means that when an on-call fire engine is mobilised to a building fire, control does not know whether there are sufficient breathing apparatus-qualified staff on board. While Oxfordshire FRS has procedures in place for the officer-in-charge of the fire engine to inform control if the incident needs another engine, inspectors were concerned that there could be a delay if several engines did not have staff qualified to wear breathing apparatus. The service should review this issue.

We spoke to operational staff who were confident in the use of breathing apparatus testing. In addition, we saw that training competencies of control room staff were managed to ensure they maintained their skills.

Response

The wider Thames Valley partnership group is reviewing and aligning operational policy across the three services. It will assess and address gaps between local policy and national operational guidance (NOG).

The initial priority for the partnership has been to review arrangements for fires and firefighting. It has produced a draft policy that is out for consultation and discussion between the services, and for the services to determine any additional staff training requirements before the policy is introduced. It has programmed analysis of the gap between remaining NOG products and current policy in early 2019. The partnership plans to revise the remaining operational policies on a prioritised basis.

The service has a process for collecting information about buildings and sites that pose a potential increased risk to firefighters. Firefighters use this information at emergency incidents. We saw examples of information included on turnout instructions, SSRI and tactical fire plans (TFPs). SSRI and TFP information is available through mobile data terminals in fire engines. The service is maintaining its programme of risk site visits and has carried out the following number of risk sites visits:

- 150 in the 12 months to 31 March 2017;
- 189 in the 12 months to 31 March 2018; and
- 167 between 1 April and 31 December 2018.

Some operational staff we observed were more confident than others in retrieving information from the mobile data terminals. Staff told us that they are not trained to use the terminals.

Command

Firefighters who take on an incident command role have clear training and assessment requirements. These are supported by exercises and simulations where they practice command skills. All incident commanders are assessed every two years, unless they have an identified development need, in which case they will be assessed annually. Support officers attend emergency incidents to mentor new commanders, giving feedback and advice as they develop and consolidate their incident management skills.

The service's plans for handling incident command reflect NOG and best practice. Incident commanders are clear about the circumstances when operational discretion can be applied. We heard recent examples of when it had been used, including rescuing an unconscious casualty from water. Staff were generally confident the service would support them when using operational discretion. As part of our inspection, we carried out a survey of FRS staff to get their views of their service (please see Annex A for more details). Of the 65 firefighters who were crew manager or above, 85 percent felt that they would be supported if they used unauthorised tactics or used tactics in a novel way if an incident required it.

Keeping the public informed

Oxfordshire FRS uses the county council's press office to provide public information and publicise larger emergency incidents. It works closely with Thames Valley Police to provide information and give public warning messages about multi-agency incidents. Local managers keep local elected members informed of incidents as they occur. The service does not inform the public of incidents on a day-to-day basis via its website or on social media.

The service's social media account is mostly used to promote campaigns. Some fire stations have social media accounts which they use to promote the work of the service, promote on-call recruitment and engage with their local communities.

The service has well-established arrangements for identifying and safeguarding vulnerable people at incidents. Thames Valley fire control are trained in giving guidance over the telephone to those trapped in a fire. The service's safeguarding team provides training to staff, offers advice and refers concerns to the appropriate partner agency. All operational staff we spoke to were confident they could recognise the signs of vulnerability, request advice and make a safeguarding referral. The service provided data that showed a steady increase in safeguarding referrals, reaching 239 in 2017.

Evaluating operational performance

We found a mixed approach to reviewing incidents, evaluating performance and sharing what it has learned within the service and with partner agencies and services.

Most operational staff told us about an immediate (hot debrief) review of incidents. This takes place at the scene of the incident or immediately upon return to the fire station. The review is in the form of a discussion, usually led by the incident or fire engine commander. All staff are encouraged to contribute and give their account of the incident.

Sometimes, the central team receives recommendations for improvement, requests for additional equipment or suggestions for a change in procedure via a standard form. There is no consistent trigger for this feedback and not all staff are aware that this is at the discretion of the person in charge of the incident. Similarly, not all incidents are reviewed in this way. We found examples of suggestions made by firefighters following an incident that resulted in improvements. These include providing a different type of rescue saw blade for cutting wood and additional gloves that are more practical at road traffic collisions. Of the 105 firefighters or specialist staff who responded to our staff survey, 88 percent were confident that the service acts because of learning from operational incidents.

Staff had a general understanding that the service and/or multi-agency partners would organise a structured review (debrief). They gave examples of reviews following the Didcot power station collapse and the fire in South Oxfordshire District Council's offices. The service has a policy for debriefs that states a structured debrief should be held for incidents attended by five fire engines or more. However, station-based staff we spoke to were not clear about when these reviews should be triggered and what the process is.

Responding to national risks

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Good

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at responding to national risks. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

> **Areas for improvement**
> - The service should ensure consistent knowledge and application of incident command across the service.

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.

Preparedness

Oxfordshire FRS has assessed its needs and developed clear plans to supplement resources if there is a major or long-lasting incident.

Control room staff, who work for the Thames Valley partnership, have an overview of the fire engines that are available to them and will send the quickest appropriate engine, irrespective of where it is based. Similar arrangements are in place for joint working with Oxfordshire FRS's other fire service partners, although these are not as well integrated. The service hosts several national resilience assets, including a high volume pump.

The service has a thorough approach to planning for incidents at large and complex sites. We saw examples of SSRI, which is collected for medium-risk sites, stored on mobile data terminals and in hard copy folders on fire engines. For higher-risk sites, the service produces a TFP, which is also available on the mobile data terminals. It uses scenario exercises, based on TFPs, during fire incident command training. This brings an element of reality to the training and consolidates the risk and firefighting information in TFPs.

Working with other services

Oxfordshire FRS works closely with its neighbouring fire services via the Thames Valley Fire Control Service. In addition to the borderless mobilising arrangements, the services have procured a single specification fire engine that should improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the services when working together. Each engine will have identical equipment so that firefighters from different services can comfortably access and use the equipment on board. These new engines are being located initially at stations along the county border to improve integration. Oxfordshire FRS is leading the partnership, embedding NOG into the three services. This will lead to further streamlining of operational working in the partnership. The service shares and collects risk data from neighbouring services via Resilience Direct. However, most operational station-based staff we spoke to were not aware that these plans were available on their mobile data terminals.

Working with other agencies

We found clear evidence that Oxfordshire FRS works closely with other agencies. It is a trusted partner in the Thames Valley LRF, leading on chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) and hazardous materials threats. The service is well prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to a major incident and has arrangements for responding to terrorist threats.

We heard examples of the service forming part of a multi-agency response in Oxfordshire and over the border, into surrounding service areas. We found examples of the service taking part in joint exercises with multi-agency partners and neighbouring fire and rescue services. Between 1 April and 31 December 2018, the service completed three joint exercises with other fire and rescues services and nine joint exercises with multi-agency partners. We saw examples of Oxfordshire FRS's senior incident commanders taking part in exercises simulating incidents at high-risk sites or involving terrorist attacks.

The service has arrangements in place to provide specialist response to incidents involving an actual or suspected terrorist threat. The service has a detection, identification and monitoring team to assist in identifying hazardous substances. Some of its staff are trained to form a response team for incidents involving a terrorist attack. While this team is based in Royal Berkshire, staff from Oxfordshire provide support to it.

Some level 1 commanders didn't properly understand the joint decision model, which is part of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) and aids operational decision-making by giving a structured rationale and approach. However, we found that knowledge and competence at levels 2, 3 and 4 was part of day-to-day practice.

Efficiency

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

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Good

Summary

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

The service has a good track record of achieving savings. It is on course to achieve modest savings this year. Oxfordshire County Council supports the service's medium and long-term planning. Its committees also scrutinise the fire budgets. The service has robust financial systems.

The service has limited capacity to support the change programme. Its funding of response teams is stable, but it relies on overtime to keep fire engines crewed with five staff. This should be tested for value for money. It holds quarterly reviews to make sure resources are used effectively.

The service works with others within the Thames Valley partnership group and evaluates its joint work with emergency services. It has tested its business continuity plans but needs to improve its prevention and protection databases to avoid loss of data.

The service reviews its budgets annually. Staff help in making their work more efficient and eliminating waste. Finances are in good order and the service is proactive when jointly buying equipment. All operational equipment is tested and fit for use. But the service needs to invest more in technology and its buildings need updating. The collapse of the building services contractor Carillion has meant the service has not had a formal programme in place to update these buildings.

Making best use of resources

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Good

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making best use of resources. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- The service should implement a more robust way of recording prevention and protection information.

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

How plans support objectives

Oxfordshire County Council considers the service a high priority and it can plan resources to manage risk accordingly. The service's financial plan is based on the county council's medium-term financial plan, which is informed by the central government spending review. The council's performance scrutiny committee challenges and scrutinises fire budgets.

Oxfordshire County Council supports the service's work on medium and long-term planning. The chief fire officer sits at a high level within the county council leadership team, which reports directly to the chief executive on professional issues. Elected members of the council strongly support the service.

The service told us that the final budget for the fire and rescue service for 2 015/16 was £25.8m. Efficiency savings helped reduce this to £22.9m for 2016/17. For 2018/19 the budget was set at £22.6m. The service saved over £1m in 2016/17 and a further £454,000 in 2017/18. The council expects modest savings from the service – £30,000 in 2018/19 and £90,000 in 2019/20 – through a combination of transforming crewing models and fire collaboration initiatives.

In the year to 31 March 2018, the firefighter cost per head of population was £21.79. This compares to the England rate of £22.38 over the same period. However, many factors influence this cost, for example the ratio of wholetime to retained staff. The rural area that the service covers partly influences this. The service has reinvested to achieve the aims of the CRMP. For example, it switched staff to form the crew of the roving fire engine to fill gaps in service availability, and made savings through the Thames Valley control room merger. The service has carried out a mapping exercise to examine and cost all current activity against its budget. That has allowed the chief fire officer to model future budgets in a better way.

The service has the right level of checks to manage its finances. Every year, it considers priorities, affordability and allocation of resources between protection, prevention and response for the following year's budget-setting process.

Productivity and ways of working

As set out earlier in this report, the service recognises that it has problems of capacity in rolling out its risk-based inspection programme within its protection function. It has been successful in a capital bid of £350,000 to the county council to increase staffing to support the programme. The council is planning future investment in IT of around £10m across all its services. This will focus on providing a service to the public and using ICT to improve service provision. Its current capacity to support further major change programmes is limited. The service needs to consider how it will support this programme of change.

Current resourcing of response services is stable. The budget for pre-arranged overtime is monitored and the vacancy management plan is balanced against the overtime budget. We were informed that the service relies heavily on additional hours to try to keep wholetime fire engines crewed with five staff. Between 1 April 2018 and 31 December 2018, wholetime firefighters in Oxfordshire worked 8,147 hours of pre-arranged overtime. This has cost the service £147,526. While we saw the hours that staff worked were well managed, the service should make sure this gives the best value for money.

The service has effective measures to compare performance with targets for prevention, protection and response. Quarterly meetings monitor performance to make sure that resources are targeted effectively. The CRMP identifies that the service uses intelligence and data to improve understanding of its community. This allows it to target resources effectively.

We found evidence of positive partnership working through the service's use of its specialist rescue unit. For example, when the unit is not needed for firefighting functions, it undertakes emergency tree removal for the county council where the tree is disrupting transport.

Collaboration

The service meets its statutory duty to consider emergency service collaboration. This work is part of the CRMP's priorities and improves the provision of core functions.

The service monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of all collaborative work. The service has a clear collaboration strategy which the Thames Valley programme board oversees. This reports to the service's senior management board, which looks at collaboration between fire, police and ambulance services. The Thames Valley partnership has appointed a programme manager to work across six different areas. These include procuring fire engines, aligning protection policies and skills, and joint working on NOG.

One example of joint working is evaluating gaining entry for the ambulance service. This improved response times for the ambulance service. It could start treating a patient an average of 9 minutes after the first call, which is 16 minutes quicker than previously when police were called.

Continuity arrangements

The service has a wide range of business continuity plans. Nearly all of these are tested regularly. The business continuity framework identifies the main critical functions such as response capability, looking after staff, weather alerts and cyber-attacks. Each department within the service has a relevant and bespoke plan.

The prevention and protection databases have dedicated administrators. They currently use spreadsheets to record inspections. The service has recognised it needs to improve these systems, which present a risk due to loss or corruption of data.

Thames Valley Fire Control Service has comprehensive business continuity arrangements. But at the time of inspection, staff had limited exposure to testing the plans in full to evacuate to the secondary control room in Oxfordshire FRS. Since then, we have seen further evidence of testing during our Royal Berkshire FRS inspection.

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

Good

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

Improving value for money

Oxfordshire FRS has financial controls to reduce the risk of inappropriate use of public money.

We found evidence that staff were engaged in increasing efficiencies and eliminating waste. Each department head reviews their own budget for the next year and reports into the senior management team budget meeting. The medium-term financial plan focus is on longer-term, year-on-year savings rather than in-year savings.

The service knows the main risks it faces (grant funding changes, inflation, unforeseen costs) and is working to mitigate them. Finances are in good order and plans support its ambitions. It bases its plans on reasonable assumptions on pay, inflation, pressures and funding changes. These are subject to informed challenges. It has external scrutiny to advise on the use of reserves, and judges the arrangements to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness as good.

The service actively seeks joint procurement opportunities with partner organisations, including other fire and rescue services, in order to realise price reductions through bulk purchasing and more joined-up working. The service is actively seeking to align procurement plans with the CRMP. It is working to align contracts to get to the stage where they all have the same timetable for renewal.

The scale of the overall council resources, compared with the funds required by Oxfordshire FRS, gives a stable financial background to safeguard against future risks. Although the service cannot predict beyond the comprehensive spending review, both Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire FRS have performed consistently well in operating within the budget.

Innovation

The service's fleet management programme provides assurance that all operational equipment is appropriate, tested and fit for purpose. It is based on a 25-year planning term. The county council has approved a capital programme that is prudently funded from the council's corporate resources budget with a combination of grant, revenue contributions and borrowing.

The county council currently provides an acceptable level of technology support. However, the council has recognised the need for future investment in technology. The service is included in the planning as part of the council's transformation programme.

The current condition of the service's buildings varies. Most were built between the 1950s and 1970s and need updating. Funding constraints and the recent problems due to the collapse of private sector estates partner Carillion has meant the service has not had a formal programme in place to update these properties.

Future investment and working with others

Oxfordshire FRS does not hold a separate general reserve from the one held by the county council. Data from the service shows there are earmarked reserves relating to fire control (£239,000 in 2017/18), emergency planning (£37,000 in 2017/18) and community safety (£156,000 in 2017/18). The last of these is expected to remain stable until 2021/22. The fire control and emergency planning reserves are planned to be exhausted by 2019/20.

As set out above in this report, the Thames Valley partnership has a structured programme of work. Buying large numbers of fire engines saves money. It also means that engines across county borders have standard equipment and stowage, which supports effective working with neighbouring services. Along with the other projects, this shows clear direction in collaborative work across Thames Valley.

The service may expand its co-responding initiative from the current three co-responding models that have been set through collaboration with South Central Ambulance Service, but this is dependent on national pay negotiations.

The service carries out fire safety training for other county council departments on a recharge basis, as well as offering training externally on its website with any additional capacity it has.

People
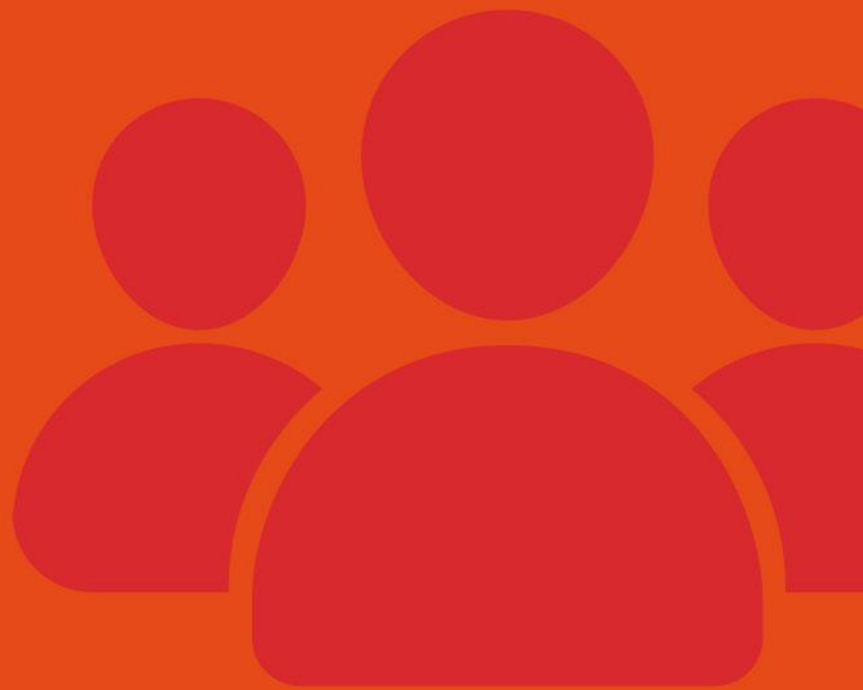
How well does the service look after its people?

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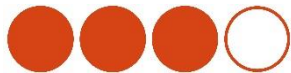
Good

Summary

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

The service puts the wellbeing of staff as a high priority. Leaders had put in a range of support services for staff, which were well received. Critical incident welfare arrangements were also in place. Staff asked for appointments out of hours to support those on call.

The service has a clear and up-to-date health and safety policy and all staff were trained in this. The service has low levels of sickness. Monitoring and management of absences is done well.

Staff felt proud to work for the service and the senior management team create a positive and inclusive culture across the organisation.

The service understands the make-up of its workforce. But it faces difficulties in recruiting and retaining on-call firefighters. It is doing more work to try and address this problem.

Staff valued the quality and range of training. The service regularly organises training exercises with neighbouring fire stations. It needs to improve the IT system to monitor the training needs of staff and make information easier to find and record. Staff felt they were encouraged to give feedback and managers responded well to their comments. The service should look for a better way to tailor messages for on-call staff.

The service is making efforts to become a more inclusive employer, although more could be done. Uniforms for female staff do not fit well. There is a problem with the suppliers that needs to be addressed as a priority.

A new appraisal system has been introduced but we found that operational staff had limited understanding of it. On-call firefighters found it difficult to use because they work part-time. Some staff considered it an unnecessary burden while others were supportive of it.

We were not able to consider how the service identifies high potential staff as there was no set process in place. However, staff felt that promotion opportunities across the service were fair and open.

Promoting the right values and culture

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Outstanding

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

Workforce wellbeing

We found that senior leaders understood the wellbeing needs of its workforce and had put in place a range of activities to support staff. We spoke to staff who were positive about the support services available. But they felt some services could be improved. Appointments could be offered out of normal working hours for on-call staff, so as not to interfere with their main jobs.

The service has had a positive focus on mental health. The chief fire officer is responsible for mental wellbeing across Oxfordshire County Council. The service has recently trained mental health first aiders and has implemented a reporting and monitoring process.

Critical incident welfare arrangements are also in place and well supported by staff across the service. The service automatically offers debriefs following a critical incident. Watch and crew managers felt equipped to recognise the signs of trauma in their staff. Prominent intranet pages point staff to further information and supply contact details to support staff and their families.

Health and safety

The service has a clear and up-to-date health and safety policy. Staff at all levels felt suitably trained in the policy. There are regular health and safety events which are tied to national campaigns. The service issues specific bulletins to inform the organisation about important health and safety messages.

Firefighters must take an annual fitness test. In the year to 31 March 2018, the first-time pass rate for station manager and below is 98.5 percent and 100 percent for group manager and above. Fitness equipment is available at stations for staff to use while on duty. Staff we spoke to felt that the service supported them in both maintaining their fitness and in passing the annual test. The service has low levels of sickness, and monitors and manages absences well.

The resource management team considers the wellbeing needs of staff when approving overtime, making sure that staff have had enough rest since their last shift.

Culture and values

Staff felt proud to work for the service. We found staff throughout the organisation were working to the same value – making the communities of Oxfordshire safer – and all staff we spoke to at all levels were committed to achieving this. The service's prevention activity, called 365 Alive, is widely known and has strong brand recognition across the service.

The service has a relatively new senior management team. We found that they have created a positive and inclusive culture. The chief fire officer regularly emails all staff and produces periodic video blogs. The service has formed two groups – engagement and inclusion – to allow staff to raise ideas. In turn, managers can use these groups to test ideas and proposals. Staff felt these groups have further developed the service's inclusive culture. An inclusion strategy is also being developed. Of the 126 respondents to our staff survey, 84 percent felt that there were opportunities to feed their ideas upwards in the service.

Staff find the service's senior management team accessible and visible. They like the regular programme of station visits by senior managers. The service has combined its management meeting structures to include all middle managers as well as the senior management team. From the 126 responses to our staff survey, 10 staff reported feeling bullied or harassed and 10 reported feeling discriminated against at work in the last 12 months. This is a low figure compared with similar services. There are limitations to the staff survey which should be considered alongside the findings. We explain these in Annex A.

Staff like the 'open chair' system, where any staff member can sit in on the senior management team meeting. We found that after feedback from staff, a senior management team member went through the agenda, so that the staff member could fully contribute to the meeting.

On-call firefighters felt that the service values them and they can take on overtime as part of a wholetime crew. This demonstrates the service's integration of wholetime and on-call staff. On-call staff can see that the service listens and responds to their concerns.

Getting the right people with the right skills

Good

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

Workforce planning

The service understands its workforce and the skills and staff replacements it needs to plan for. As at 31 March 2018, the service had 505 full-time equivalent (FTE) total staff members. This includes 230 FTE firefighters who are wholetime (53 percent of all firefighters). The service regularly monitors anticipated and unplanned departures to consider workforce gaps and succession plans. Resources used across prevention, protection and response areas of work appear broadly in line with the service's integrated risk management plan.

The service operates 24 mixed fire stations (with both wholetime and on-call firefighters). Problems with recruiting and retaining on-call firefighters are similar to those faced by other fire services. The service is working to attract more on-call firefighters and support them through the recruitment and training process.

The service has recently created a roving fire engine, which it moves around the county to cover gaps in operational cover. This innovative use of resource was staffed by posts taken from other wholetime stations.

We saw that the service has a workforce establishment model, which it reviews on a regular basis. We have not seen this in every service. The model shows all the posts in the service, which ones are permanent and where there are vacancies. The service holds regular meetings to review current and future pressures on all positions.

Learning and improvement

Staff spoke very highly about the quality and range of training they receive. This includes the practical and incident command virtual simulation training. Staff felt trained to do their job and well supported by the service. We observed staff using breathing apparatus confidently. Of the 126 respondents to our staff survey, 90 percent agreed that they had received sufficient training to enable them to do what is asked of them.

The service regularly carries out different-sized training exercises, including with multi-agency cross-border partners. These include Royal Berkshire FRS for marauding terrorist attacks (MTAs), as the two services form a joint team. Stations organise training exercises against their known local risk and involve neighbouring stations who would provide the operational response for an incident.

The service monitors the current competence level and training needs of staff using a computer-based system. We found that all training records were up to date. While staff thought the system was generally good, they felt that the structure could be improved to make information easier to find. The system did not have some firefighter core competencies – for example working with ladders – as standard. These are recorded as ad hoc training.

Support staff can undertake training using the council's e-learning portal. They received support for additional training via their appraisal process. This is all recorded on either the council IT system or the service competency recording system, depending on the training carried out.

On-call staff undertake one training night per week. But we heard some staff needed to do further training during the week to become competent and maintain their skills. Staff wasted time trying to find training materials and maintain competencies on the recording system. The service recognises it needs to review the training requirements and provision for on-call staff. This is part of the work of the service's programme board.

As highlighted in the response section, the service should consider including mobile data terminal training as part of the competency training schedule to make sure staff can confidently retrieve operational information.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Good

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity. But we found the following area in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement
- The service should ensure all staff are provided with appropriate uniform.

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

Seeking and acting on staff feedback

Oxfordshire FRS gives feedback to staff through station visits, service-wide consultations, online forums and staff networks. Staff throughout the service told us they felt encouraged to give feedback. They felt that the senior management team listened and responded to comments. For example, the service recently introduced a tethered wade following feedback from previous water rescues. It has asked its inclusion and engagement groups to work on specific projects with representatives from both groups drawn from across the service.

Following staff feedback, the service has tried hard to improve communications to its staff. It has a well-used intranet site that includes news and information. It also sends frequent emails to staff. The service has also provided technology and software to allow staff to access communications remotely. Conversely, on-call firefighters feel they now receive too much information and are unable to read all of it in a short space of time. The service should consider tailoring messages specifically for on-call staff.

The service engages well with its representative bodies and holds quarterly meetings. Staff representatives are consulted over policy changes.

The service has a comprehensive grievance policy. The service has trained mediators available at both the informal and formal grievance stages. Wellbeing support and accessibility systems are available to employees throughout the process. The service has used Oxfordshire County Council's managers to carry out independent reviews in some cases. The grievance policy also links to the service's dignity at work, whistleblowing and disciplinary procedures. In 2017/18, the service received very few grievances. Of those we reviewed, we found that the service had followed its policy appropriately and met timescales.

Diversity

Oxfordshire FRS's workforce does not reflect the community it serves. The top of the organisation has limited diversity. As at 31 March 2018, 0.9 percent of firefighters were from a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background. This compares with a BAME residential population of 9.1 percent. As at 31 March 2018, 5.5 percent of firefighters were female.

The service is making positive efforts to become a more inclusive employer. The service runs engagement and 'have a go' days aimed at women and is active at careers fairs. The service also works to help improve the fitness of those who have failed selection exercises.

A group has recently been set up to produce an inclusion strategy. This group is reviewing the targeted work and looking at other fire and rescue services to develop new ways of recruiting a more diverse workforce.

The service is subject to Oxfordshire County Council's equality policy and strategy, introduced in 2018. The strategy aims to bring about equality, diversity, fairness and inclusion within both the council's workforce and local communities. Staff we spoke to knew of the policy and had undertaken training. We heard a regular comment that said the service had improved its knowledge and understanding over the last two years but that it "is still on a journey" to achieve its desired standard.

The service is not providing its female staff with uniforms that fit correctly. This is because of a problem with its contracted uniform supplier. The service is reimbursing staff who need to buy their uniform elsewhere. We understand that the service is working closely with its supplier to resolve this problem. It should address this problem as a priority to preserve the dignity of affected staff. Correctly fitting uniforms for female staff should be part of the user specifications for any future clothing contract. The service provides its female firefighters with personal protective equipment that fits correctly.

Managing performance and developing leaders

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Requires improvement

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

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

Managing performance

The service uses Oxfordshire County Council's performance appraisal system and has recently implemented this process. We found operational staff had a limited understanding of it across the service. The system is based on monthly performance and quarterly development conversations between job holder and manager. Attitudes towards the new system varied. Some staff considered it an unnecessary burden while others supported the need for structured conversations.

We could not determine how objectives were being set and how they are being used to plan for development. Monthly conversations should use a standard agenda, although how this was agenda was used varied widely. However, according to our staff survey, 89 percent of the 126 respondents were satisfied with their current level of learning and development.

The unique nature of the on-call firefighter role among council employees is not reflected in the new appraisal system. Due to the nature of the role, an on-call firefighter may see their manager on an individual basis very rarely. As a result, we saw on-call station staff applying the process inconsistently, with some trying to implement the new system and others setting group objectives for the watch. The service needs to have a consistent, workable performance management process across the whole service, in particular a system that considers the circumstances of on-call firefighters.

Developing leaders

We were not able to consider how the service identifies and develops high-potential members of staff as there was no established process. Managers can identify high potential, but we found that it was mostly job holders who put themselves forward for training and development opportunities.

The service does have a range of development opportunities for new and established managers. This includes joint leadership training with a neighbouring fire and rescue service and senior management training with Oxfordshire County Council.

Middle managers are also supported to apply for and undertake the executive leadership programme.

Most staff we spoke to said that promotion opportunities across the service were fair and open. Staff either knew the process or knew where they could get information. The service has used staff from outside Oxfordshire FRS on promotion panels to improve the transparency of the selection process.

Annex A – About the data

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

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

Where we collected data directly from fire and rescue services (FRS), we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with services and with other interested parties such as the Home Office. This was primarily through the FRS Technical Advisory Group, which brings together representatives from FRSs and the Home Office to support the inspection's design and development, including data collection. We gave services several opportunities to validate the data they gave us and to ensure the accuracy of the evidence presented. For instance:

- We asked all services to check the data they submitted to us via an online application.
- We asked all services to check the final data used in the report and correct any errors identified.

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

Methodology

Population

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

BMG survey of public perception of the fire and rescue service

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

However, a minority of the interviews (757) were conducted via face-to-face interviews with trained interviewers in respondents' homes. A small number of respondents were also interviewed online via postal invitations to the survey.

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

Survey findings are available on BMG's website.

Staff survey

We conducted a staff survey open to all members of FRS workforces across England. We received 2,905 responses between 1 October 2018 and 15 February 2019 from across 16 FRSs during this period in Tranche 2.

The staff survey is an important tool in understanding the views of staff who we may not have spoken to, for a variety of reasons, during fieldwork.

However, you should consider several points when interpreting the findings from the staff survey.

The results are not representative of the opinions and attitudes of a service's whole workforce. The survey was self-selecting, and the response rate ranged from 8 percent to 31 percent of a service's workforce. So any findings should be considered alongside the service's overall response rate, which is cited in the report.

To protect respondents' anonymity and allow completion on shared devices, it was not possible to limit responses to one per person. So it is possible that a single person could have completed the survey multiple times. It is also possible that the survey could have been shared and completed by people other than its intended respondents.

We have provided percentages when presenting the staff survey findings throughout the report. When a service has a low number of responses (less than 100), these figures should be treated with additional caution.

Due to the limitations set out above, the results from the staff survey should only be used to provide an indicative measure of service performance.

Service in numbers

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

Perceived effectiveness of service

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

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

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

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

Incidents attended per 1,000 population

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

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

- There are seven worksheets in this file. The 'FIRE0102' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and fire and rescue authority (FRA) for each financial year. The 'FIRE0102 Quarterly' worksheet shows the number of incidents attended by type of incident and FRA for each quarter. The worksheet 'Data' provides the raw data for the two main data tables (from 2009/10). The 'Incidents chart - front page', 'Chart 1' and 'Chart 2' worksheets provide the data for the corresponding charts in the statistical commentary. The 'FRS geographical categories' worksheet shows how FRAs are categorised.

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

- We took data for Service in numbers from the February 2019 incident publication. So figures may not directly match more recent publications due to data updates.

- Before 2017/18, Hampshire FRS did not record medical co-responding incidents in the IRS. It is currently undertaking a project to upload this data for 2017/18 and 2018/19. This was not completed in time for publication on 14 February 2019.

Home fire safety checks per 1,000 population

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

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

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

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

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

- The checks included in a home fire safety check can vary between services. You should consider this when making direct comparisons between services.

Home fire safety checks may also be referred to as home fire risk checks or safe and well visits by FRSs.

Fire safety audits per 100 known premises

Fire protection refers to FRSs' statutory role in ensuring public safety in the wider built environment. It involves auditing and, where necessary, enforcing regulatory compliance, primarily but not exclusively in respect of the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO). The number of safety audits in Service in numbers refers to the number of audits FRSs carried out in known premises. According to the Home Office definition, "premises known to FRAs are the FRA's knowledge, as far as possible, of all relevant premises; for the enforcing authority to establish a risk profile for premises in its area. These refer to all premises except single private dwellings".

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

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

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

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

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

Firefighter cost per person per year

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

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

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

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

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

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

- We calculate these figures using full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers. FTE is a metric that describes a workload unit. One FTE is equivalent to one full-time worker. But one FTE may also be made up of two or more part-time workers whose calculated hours equal that of a full-time worker. This differs from headcount, which is the actual number of the working population regardless if employees work full or part-time.
- Some totals may not aggregate due to rounding.
- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset & Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

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

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

Please consider the following points when interpreting outcomes from this data.
- We calculate BAME residential population data from ONS 2011 census data.
- We calculate female residential population data from ONS mid-2017 population estimates.
- The percentage of BAME firefighters does not include those who opted not to disclose their ethnic origin. There are large variations between services in the number of firefighters who did not state their ethnic origin.
- Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS merged to form Dorset & Wiltshire FRS on 1 April 2016. All data for Dorset and Wiltshire before 1 April 2016 is excluded from this report.

Annex B – Fire and rescue authority governance

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

Metropolitan FRA

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

Combined FRA

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

County FRA

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

Unitary authorities

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

London

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

Mayoral Combined Authority

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

Police, fire and crime commissioner FRA

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

Isles of Scilly

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