



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority

# **HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES 2024 INSPECTION FINDINGS**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 20 September 2024

**Purpose of Report:**

To present Members with the outcomes from the report regarding the recent inspection of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the outcome of the HMICFRS inspection report and the progress made by the Service.
- Acknowledge the area for improvement highlighted by HMICFRS and approve governance and scrutiny through the Fire Authority Community Safety Committee.

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is the inspectorate for fire services in England.
- 1.2 In 2018, the Service was inspected by HMICFRS and graded as 'requiring improvement' in all 11 inspection areas. Within the 2018 report 24 'Areas For Improvement' (AFIs) were given.
- 1.3 In 2021, the Service was again inspected, and this time graded as 'good', in all 11 inspection areas. Notably, just four AFIs were received. This grading demonstrated Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) to be one of the higher performing fire and rescue services in England.
- 1.4 During March and April 2024, HMICFRS conducted its third inspection of the Service. The comprehensive inspection process included interviews, audits and 'reality testing' involving contact with over 200 staff members.
- 1.5 As part of round three of fire service inspections HMICFRS introduced a new grading of 'adequate'. HMICFRS grading framework is now as follows:
  - **Outstanding** – the Service has substantially exceeded the characteristics of good performance.
  - **Good** – is the 'expected' graded judgment, based on policy, practice or performance that meets pre-defined grading criteria that are informed by any relevant national operational guidance or standards.
  - **Adequate** – the Service has demonstrated some of the characteristics of good performance, but identified areas where the Service should make improvements.
  - **Requires Improvement** – the Service has demonstrated few, if any, of the characteristics of good performance and a substantial number of areas where the Service needs to make improvements have been identified.
  - **Inadequate** – there are causes for concern and recommendations are made to the Service to address these findings.
- 1.6 In the HMICFRS annual State of Fire and Rescue report (SoFR), released May 2024, HMI Chief Inspector Andy Cooke, stated "While we appreciate the introduction of the new 'adequate' grade may be a contributory factor in some grades moving backward, too often we are seeing a deterioration." Later in the report HMI Cooke states: "The performance of some services has greatly declined since our last inspection."
- 1.7 The SoFR also reports that, so far in inspection round three, across the 15 inspections conducted, there has been a fall in grades in the areas of: protection, multi-agency incidents, values and culture, and getting the right people with the right skills.

## 2. REPORT

- 2.1 The 2024 inspection report for the Service was published on 18 September 2024 (attached at Appendix A to this report). HMICFRS graded the Service as 'Good' in ten areas with one area receiving 'Adequate'.
- 2.2 HMI Lee Freeman KPM, thanked the Service for the "positive and constructive way" the Service engaged with the inspection and commented "the Service has made progress since our previous inspection, we found it had maintained or improved performance in almost all areas."
- 2.3 NFRS is one of only two Services to be inspected so far (totalling 18 inspections to date), to receive a grading of 'Good' in 10 areas of inspection.
- 2.4 In the 2021 inspection, it was recommended that the Service improve staff awareness of how to access well-being support, identifying this as an AFI. The 2024 inspection report notes that 'a significant range of well-being support is available to support both physical and mental health.'
- 2.5 The 2024 inspection report highlights that the Service "routinely considers opportunities to collaborate" and it 'monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations.' Collaboration was an AFI in the 2021 report.
- 2.6 The 2024 report notes, 'access to risk information, an AFI area in the 2021 report, has been enhanced through new software. All staff engaged were able to access relevant risk information,' and 'we were pleased to see the improvements the Service has made.'
- 2.7 The 2024 inspection found that 'the Service continues to have well defined values which staff understand', noting 'a positive working culture throughout the Service.' The report also highlighted other areas, noting 'the continued improvement in productivity, the Service's ongoing efforts to engage with different community groups and consistently achieving a high level of appliance availability, exceeding the national average for similar Services.'
- 2.8 In the third round of inspections, national grades for 'multi-agency incidents,' especially those involving tall buildings, have declined. However, in the 2024 inspection, HMICFRS found 'the Service has well-developed policies and procedures in place for safely managing this type of incident.'
- 2.9 The 2024 inspection found that 'the Service has good workforce planning in place, ensuring that skills and capabilities align with what is needed to effectively carry out its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).' This is particularly significant, given that nationally, there has been a decline in performance related to 'getting the right people with the right skills.'
- 2.10 On 1 August 2024, HMICFRS released the 'Standards of Behaviour, Handling of Misconduct in the Fire and Rescue Service' report, which highlighted the need for Services to enhance efforts in addressing misconduct and improving workplace culture. Following the 2024 inspection,

HMICFRS acknowledged that 'the Service continues to have well-defined values, which staff understand,' emphasising the Service's ambition to maintaining a professional and committed workforce.

## **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- 2.11 Across the 18 inspections carried out in round three, a total of 311 AFIs have been issued by HMICFRS.
- 2.12 In the 2024 NFRS inspection report just one AFI was given. This is the lowest number of AFIs to be issued to any Service to date in round three of the inspections. The average number of AFIs being received by Services is 17.
- 2.13 The AFI identified in the report relates to the inspection area of Protection and is reported as:
- 'The Service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.'*
- 2.14 This AFI is a continuation of the AFI for the risk-based inspection programme given in the 2021 inspection. Whilst HMICFRS acknowledges the work that has been undertaken in this area, HMICFRS wishes to see more embedding and assurance in this area before the AFI is removed.
- 2.15 To oversee the required improvement it is proposed that the same, robust governance and scrutiny arrangements are adopted as with the previous AFIs from the round two inspection. This would involve the adoption of the AFI by Members of the Fire Authority, and progress and management of the AFI being discharged to the Community Safety Committee.
- 2.16 The Service did not receive any 'Causes for Concern' (CfC). So far in round three inspections, eight Services have received a total of 36 CfCs.
- 2.17 The inspection process has shown a continued positive direction of travel and confirmed the Service has a high level of self-awareness and is focused on its drive towards being outstanding.
- 2.18 The Service will continue to maintain an effective relationship with the HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead and will continue to demonstrate its commitment toward continual improvement.
- 2.19 The Service will take the opportunity to use the 2024 HMICFRS report, along with reports from other Services to further drive continuous improvement, benchmarking the Service against other Services to identify and learn from 'positive' and 'innovative' practices across the sector, supporting the ambition to become an 'Outstanding' organisation.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

### **5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

5.2 The introduction of a Core Code of Ethics (CCoE) was a recommendation from HMICFRS' first 'State of Fire and Rescue, Annual Assessment'. As part of the inspection HMICFRS reviewed how well the Service has adopted this, alongside Service values and behavioural framework.

5.3 In Section 3.1 of the 2024 inspection report which relates to promoting the right culture and values, the Service was rated as Good. Specifically relating to the CCoE the report states 'the Service has implemented the Core Code of Ethics, and staff understand it.'

### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Police and Crime Act (2017) Chapter 4 Section 11 outlines that the English inspectors must inspect, and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of, fire and rescue authorities in England.

### **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Risk 15 on the Service's Corporate Risk Register is Corporate Reputation. One of the specific risk areas for this is '*The risk that public will lose confidence in their fire service through current national media reporting, HMICFRS findings and the LFB Cultural review*'.

8.2 The 2024 inspection report should enhance public trust and confidence in the Service. It will also give confidence across the sector with the report identifying NFRS as one of the highest performing Services in the country.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the outcome of the HMICFRS inspection and the progress made by the Service.
- 10.2 Acknowledge the area for improvement highlighted by HMICFRS and approve governance and scrutiny through the Fire Authority Community Safety Committee

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

Craig Parkin  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

# Fire & Rescue Service 2023–25

## Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

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# Changes to this round of inspection

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Overall summary

## Our judgments

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

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

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

## HMI summary

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

I am pleased with the performance of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks. For example, it has improved its [mobile data terminals \(MDTs\)](#), which we found were reliable and helped staff to access risk information promptly.

We were pleased to see that the service has made progress since our 2021 inspection. We found it had maintained or improved its performance in almost all areas.

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

- The service has increased its prevention activity, meaning it is on track to meet its target of 15,000 [safe and well visits](#) in a year by 2025.
- The service's fire engine availability is good, and is supported by the work of its on-call support team.
- The service has increased its productivity in almost all areas of work.
- The service manages staff performance appropriately and effectively, and staff understand what is expected of them.
- The service has made good progress in improving its well-being provision.

Overall, I commend the service on the changes and improvements it has made since our 2021 inspection. In this report, we highlight one [area for improvement](#) and look forward to seeing the service's progress in that area.



**Lee Freeman**

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

# Service in numbers



## Profile

	Nottinghamshire	England
Area Square miles	834	50,370
Population (thousands) 30 June 2022	1,163	57,106
Population density Thousands per square mile	1.4	1.1



## Cost

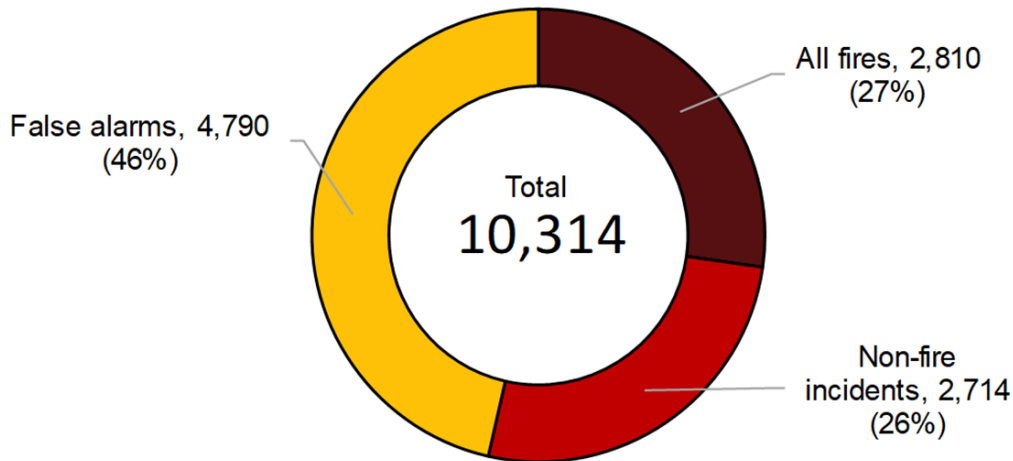
Funding Year ending 31 March 2023	£46.0m	£2.5bn
Expenditure per population Year ending 31 March 2023	£40.92	£46.66



## Response

Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 30 September 2023	8.9	10.4
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2023	16.8	9.3
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2023	5.9	2.0
Availability of wholetime pumps Year ending 31 March 2023	99.7%	
Availability of on-call pumps Year ending 31 March 2023	87.1%	

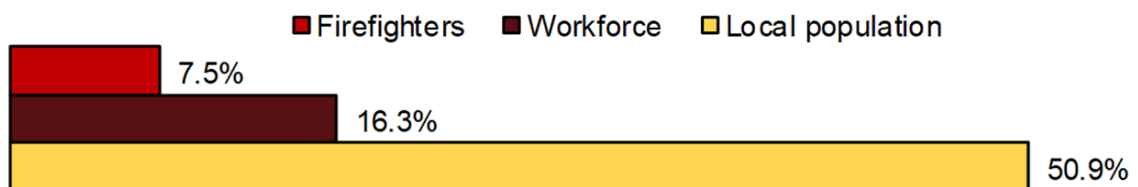
 **Incidents attended in year ending 30 September 2023**



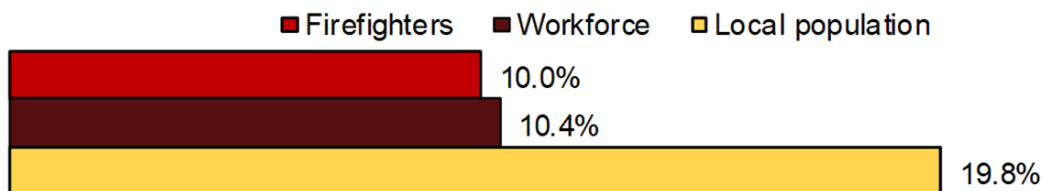
**Workforce**

	Nottinghamshire	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2018 to 2023	-10.1%	1.4%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2023	0.56	0.61
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2023	62.7%	65.5%

**Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who identified as a woman as at 31 March 2023**



**Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who were from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2023**



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

# Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

Good

Nottinghamshire 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. It should use its 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.

## Main findings

### **The service continues to identify risk well and has improved how it works with its communities**

The service has assessed a suitable range of risks and threats using a thorough community risk management planning process. In its assessment of risk, it uses information it has collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and datasets. This includes information on health and social care, environmental data and data from previous incidents it has attended. Sources include the Office for National Statistics and other organisations that provide data on public safety.

When appropriate, the service has consulted and held constructive dialogue with its communities and other relevant parties to understand risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it. For example, the service meets with different community groups as well as its own community advisory group. This has helped the service understand the risks and needs of different communities.

### **The service has an effective community risk management plan**

Once it has assessed risks, the service records its findings in an easily understood [community risk management plan \(CRMP\)](#). This plan describes how the service intends to use its prevention, protection and response activities to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces both now and in the future.

The CRMP details six strategic goals:

- We will help people stay safe from fires and other emergencies.
- We will improve fire safety in the buildings people live and work in.
- We will respond immediately and effectively to emergency incidents.
- We will continue to support and develop our workforce and promote an inclusive service.
- We will continue our improvement journey to deliver an outstanding service.
- We will manage and invest in our service to ensure it is fit for the future.

The service provides an annual statement of assurance on its website to show its progress against these goals.

The service works with its communities in planning its CRMP. This has helped the service understand the risks and needs of different community groups. The service uses this information to identify specific risks and assign additional resources to address them. For example, it increased the number of fire engines that would respond to a call to a building housing refugees because the risk profile of the building had changed. The service also works with local religious organisations to better understand their practices and needs in relation to preventing and responding to fires.

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

The service routinely collects and updates the information it has about the highest-risk people, places and threats it has identified. This includes operational risk information.

We sampled a broad range of the risk information the service collects, including:

- safe and well assessment files;
- operational intelligence system records, including tactical plans;
- site-specific risk information;
- protection files; and
- temporary and urgent risk information.

This information is readily available to the service's prevention, protection and response staff. This means these teams can identify, reduce and mitigate risk effectively. Where appropriate, the service shares risk information with other organisations, such as neighbouring fire and rescue services.

Staff at the locations we visited, including firefighters and emergency control room staff, were able to show us that they could access, use and share risk information quickly to help them resolve incidents safely.



But the service should make sure it has a robust process to gather, maintain and share short-term or temporary risk information. We found that its process may not always make sure up-to-date risk information is shared with all relevant teams.

The service carries out site-specific risk information visits on a three-year cycle. National guidance doesn't specify the timescale for these visits but does specify that they should be based on risk. The service is successful in carrying out all of these site visits within the cycle. But it isn't prioritising these visits, for example by visiting the sites with a higher risk more frequently and those with a lower risk less frequently. The service reviews some sites sooner in exceptional circumstances.

### **The service builds a good understanding of risk from operational activity**

The service records and communicates risk information effectively. It also routinely updates risk assessments and uses feedback from local and national operational activities to inform its planning assumptions. For example, the service's single point of contact for national operational learning is responsible for identifying learning and sharing it with operational staff through operational assurance bulletins.

# Preventing fires and other risks

Good

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

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

## Main findings

### **The service's prevention strategy links to the risks identified in its community risk management plan but is limited in detail**

The service's prevention strategy is contained within its community safety strategy, which is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP. But it is limited in detail. More detail would give a clearer overview of the activity taking place in the service's prevention function.

The service's teams work well together and with other relevant organisations on prevention, and they share relevant information when needed. The service uses information to adjust its planning assumptions and direct activity between its prevention, protection and response functions. For example, prevention officers and protection officers have received training in each other's areas to improve collaboration and effective referrals between departments. This integrated approach includes processes for addressing very high-risk scenarios, such as organised crime and arson threats. This shows the service is carrying out work to make sure staff have a common understanding of risk across prevention, protection and response.

## **The service uses targeting to prioritise activity**

The service uses a risk-based approach to clearly prioritise its prevention activity for people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. For example, the service delivery performance report shows that, between 1 January 2024 and 31 March 2024, 52 percent of safe and well visits involved people over the age of 65, and 43 percent involved people with a disability.

It uses a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity towards [vulnerable](#) individuals and groups. A risk-scoring system called the CHARLIE profile helps the service to identify people who are at higher risk. CHARLIE refers to:

- care and support needs
- hoarding and/or mental health issues
- alcohol and medication use
- reduced mobility
- lives alone
- inappropriate smoking
- elderly – 65+.

It carries out a range of interventions, which it adapts to the level of risk in its communities.

## **Staff have the skills they need to carry out safe and well visits**

Staff told us they have the right skills and confidence to make safe and well visits. These visits cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies.

## **The service is good at responding to safeguarding concerns**

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified [safeguarding](#) problems. They told us they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. Operational staff have face-to-face training as well as access to an online e-learning package. We found that staff regularly recognised vulnerabilities and risks during safe and well visits and acted appropriately to improve people's safety. This included escalating matters to a more qualified person and making referrals to partner agencies, such as health and social care services.

Prevention teams use safer streets information to target areas of risk. An example of this is Nottingham city centre, during the night-time economy. Signs saying "safe space" are placed on fire engines, where members of the public and vulnerable individuals can get help from fire and rescue service staff. This has resulted in safeguarding referrals.

Also, acting on information from the police that specific locations have had a spike in violence against women, staff drive fire engines along what are called red routes. This aims to increase the emergency service presence in an area to reassure the public and deter or prevent crime.

### **The service works well with other organisations to reduce the number of fires and other risks**

The service works with a wide range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. These include the police, the local authority, schools, community safety groups, the RNLI, safeguarding hubs and [safety advisory groups](#).

We found good evidence that it routinely refers people at greatest risk to organisations that may better meet their needs. These organisations include the local authority and social services. Arrangements are also in place to receive referrals from others, such as health services, the local authority and the police. The service acts appropriately on the referrals it receives.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses this information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention activity.

### **The service has effective interventions to tackle fire-setting behaviour**

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people with different needs who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. This includes the service's fire-setting co-ordinator, who collaborates with the court system to focus on those people. The co-ordinator monitors the reoffending rates of those involved in these interventions. The service has had a very high success rate with this work.

Prevention officers monitor trends in fire-setting behaviour and discuss plans to tackle it with station managers. Station managers identify any reductions in fire-setting behaviour, discuss communication strategies and instruct crews to focus on tasks such as leaflet drops and visits to community groups and schools.

When appropriate, the service routinely shares information with relevant organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists.

### **The service is good at evaluating its prevention activity**

The service has good evaluation tools in place to measure how effective its activity is and to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to the prevention services that meet their needs. For example, the service uses the [National Fire Chiefs Council's \(NFCC\)](#) campaigns calendar and collaborates with the communications team. It also uses social media interactions and annual school campaigns to evaluate its work. This shows the service has a systematic approach to measuring campaign effectiveness and working with the community.

Prevention activities take account of feedback from the public, other organisations and other parts of the service.

The service uses feedback to inform its planning assumptions and change future activity, so it focuses on what the community needs and what works.

# Protecting the public through fire regulation

## Adequate

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate 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.

### Area for improvement

The service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.

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

### Main findings

#### Protection plans support the effectiveness of the CRMP

The service's protection strategy is contained within its community safety strategy. It clearly links to the risks it has identified in its CRMP.

Staff across the service are involved in protection activity, effectively exchanging information as needed. For example, operational crews routinely carry out business safety visits, and prevention staff receive protection training to improve collaboration between departments. The service then uses information to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between its protection, prevention and response functions. This means resources are properly aligned to risk.

## **The service is improving its alignment of activity to risk**

In our 2021 inspection, we identified the following area for improvement: “The service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.”

The service’s risk-based inspection programme is focused on the service’s highest-risk buildings. The service now uses a more data-led, evidence-based approach using the latest data available from a range of sources.

The service has evaluated its new approach with support from Nottingham Trent University. The evaluation findings were generally positive and confirm progress has been made in this area. But the findings also identified a number of faults in the process. The service should continue to monitor this and to make the required improvements so that it has a robust process to prioritise the highest risk.

The audits we reviewed had been completed within the timescales the service has set itself.

While the service has made progress, it still needs to demonstrate it has a robust process and that it can be maintained. This area for improvement will remain in place.

## **The quality of the service’s fire safety audits is good**

We reviewed a range of audits that the service had carried out at different buildings across its area. These included audits carried out:

- as part of the service’s risk-based inspection programme;
- after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies;
- after 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. The service makes relevant information from its audits available to operational teams and control room operators.

## **The service is effective at quality assurance**

The service carries out proportionate quality assurance of its protection activity. Fire safety inspectors have four inspections quality assured each year. This quality assurance is carried out quarterly and covers a range of different inspection types.

The service has good evaluation tools in place to measure how effective its activity is and to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to protection services that meet their needs.

### **The service's enforcement activities are proportionate to risk**

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers, and when appropriate, it prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations. The service had a low number of prosecutions over the past five years but is confident it is taking appropriate measures in every case.

In the year ending 31 March 2023, the service issued no alteration notices, 283 informal notifications, 26 enforcement notices and 11 prohibition notices, and carried out no prosecutions. It completed one prosecution in the five years from 2017/18 to 2022/23. The service had 179 satisfactory audits following enforcement action.

### **The service's protection team is adequately resourced**

The service has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of its risk-based inspection programme. This helps it provide the range of audit and enforcement activity needed, both now and in the future.

The service has increased its productivity each year. But some staff have concerns that it will need more resources or will have to find more efficient ways of working to maintain this increase in productivity.

Staff get the right training and work towards appropriate accreditation.

### **The service has responded positively to new legislation**

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

The service is supporting the introduction of the [Building Safety Regulator](#). The service has arranged for staff to have training and to carry out other work to help them adjust to the changes in legislation. It has shared information on legislative updates promptly with relevant staff and has incorporated changes into audit procedures. It expects these arrangements to have a manageable impact on its other protection activity.

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

We found the service has arrangements in place to receive this information. And it updates the risk information it gives its operational staff accordingly.

### **The service works closely with other agencies to regulate fire safety**

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety, and it routinely exchanges risk information with them.



The service has staff who are assigned to work with local authority staff in a joint audit inspection team for high-rise premises. But due to issues beyond the service's control, for a prolonged period this team was only able to take limited action or had to put its work on hold. The service has been assured that the issues have been addressed, allowing work to continue in an effective manner. The service should make sure measures are in place so it can continue its work and monitor all risks and actions outstanding, even if partner agencies are unavailable.

### **The service has good completion rates for building consultations**

The service responds to building consultations on time. This means it consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. In 2022/23, the service responded to 95 percent of building consultations within the required time frame. In the same period, it completed 100 percent of its licensing consultations within the required time frame.

### **The service works proactively with businesses**

The service proactively works with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. For example, it takes part in business safety week, carries out fire safety workshops and provides educational resources on its website.

### **The service is struggling to reduce unwanted fire signals**

The service is attempting to manage the number of unwanted fire signals. Control room operators carry out call challenging, which involves assessing calls in greater detail. The service also has a process for working with those responsible for premises to reduce unwanted fire signals, but it is having a limited impact. The service has a target to reduce these calls by 10 percent by 2025, but they have increased by 14 percent since the start of the current CRMP. The service should continue to look for actions it can take to help reduce these calls.

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

### **The service doesn't have guaranteed out-of-hours fire safety cover**

During this inspection, we found the service has no clear process in place to make sure specialist fire safety advice is available out of hours. This means that, at times, specialist fire safety advice won't be available to operational crews during or after an incident.

But it is encouraging that the service plans to implement a rota made up of qualified staff who will provide cover out of hours. This will provide more resilience to the service's out-of-hours provision. We look forward to seeing this implemented on a permanent basis.

# Responding to fires and other emergencies

Good

Nottinghamshire 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 areas.

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

## Main findings

### **The service should improve how it communicates its response strategy**

The service's response strategy is contained in its community safety strategy. This was very limited in scope and detail and didn't provide an overview of the response strategy or function.

The service's fire engines and response staff, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to help the service respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources.

### **The service doesn't consistently meet its response standard**

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standard in its CRMP. This standard is to attend all incidents in an average of eight minutes.

The service doesn't always meet its standard. Home Office data shows that in the year ending 31 March 2023, the service's response time to [primary fires](#) was 9 minutes and 54 seconds, which is slower than the average for predominantly urban services.

## **The service availability of fire engines is positive**

In 2022/23, to support its response strategy, the service had 24 fire stations with 30 fire engines. During this period, the service had [wholetime](#) fire engines available 99.7 percent of the time, on-call fire engines available 87.1 percent of the time and an overall availability of 93 percent.

These figures are higher than expected for a service with a high proportion of on-call staff. The service's on-call support team helps on-call fire teams to maintain their availability. This is clearly working well for the service.

## **Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely**

The service has trained incident commanders, who are assessed regularly and properly. Following their acquisition course, commanders are required to revalidate their skills every two years. Commanders are also required to attend a development day and maintain their competence by attending three training exercises a year, covering a range of command roles. This is monitored and recorded by the operational assurance team. This helps the service safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

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

## **The service is continuing to improve how it works with fire control**

The service operates a joint [fire control](#) with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service.

We were pleased to see efforts are being made to align working practices between the services. This will support control room operators in doing their job efficiently and effectively.

We found that control room staff received service-appropriate training and were included in training exercises. But on some occasions control staff weren't fully included in the debriefing process.

## **The service has accurate and up-to-date risk information that is available to firefighters**

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement: "The service should ensure that, when responding to a 999 call, mobile data terminals are reliable to allow staff to access risk information."

We were pleased to see the improvements the service has made, and this area for improvement has been closed.

The service has installed new MDT software. It has a monitoring process to make sure MDTs are working effectively. All fire engines have an MDT and an additional tablet that both give access to risk information.

When risk information is uploaded, it is immediately available on MDTs.

We sampled a range of risk information. This included site-specific risk information, the information in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings and the information held by fire control.

All staff we spoke with at fire stations showed us they were able to access risk information without problems.

The risk information we reviewed was up to date and detailed. Staff could easily access and understand it. Encouragingly, it also included information from the service's prevention, protection and response functions, when appropriate.

### **The service has good processes to evaluate operational performance and national operational guidance**

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included major flooding, domestic fires, wildfires and marauding terrorist attack incidents.

We were pleased to see the service routinely follows its policies to make sure that staff command incidents in line with operational guidance. It updates internal risk information with the information it receives. And it exchanges this information with appropriate organisations, such as the police, East Midlands Ambulance Service and the local authority.

The service has responded to learning from carrying out exercises to improve its service to the public. For example, after an exercise highlighted that water plans were no longer appropriate, the service updated its risk information and salvage plans for the location.

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

After debriefs, it records all learning and shares this with relevant departments in the service. Any required actions are tracked and monitored, and given deadlines, until they are completed.

The service takes part in regional and [national operational guidance](#) groups and cross-border exercises. This shows it takes a proactive approach to aligning training and learning with neighbouring services.

### **The service is effective in keeping the public informed about incidents**

The service has good systems in place to inform the public about ongoing incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. This includes a communications officer who is on-call 24/7 to help share information when required. The service uses social media, TV and its website to communicate messages to the public. It works closely with the police, sharing office space and jointly managing communications when appropriate.

The service is part of the local resilience forum warn and inform group. It regularly exchanges information with local resilience forum partners.

# Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

Good

Nottinghamshire 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.

## Main findings

### The service is well prepared for major and multi-agency incidents

The service has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. These risks are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its community risk management planning. For example, flooding is a recurring problem affecting many communities in Nottinghamshire. The service works with the local resilience forum on planning and responding to flooding incidents.

It is also familiar with the significant risks neighbouring fire and rescue services may face, and which it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. They also receive risk information through ResilienceDirect up to six miles into other service areas bordering Nottinghamshire. ResilienceDirect is the UK's secure web-based platform for real-time sharing of information across emergency responders, and public and private sector organisations.

## **The service is well prepared to respond to major and multi-agency incidents**

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

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

We found the service has well-developed policies and procedures in place for safely managing this type of incident. Training and exercising have taken place to test them. The service should continue to carry out training and exercising in these new procedures so that staff at all levels can be effective during such an incident.

At this type of incident, a fire and rescue service would receive a high volume of simultaneous fire calls. We found that the systems in place in the service are robust enough to receive and manage this volume of calls. Staff in the emergency control room, at the incident and in assisting control rooms can share, view and update the information and actions that result from the individual fire calls.

## **The service works well with other fire and rescue services**

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents, such as Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. 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 urban search and rescue and high-volume pumps, used for flooding incidents.

## **The service has a positive approach to cross-border exercising**

The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services, helping them work together effectively to keep the public safe. The plan includes the risks of major events at which the service could foreseeably give support to or ask for help from neighbouring services. We were encouraged to see the service uses feedback from these exercises to inform risk information and service plans.

After a cross-border incident, the service sends the neighbouring service a request for feedback about how the services worked together. This feedback is used to consistently improve working relationships.

## **The service applies JESIP well**

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with JESIP.

The service could give us strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. This includes the time and effort it invests in JESIP training and exercising for tactical and strategic co-ordinating groups. The service also takes a lead role in the local resilience forum.

We sampled a range of debriefs the service had carried out after multi-agency incidents and/or exercises. We were encouraged to find that the service is identifying any problems it has with applying JESIP and taking appropriate, prompt action with other emergency services.

### **The service works well with partner agencies**

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with the partner agencies that make up the Nottinghamshire local resilience forum. These arrangements include producing emergency plans to either prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on local communities.

The service is a valued partner in the local resilience forum. It is part of subgroups such as warn and inform, risk assurance, resilience working and business continuity. The service takes part in regular training events with other members of the local resilience forum and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

### **The service keeps up to date with national learning**

The service makes sure it knows about national operational updates from other fire and rescue services and joint [organisational learning](#) from other organisations, such as the police service and ambulance trusts. It uses this learning to inform planning assumptions that it makes with partner agencies.



# Making best use of resources

Good

Nottinghamshire 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 their risks and statutory responsibilities. Services should make best possible use of resources to achieve the best results for the public.

The service's revenue budget for 2024/25 is £52.7m. This is a 5.4 percent increase from the previous financial year.

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

## Main findings

### The service has good plans that help it achieve its objectives

The service's financial and workforce plans, including allocating resources to prevention, protection and response, are consistent with the risks and priorities it has identified in its CRMP.

The service has restructured its prevention department. More resources are available through an increase in the number of specialist staff and crews spending more time carrying out prevention activity. The service is on track to meet its CRMP objective of carrying out 15,000 safe and well visits in a year by 2025.

The service has evaluated its mix of crewing and duty systems. It has analysed its response cover and can show it deploys its fire engines and response staff to manage risk efficiently. The service has used [risk modelling](#), which is carried out by an independent organisation, to support its current CRMP. As a result of this work, the service changed its staffing at Ashfield fire station from a day-crewed to a wholetime duty system.

It builds its plans on sound scenarios. These plans help make sure the service is sustainable and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority oversees and scrutinises the service's budget performance to make sure it uses public money appropriately.

### **The service is good at monitoring performance and making improvements to ways of working**

We were pleased to see that the service's arrangements for managing performance clearly link resource use to its CRMP and its strategic priorities. Performance indicators are reported to and monitored by the service delivery and operational assurance group. Managers use dashboards to track live performance data. Most staff we spoke with have a clear understanding of the work they are expected to do, and line managers are in regular contact with their staff. Operational staff are clear on their targets and have a simple but useful "plan on a page" for each fire station.

The service understands how it uses its wholetime firefighters. It collects data on how they spend their time across day and night shifts. Firefighters are required to complete a form after each shift to record the activities they have carried out and the time taken to complete them. This information helps managers monitor team productivity and better understand capacity across different teams.

The service makes the most of its capacity. For example, the productivity of firefighters has improved. They are completing more safe and well visits and more business safety checks year on year. This is in line with the service's focus on increasing productivity across the organisation to meet the objectives in the CRMP. Targets for crews are reviewed annually.

### **The service collaborates well with others and has improved how it evaluates this work**

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement: "The service should ensure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity."

We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection, and this area for improvement has been closed.

We were pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate. It routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. The service collaborates with Nottinghamshire Police, East Midlands Ambulance Service and neighbouring fire and rescue services. This includes co-responding with East Midlands Ambulance Service. Fire and police joint headquarters have had a positive impact on working relationships. During a recent network outage, the service was able to use

police IT services to continue working normally, avoiding a loss of service and the need to send staff home.

The service also collaborates with a range of other partners, including local councils, health services, social care agencies and voluntary sector organisations. For example, it works with the Red Cross to accommodate homeless people at stations during the winter and works with community care boards to promote water safety.

Collaborative work is aligned to the priorities in the service's CRMP. For example, the service's control room is a collaboration with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The service monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. Some teams carry out their own evaluations. The service has also provided a placement for a PhD student from Nottingham Trent University to evaluate certain projects and collaborations. The service has introduced a robust two-fold evaluation process for all future collaborations. This consists of a formal evaluation and a benefits/impact evaluation.

### **The service has good business continuity arrangements**

The service has good continuity arrangements in place for areas in which it considers threats and risks to be high. It regularly reviews and tests these threats and risks so that staff know the arrangements and their associated responsibilities.

The service has tested its business continuity plan for industrial action twice since October 2022. It completed a lessons learned management report after an internal debrief. At the time of our inspection, the service told us it will need to consider the implications of [The Strikes \(Minimum Service Levels: Fire and Rescue Services\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#).

### **The service displays 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 capital programme is regularly reviewed to manage changes in inflationary pressures. As a result of this work, the service has reprioritised some estate projects to make sure they are affordable.

The service is taking steps to make sure it achieves efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. It is doing this in important areas such as estates, fleet and procurement. It uses national and local procurement frameworks to get the best possible purchasing power. But the service would benefit from carrying out more regular [benchmarking](#) with other fire and rescue services to show value for money.

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

Good

Nottinghamshire 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.

## Main findings

### **The service has developed a sound understanding of future financial challenges**

The service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its main or significant financial risks. For example, it has a budget pressure support reserve to cover unforeseen pay and price inflation.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic and prudent. They take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. The service considers different scenarios when setting its budget. Its sensitivity analysis has helped it to consider the implications of different levels of funding and spending pressures on its financial forecast.

There is a balanced budget for 2024/25. The service's Futures 25 efficiency programme will help it develop savings options and new ways of working to manage its anticipated future budget shortfalls between 2025/26 and 2027/28.

## **The service has clear arrangements for the use of reserves**

Total estimated reserve levels as at 31 March 2024 are £9.4m, which consists of £5.0m general reserves and £4.4m earmarked reserves.

The service has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves. This plan includes sufficient reserves being set aside to meet budget pressures and investment until the improvements from the Futures 25 efficiency programme are in place.

## **Fleet and estate strategies support the service's CRMP**

The service's estate and fleet strategies have clear links to its CRMP. Both strategies exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

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

The capital programme includes funding for the service's fire station refurbishment and replacement plan. Estate audits are carried out regularly to make sure provision is appropriate. The service has built a new fire station at Worksop. This building is 20 percent more efficient than building regulations require and is fitted with the latest renewable technology. It has the capacity to generate up to 50 percent of its energy consumption requirements, with an air source heat pump providing heating and hot water. At the time of our inspection, the service also had electric vehicle charging points at 11 fire stations.

The service has recently purchased 17 new fire engines. It anticipates most of these vehicles will be delivered in late 2024. The cost to the service is higher than expected due to contractual issues. The service should review what has happened to make sure its process is appropriate.

## **The service has improved how it uses technology and considers future innovation**

The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. Phase 2 of the Futures 25 efficiency programme includes an investment of £250,000 in systems and processes. MDTs are now more stable and robust, meaning risk information can be accessed quickly when it is needed.

The service also tries to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology. It has significantly upgraded and modernised its IT systems as a result of the changes introduced in response to the pandemic and the service's move to a joint headquarters. The service is now using cloud functionality, which means staff can work remotely.

The service has put in place the capacity and capability it needs to achieve sustainable improvements. And it routinely looks for opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency and provide better services in the future.

### **The service considers some income-generation opportunities**

The service actively considers and exploits opportunities for generating extra income. It has leasing agreements with East Midlands Ambulance Service, the local authority's emergency planning team and St John Ambulance, which are all paying tenants of the service's estate. The service told us this brings in around £100,000 a year.

The service also told us that it has been successful in its application for a public sector decarbonisation scheme grant of over £367,000.

# Promoting the right values and culture

Good

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

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

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

## Main findings

### The service's culture, behaviours and values are positive

The service continues to have well-defined values, which staff understand. Most staff we spoke with were able to explain in detail the service's values and the [Core Code of Ethics](#). We found most staff at all levels of the service showing behaviours that reflect service values.

In our staff survey, 97 percent (299 out of 307) of respondents stated that they are aware of the service's statement of values. Ninety-six percent (288 out of 299) of respondents agreed or tended to agree that their colleagues consistently model and maintain the service values. And 95 percent (284 out of 299) of respondents agreed or tended to agree that line managers model and maintain service values.

The service has implemented the [Core Code of Ethics](#) well, and staff understand it.

Senior leaders act as role models. For example, in our staff survey, 81 percent (241 out of 299) of respondents agreed or tended to agree that senior leaders consistently model and maintain service values.

We heard from staff that they enjoy their work and feel supported by their line managers. But some staff we spoke with felt senior leaders weren't visible enough and don't always model the behaviours expected of them. They said station managers weren't visible enough to firefighters on station. They also felt that managers would be treated differently to firefighters if they displayed poor behaviours. These staff members felt there was still a divide between firefighters and managers.

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

### **The service has improved its well-being provision for both mental and physical health**

In our last inspection, we identified the following area for improvement: "The service should assure itself that staff understand how to get wellbeing support."

The service has reasonably well-understood and effective staff well-being policies. A wide range of well-being support is available for both physical and mental health. For example, the service uses an external company that offers counselling support and talking therapies. These can be accessed through manager referrals or self-referrals. The service has a peer support group and recently developed a crisis team. This team supports staff who have been involved in traumatic events or incidents.

The peer support team has given staff training on well-being provision. Line managers also carry out stress risk assessments when an employee raises an issue or demonstrates behaviours that may indicate stress is affecting their well-being. They use the Health and Safety Executive Stress Indicator Tool as a guide.

In response to our staff survey, 93 percent (284 out of 307) of respondents told us they discuss their personal well-being and/or work-related stress with their manager at least once a year.

Some staff were still unclear about the processes to access support. Although the introduction of the crisis team to further support staff exposed to traumatic events is positive, not everyone is aware of this. It isn't clear how fire control staff will be monitored after exposure to multiple traumatic incidents. Staff didn't feel they had received enough information about how to access this support and what it involves. The few members of staff we spoke with who had worked with the new crisis team after a traumatic event described the experience as extremely useful.

The service has a robust fitness monitoring process in place. In response to our staff survey, 94 percent (178 out of 189) of respondents agreed or tended to agree that they have access to the equipment they need to maintain operational fitness.

We are pleased with the progress the service has made, and this area for improvement is now closed.



## **Staff understand and have confidence in health and safety policies**

The service has effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. Staff are good at reporting [near misses](#). Fire stations display posters to help staff easily understand the process to report a near miss.

Health and safety policies and procedures are easy to find on the service's intranet, and the service promotes them effectively to all staff. In our staff survey, 99 percent (304 out of 307) of respondents agreed or tended to agree that they understood the service's policies and procedures to make sure they can work safely. Staff and representative bodies have confidence in the health and safety approach the service takes.

The service monitors staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts within the service to make sure they comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours. But processes could be improved for those staff who have on-call employment at another fire and rescue service. Although there is a policy covering this, it is left to the individual to declare their outside hours, or to the individual's line manager to detect that the policy isn't being complied with. The service should have a more robust process in place to make sure staff comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours.

## **The service is good at managing absence**

We found there are clear processes in place to manage absence for all staff. There is clear guidance for managers, who are confident in using the process. The service manages absence well and in accordance with policy. Managers receive specific training on how to deal with absence management. They collaborate with HR and other relevant parties, such as occupational health, to manage absence proactively.

In 2022/23, the average number of days not worked per firefighter due to short-term sickness decreased by 16.3 percent compared to 2021/22.

# Getting the right people with the right skills

Good

Nottinghamshire 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 [community risk management plans](#). It should set out their current and future skills requirements and address capability gaps. This should be supplemented by a culture of continuous improvement, including appropriate learning and development throughout the service.

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

## Main findings

### **Workforce planning continues to make sure that the required skills and capabilities are available**

The service has good workforce planning in place. This makes sure staff skills and capabilities align with what it needs to effectively carry out its CRMP. For example, in 2023, the service carried out an evaluation project, which was led by the assistant chief. This identified a trend of support staff leaving the service after 10–15 years because they want more flexibility. In response to this finding, the service has brought in 14 transferees during 2023/24 to build resilience in the operational workforce. This provided some cost efficiencies to the recruitment budget.

Workforce and succession planning is subject to consistent scrutiny in the form of regular meetings to discuss requirements. The service has a current annual workforce plan, which was signed off by the senior leadership team. Nottinghamshire County Council audited the plan and rated its confidence in the plan being effective “high”.

## **The service effectively records and monitors the skills and capabilities of its staff**

Most staff told us that they could access the training they need to be effective in their role. This wasn't just focused on operational skills. The service's training plans make sure staff can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, all operational staff we spoke with said they had received adequate and timely safeguarding and vulnerability training so that they can identify vulnerability and safeguarding concerns.

Staff carry out required learning using an e-learning platform that records and monitors completion of training. Staff and managers can access this system to review competencies. The system also prompts staff and managers when training, assessment or continuous professional development is due or when an activity hasn't been carried out within a given time frame.

Practical and theoretical training is part of a monthly training programme. The training team creates reports, which have shown consistently good results in terms of maintaining competence for most of the workforce.

The service regularly updates its understanding of staff skills and risk-critical safety capabilities. This approach means the service can identify gaps in workforce capabilities and resilience. It also means it can make sound and financially sustainable decisions about current and future needs.

We found staff had completed online training regarding tall buildings. But some operational staff we spoke with hadn't received in-person practical tall buildings training. We are aware the service is carrying out practical tall buildings training, but it should make sure all operational staff receive this training as a priority.

Staff told us that all new recruits have training on carrying out safe and well visits, but existing staff haven't received this training. The service should review this to make sure skills and capabilities to carry out safe and well visits are consistent.

## **The service supports staff with their learning and improvement**

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvements throughout the organisation, and it encourages staff to learn and develop. For example, it has introduced business safety checks training for operational crew and [watch](#) managers, which is a level 3 certificate qualification.

We were pleased to see that the service has a range of resources in place. These include e-learning modules and leadership programmes. Annual professional development reviews allow the service to identify specific training needs. They also give staff the opportunity to express an interest in promotion or development in a range of different areas.

Most staff told us they can access a range of learning and development resources. These include incident command development and tailored development identified through the appraisals process. This allows them to do their job effectively.

# Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Good

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

Creating a more representative workforce gives fire and rescue services huge benefits. These include greater access to talent and different ways of thinking. It also helps them better understand and engage with local communities. Each service should make sure staff throughout the organisation firmly understand and show a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. This includes successfully taking steps to remove inequality and making progress to improve fairness, diversity and inclusion at all levels of the service. It should proactively seek and respond to feedback from staff and make sure any action it takes is meaningful.

## Promising practice

### **The service has made excellent use of its community advisory group to support the development of its policies, procedures and communications**

The service works closely with its community advisory group, which includes subject matter experts, members of ethnic minority community groups, county council staff and [police personnel](#) from within Nottinghamshire.

The community advisory group reviews the service's policies and procedures, helping it to become more inclusive. It can also review the service's communications with staff and the public to offer advice on terminology and make sure inclusive language is used. The group has also given feedback on command training scenarios that has helped diversify the scenarios, and on trauma care courses for operational crews. The group's involvement has helped to improve operational staff's knowledge and understanding of diversity, specifically when dealing with incidents and scenarios that include members of the public from a diverse range of cultures and backgrounds.

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

## Main findings

### **The service has processes for gathering and acting on staff feedback and challenge**

The service has developed several ways to work with staff on issues and decisions that affect them. These include methods to build all-staff awareness of fairness and diversity, as well as targeted initiatives to identify matters that affect different staff groups. The service's leadership team takes part in reverse mentoring with members of the workforce. This helps leaders understand the different perspectives in their workforce.

The service offers exit interviews to all leavers to help it identify any improvements it can make.

Some staff we spoke with had limited confidence in the service's feedback processes and don't think they are effective. We heard of some staff receiving negative comments from managers when raising concerns about issues such as station security. Some said that although the chief fire officer welcomes challenge and feedback, not all managers respond well to any form of constructive challenge.

The service has implemented a confidential reporting line called Say So. It is in its infancy and has had a low number of submissions to date. Staff who aren't comfortable raising issues through their line managers can raise them anonymously, so the service can review and address them.

### **The service is improving how it deals with bullying, harassment and discrimination**

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

In this inspection, 9 percent (29 out of 307) of respondents told us they had felt bullied or harassed at work, and 7 percent (21 out of 307) told us they had felt discriminated against at work over the past 12 months.

Most staff are confident in the service's approach to tackling bullying, harassment, discrimination, grievances and disciplinary matters. Staff told us there have been positive changes to how the service deals with bullying, harassment and discrimination. The service has made sure all staff are trained and clear on what to do if they encounter inappropriate behaviour.

## **The service is making efforts to address disproportionality in recruitment and retention**

There is an open, fair and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for the fire and rescue service. The service has an effective system to understand and remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. For example, recruitment policies are subject to [equality impact assessments](#). The service is recording and monitoring actions that come from these assessments to help reduce any disproportionality in recruitment processes.

The service has put effort into developing its recruitment processes so that they are fair, and potential applicants can understand them. The recruitment policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. The service advertises recruitment opportunities both internally and externally. This aims to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds, including into middle and senior management roles.

The service has made limited progress in increasing staff diversity at all levels of the organisation and still needs to do more. The number of firefighters who identified as being from an ethnic minority background has remained the same, but the proportion has increased from 9.7 percent (62 people) in 2021/22 to 10 percent (62 people) in 2022/23. The proportion of firefighters who identified as a woman has increased slightly from 7.2 percent (48 people) to 7.5 percent (49 people) over the same period.

For the whole workforce, in 2022/23, 10.4 percent identified as being from an ethnic minority background compared to 19.8 percent in their local population and 8.4 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. And 16.3 percent identified as a woman, compared to an average of 19.4 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. The service should continue its work to address disproportionality in recruitment and retention so that it is more representative of the communities it serves.

The service has taken steps to improve diversity. For example, the service has a ten-year strategy that includes many positive action events for wholetime recruitment. The effects of this work can be seen in the figures for the latest wholetime recruit course. The service told us 24 percent of candidates will be those identifying as being from an ethnic minority background, 15 percent identifying as women and 15 percent identifying as LGBTQ+. The service has also done additional work with applicants who identify as a woman, such as interview training. The workforce generally supports this.

## **The service's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion is improving**

The service has improved its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. It makes sure it can offer the right services to its communities and can support staff with [protected characteristics](#). For example, the service has a strategic inclusion board that formalises its processes, which senior leaders, [fire and rescue authority](#) members and the service's head of equality, diversity and inclusion attend.

The service works well with its community advisory group, which includes representatives from ethnic minority community groups, subject matter experts, county council staff and police personnel. It offers advice on the service's policies and procedures. For example, the group attended an anti-racism training course and suggested some additional content for the course before the service made it available to the workforce. It also attended the incident command training suite and provided additional considerations for commanders for scenarios involving people from diverse backgrounds.

The service has well-established staff networks that support it in improving equality, diversity and inclusion. The service should make sure that senior leaders acting as strategic sponsors for staff networks are consistent in the type and level of support they give these networks. It should also make sure that chairs and members of the staff networks don't become overwhelmed when managing their day-to-day work as well as staff network responsibilities.

The service has an effective equality impact assessment process. The service uses the NFCC equality impact assessment template and provides clear instructions on how it should be used. If the assessments identify potential barriers, actions are created, and these actions are recorded, assigned and tracked in an effective manner.



# Managing performance and developing leaders

Good

Nottinghamshire 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.

## Main findings

### 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. For example, we found staff appraisals are carried out consistently and cover an appropriate range of subjects, such as the Core Code of Ethics, personal goals and objectives, mental health and training.

Through our staff survey, 92 percent (281 out of 307) of respondents told us they have had a formal personal development review or appraisal in the last 12 months, and 71 percent (200 out of 281) of respondents agreed these were useful. Each staff member has individual goals and objectives, and regular performance assessments. Staff feel confident in the performance and development arrangements in place.

### **The service has improved how it carries out its promotion process**

The service has put considerable effort into developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair and all staff can understand them. The service has standardised its promotion packs from firefighter to chief fire officer level to show consistency in its approach. These packs clearly set out the requirements of the process and how to access more information and support. The service tries to make sure it has a diverse range of people sitting on promotion panels. These panels often include a member of its community advisory group, stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, or individuals with knowledge and expertise in equality, diversity and inclusion. The promotion and progression policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles.

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

It manages selection processes consistently. And it uses temporary promotions appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps.

Some staff we spoke with felt there was a lack of fairness or transparency in the service's approach to the promotion process, because temporary staff can progress to the next stage of the promotion process with a score of 50 percent, while new applicants must achieve 70 percent. But this policy is applied selectively and is subject to strict moderation. The service considers that selective application and rigorous oversight create fairness and maintain high standards within the promotion process.

### **The service continues to improve its plans for diversifying leadership in the future**

The service knows it needs to go further to increase workforce diversity, especially in middle and senior management. It has put in place plans to address this. These include the service expressing an interest in being involved in tranche two of a national project for direct entry for leadership roles.

The service advertises every vacancy and currently has jobs open to all staff up to assistant chief fire officer level. It has also opened up some roles to all staff that were previously only available to operational staff.

### **The service is making efforts to develop leadership and high-potential staff at all levels**

The service has effective succession-planning processes in place, which allow it to manage high-potential staff into leadership roles.

There are talent management schemes to develop specific staff. The future leaders programme for junior managers has been well received by some staff. Several people have been promoted as a result of the programme. There is also a strategic leadership programme for those at group manager level and equivalent who want to be future strategic managers. But the service recognises there is limited diversity in the staff at this level.

Staff can apply to be considered for the NFCC Executive Leadership Programme and a higher-level apprenticeship in senior leadership, and applications are considered on a case-by-case basis.

The service has considered the December 2022 Leading the Service and Leading and Developing People fire standards and how it will implement them.

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