

Fire & Rescue Service 2023–25

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service

Contents

Changes to this round of inspection	1
Overall summary	2
Service in numbers	4
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	6
Promising practice	6
Main findings	7
Preventing fires and other risks	10
Main findings	10
Protecting the public through fire regulation	15
Promising practice	15
Main findings	16
Responding to fires and other emergencies	22
Main findings	22
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	27
Main findings	27
Making best use of resources	32
Promising practice	32
Main findings	33
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	38
Main findings	38
Promoting the right values and culture	41
Main findings	41

Getting the right people with the right skills	44
Promising practice	44
Main findings	45
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	48
Area for improvement	48
Main findings	48
Managing performance and developing leaders	53
Main findings	53

Changes to this round of inspection

We last inspected Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service in January 2022. 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.

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 Lancashire 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 Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has performed in 11 areas. We have made the following graded judgments:

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

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 visit Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way in which the service worked with our inspection staff.

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

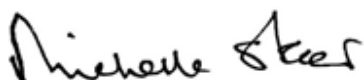
We were pleased to see that the service has made progress since our January 2022 inspection. For example, the service has improved its business continuity arrangements and made changes to make sure it can meet its risk-based intervention programme (RBIP).

We have judged the service to be outstanding in six areas and good in all others.

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

- The service is outstanding at understanding risk, using a wide range of data to understand risk at a local level, and sharing information efficiently between teams so that they can take action to reduce risk to its communities.
- The service is outstanding at protecting the public by regulating fire safety; it uses data to make sure it understands where the highest-risk buildings are and has a robust plan and resources in place to inspect them.
- The service is outstanding at responding to major and multi-agency incidents; it works closely with the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#), and has invested in innovative equipment to respond to wildfire and wide-scale flooding incidents.
- The service is outstanding at using its resources to manage risk, with sound planning assumptions and robust performance management arrangements in place.
- The service continues to be outstanding at promoting its values and culture; the leaders demonstrate the service's values, and staff feel appreciated and included.
- The service is outstanding at making sure its staff are trained and skilled, with a culture of continuous learning throughout the service.
- The service needs to do more to make sure that its [equality impact assessment \(EIA\)](#) process is robust, and the assessment findings are acted on appropriately.

The service's leadership, management and staff have further improved its services to the public, and I am confident the service will address the area for improvement we have identified.



Michelle Skeer

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Profile

	Lancashire	England
Area Square miles	1,184	50,370
Population (thousands) 30 June 2023	1,570	57,690
Population density Thousands per square mile	1.3	1.1



Cost

Funding Year ending 31 March 2023	£65.0m	£2.5bn
Expenditure per population Year ending 31 March 2023	£42.80	£46.66

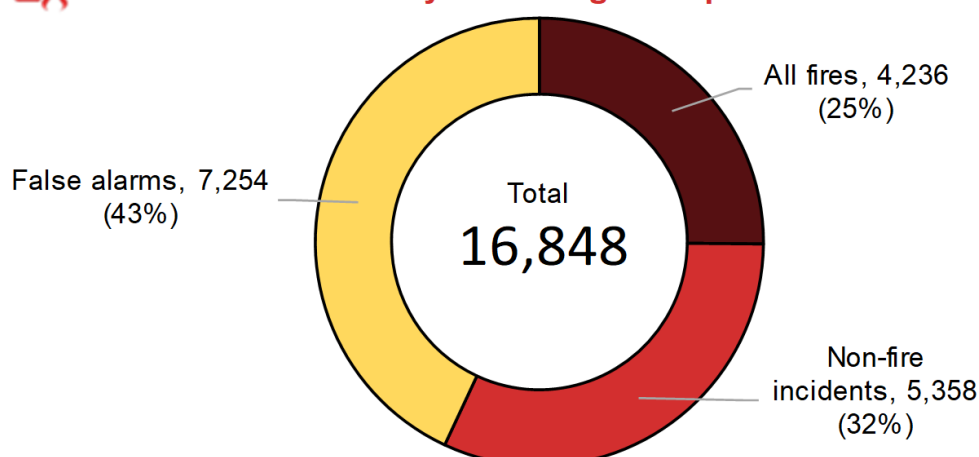


Response

Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 30 September 2024	10.7	10.4
Home fire safety visits carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2024	13.4	9.8
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2024	6.2	2.0
Availability of wholetime pumps Year ending 31 March 2024	99.2%	
Availability of on-call pumps Year ending 31 March 2024	69.0%	



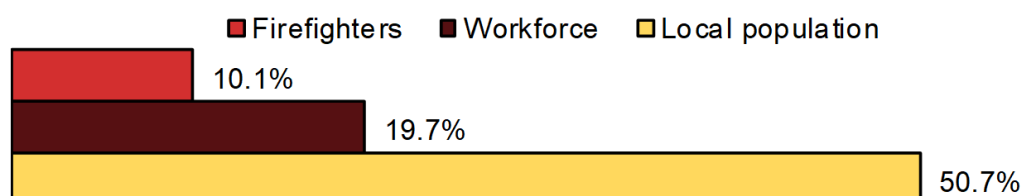
Incidents attended in year ending 30 September 2024



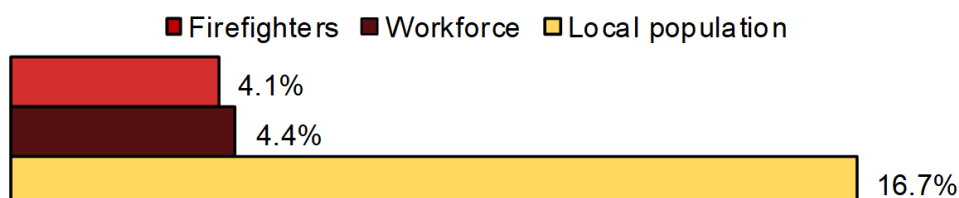
Workforce

	Lancashire	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2019 to 2024	1.0%	1.9%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2024	0.68	0.60
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2024	60.8%	65.8%

Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who identified as a woman as at 31 March 2024



Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who were from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2024



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

Outstanding

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is outstanding 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.

Promising practice

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service uses IT effectively to share incident information quickly and clearly across teams

The service has invested in technology to create a post-incident activity log, which is automatically generated by fire station systems, and shared with relevant teams. Fire station staff can include notes and suggestions for post-incident activity. Examples of this include:

- the prevention team fitting specialist alarms;
- an onwards referral to Trading Standards;
- generating arson vulnerability audits (assessments of properties to see how vulnerable they are to arson); and
- an inspection carried out by the protection team.

Staff told us they found the system quick and easy to use. There is also a quality assurance process that prompts the relevant teams to carry out post-incident recommendations.

Using this system supports a shared understanding of risk across the service, makes sure risk information is shared in a timely way to keep communities safe, and promotes a team approach to mitigating 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

The service uses information from a wide range of sources to build a comprehensive risk profile

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. These include incident data, crime and health data, the [index of multiple deprivation](#) and Office for National Statistics data.

The service has consulted constructively with local communities and other relevant parties to understand risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it. For example, it has spoken to staff, members of the public, other emergency services, trade unions, business owners, and community groups such as the Lancashire Council of Mosques. The service also uses social media and has a newsletter that it uses to encourage feedback on consultations. The service told us it had over 1,900 responses to its last consultation.

The service analyses the risk information it has gathered to create a strategic assessment of risk. The service applies a risk score to each super output area and uses this to target activity and measure any reduction in local risk. These risk scores also inform the service's response times.

The service carried out a limited evaluation of its last [community risk management plan \(CRMP\)](#). It could build its new evaluation framework into the next CRMP process.

The service's CRMP clearly explains community risks and the measures the service will take to address them

Once it has assessed risks, the service records its findings in an easily understood 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, for example:

- working with key partners to develop multi-agency flood plans;
- providing a specialist response to wildfire incidents, including investing in drones for reconnaissance and situational awareness;
- providing a wide range of prevention activities to reduce accidental [dwelling fires](#) and road traffic collisions; and
- using data to target inspection activity to the highest-risk premises.

The CRMP covers five years, but the service reviews it annually. This annual review makes sure that the service can monitor and adapt to changes in its risk profiles.

The CRMP informs department and district plans, which then filter down into station plans and, ultimately, staff appraisals. This leads to a good understanding of risk across all levels and staff groups in the service.

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

The service effectively 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:

- gathering information during risk familiarisation visits to high-risk premises;
- working with partners such as Age UK to identify [vulnerable people](#);
- working with the LRF;
- writing to the owners of mid-rise premises to collate risk information that is used to inform the RBIP;
- data sharing agreements, for example with Blackpool local authority for information on high-risk [houses in multiple occupation](#) and landlords; and
- working with organisations and businesses to identify short-term risks in the county, for example festivals and sporting events.

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

- site-specific risk information;
- [home fire safety check](#) files;
- protection files; and
- short-term/temporary 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. The service has a process to share risk information between prevention teams, protection teams, fire stations and control, for example where a building is identified as having aluminium composite material cladding. Where appropriate, the service shares risk information with other organisations, such as other emergency responders, health care providers and local authorities.

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, including over-the-border risks. Staff are also able to amend the risk score attached to a particular site, to inform future planning of visits and inspections. There is a quality assurance process in place for site-specific risk information.

The service has various methods for sharing risk-critical information with staff, including bulletins and a quarterly [organisational learning](#) report. These methods are used for both operational and health and safety risks. Staff must record that they have read the information using the electronic learning management system.

The staff we spoke to were clear about the importance of sharing risk information to reduce risk in their communities. The service's departments have good relationships and work well together to reduce risk.

The service uses information from operational activity to build its understanding of risk

The service records and communicates risk information effectively. It also routinely updates risk assessments and uses feedback from local and national operational activities to inform its planning assumptions.

The service's post-incident activity log process makes sure that information about incidents is quickly shared with relevant teams. The teams then review the incident and take appropriate action to reduce risk.

The service also has a data intelligence group that analyses trends and themes from operational incidents. For example, an increase in deliberate fires in prisons led to the service setting up an action group in partnership with the Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspectorate, to reduce the risk at prisons.

Preventing fires and other risks

Good

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is good at preventing fires and other risks.

Fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, including giving fire safety advice. To identify people at greatest risk from fire, services should work closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary 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 prioritises those most at risk of fire and other emergencies

The service's prevention strategy is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP. It identifies the following key areas of work:

- start safe – educating, supporting and protecting [children](#) and young people;
- live safe – assisting people who live and work in the community;
- age safe – supporting the older community, including those living with dementia;
- road safety;
- water safety; and
- wildfire prevention.

The service carries out targeted prevention activities. These activities include home fire safety checks incorporating [safe and well](#) information, working with partners such as Canal & River Trust and Lancashire Road Safety Partnership on water and road safety, and initiatives to tackle arson and wildfires.

The service's teams work well together and with other relevant organisations on prevention, and they share relevant information when needed. For example, following a safe and well visit, they refer people to a partner organisation such as Age UK if the resident is showing signs of dementia. In 2023/24, the service carried out 882 home fire safety checks which led to at least one referral.

The service uses information to adjust its planning assumptions and direct activity between its prevention, protection and response functions. For example, where staff identify an oxygen user or a hoarder, control updates risk information to inform local crews. This makes sure that crews are aware of the additional risk at the premises should they respond to an incident there.

The service targets its prevention activity to those most at risk from fire and other emergencies

The service uses a risk-based approach to clearly prioritise its prevention activity towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies.

The service uses a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable individuals and groups. This includes:

- historical incident data;
- referrals from partners such as the local authority;
- national trends; and
- information from fatal fire debriefs.

The service has set targets for the number of home fire safety checks it needs to complete each year. It monitors and manages these targets well. In 2023/24, the service carried out 21,035 home fire safety checks. This equates to 13.4 checks per 1,000 population, compared to the national rate of 10.4 for England.

The service's contact centre assesses the need for a home fire safety check based on criteria such as age, vulnerabilities and behaviours such as smoking. Of the home fire safety checks completed in 2023/24, 90.1 percent (18,952 out of 21,035) were for vulnerable people.

The central team books most of the home fire safety checks that are carried out. We found little evidence of fire stations proactively targeting these checks based on local risk information. The service could do more to encourage this, for example by making it easier for stations to self-generate home fire safety checks through the system.

Local prevention officers have helpful links with community groups. They meet regularly with different community leaders to discuss district-wide problems. For example, the service has collaborated with the Lancashire Council of Mosques and Lancashire Constabulary to send a joint letter highlighting fire and road safety risks over the Ramadan period.

The service carries out a range of interventions, which it adapts to the level of risk in its communities. For example, some stations will visit local hotspots to discourage disposable barbecue use in warmer weather, while others will focus more on water safety where there is a quarry located in their local area.

Staff are trained to carry out home fire safety checks

Staff told us they have the right skills and confidence to carry out home fire safety checks. These checks cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. During a home fire safety check, advice and guidance is given around risks in the home, including:

- kitchen safety;
- candle use;
- escape routes;
- safe heating;
- hoarding;
- smoking;
- emollients;
- lithium-ion batteries; and
- smoke alarm fitting and advice.

The service is also able to provide smoke alarms for people who have hearing loss.

New firefighters receive one week of prevention training at the leadership and development centre as part of their initial course. Further training on identified trends, for example about emollients and safe charging of electronic items, is provided through e-learning packages.

Prevention staff regularly visit stations to offer additional support and carry out quality assurance of home fire safety checks, to make sure that the advice and support given to residents remains at a high standard.

Staff understand how to identify and report safeguarding concerns

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified [safeguarding](#) concerns. They told us they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly.

All staff receive mandatory safeguarding training, and there is an efficient electronic safeguarding referral process in place. The service has also introduced additional training about [county lines](#). Staff told us they found this useful.

The service works effectively with partners to reduce risk

The service works with a wide range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. These include the Canal & River Trust to promote water safety across the region.

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. It works with the Lancashire Road Safety Partnership to prevent people being killed and seriously injured on the road. It has collaborated with the police and council to carry out road safety interventions for groups that were found to be at a higher risk of road traffic collisions.

The service is an active member of local community safety partnerships to identify [antisocial behaviour](#) hotspots to reduce the risk of arson. It has implemented a climate change operational response plan and works with various organisations including the police to serve [Public Spaces Protection Orders](#). The service told us that in 2024 they reported fewer wildfire incidents to the national resilience assurance team (three incidents) compared to the previous year (five incidents) as a result of this work.

We found good evidence that the service routinely refers people at greatest risk to organisations, such as Age UK, that may better meet their needs, for example if further support is needed for falls prevention, social isolation or dementia.

Arrangements are also in place to receive referrals from others, for example the local authority, and the service acts appropriately on the referrals it receives. The service has developed a preferred partners list of organisations that regularly refer vulnerable people, alongside an online partner referral process to make it easier and quicker for partners to refer individuals.

In 2023/24, the service carried out 5,943 home fire safety checks as a result of referrals from other agencies. This is a decrease compared to 11,494 in 2022/23. The service could do more to encourage further referrals to continue to make sure that vulnerable people receive a home fire safety check.

The service has prevention information on its website and has a partner newsletter, which it uses to share information relating to trends such as the risks associated with lithium-ion batteries.

The service has effective arrangements to tackle fire-setting behaviour

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people with diverse needs who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. This includes its Fire Intervention Response Education Scheme, an education intervention programme aimed at young people aged between 4 and 17 years who have demonstrated fire-setting behaviour.

The service sits on the youth justice management board and the community safety and violence reduction board, where trends in fire-setting behaviour are reviewed. Referrals to the Fire Intervention Response Education Scheme are made through these boards, and progress is fed back to partner agencies such as the local authority. The service has also worked with the Probation Service to provide interventions for adult fire-setters.

We saw good examples of shared working with other agencies to reduce arson in derelict buildings and around Bonfire Night. When appropriate, the service routinely shares information with relevant organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists. The service told us that in 2023/24 there were 16 successful arson prosecutions.

The service evaluates the effectiveness of its prevention activity

During our 2022 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should evaluate its prevention activity, so it understands what works.

The service has made satisfactory progress in addressing this and now has an evaluation lead, framework and toolkit in place. We have closed this area for improvement.

The service has evaluation tools in place to measure how effective its prevention activity is and to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to the prevention services that meet their needs. For example, after the service evaluated its Diwali campaign, it saw zero related incidents the following year. It also measures the reach of its social media campaigns. The service told us that its 'Bright Sparx' Bonfire Night safety communications reached over 52 million people.

Prevention activities take account of feedback from the public, other organisations and other parts of the service. For example, the service reviewed and updated primary school talks following feedback from teachers.

The service also chairs a critical case panel when a death has occurred. The panel supports data sharing, collaboration and partnership working.

All evaluations are reviewed by the prevention and protection task group, including evaluations of station open days and campaigns.

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

Outstanding

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is outstanding 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.

Promising practice

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has reduced attendance to unwanted fire signals

In 2022, the service introduced call challenging. It told us that this has substantially reduced attendance to commercial properties. It said that this change could lead to an approximate efficiency saving of, on average, 1,353 hours and £440,000 in a year.

North West Fire Control challenges every call, and the service has a non-attendance policy for non-sleeping risk premises, with some exemptions in place. It also has a robust follow-up process, where business safety advisors offer support to the responsible person to reduce unwanted fire signals, before moving to enforcement if progress isn't made.

As well as the time and cost savings, the reduction in unwanted fire signals has resulted in:

- fire engines and control operators being more available to respond to genuine emergencies;
- reduced road risk associated with responding to an emergency on blue lights;
- less disruption to operational training;
- reduced environmental impact;

- businesses being empowered to manage their own fire safety;
- less disruption for businesses, including employers of [on-call](#) firefighters; and
- more time for risk-reduction activities such as home and business fire safety checks.

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 protection strategy is clearly linked to its CRMP

The service's protection strategy is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP.

Staff across the service are involved in this activity, effectively exchanging information as needed. For example, lower-risk premises receive a business fire safety check from fire station crews. Where serious issues are found, these are escalated to the protection team. The service has developed a business fire safety check app, which staff told us they find easy to use. The service told us that in 2023/24 it carried out 3,307 of these checks.

The service is exploring how it can support crews to identify local business risk and carry out ad-hoc or post-incident business fire safety checks through planned updates to the business fire safety check app. We are looking forward to seeing how this work progresses.

Fire station staff use the post-incident activity log to share information with relevant departments for further action to take place to mitigate risk. There is an effective information-sharing process in place between teams, including for prevention and [fire control](#).

Firefighters carry out environmental visual audits and pass information to the relevant authority, for example where there is a danger of arson following fly-tipping activity.

The service told us that it had also recently written to over 170 mid-rise premises to collate risk information which will be used to inform the RBIP.

The service uses the information it gathers to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between its protection, prevention and response functions. This means resources are properly aligned to risk.

The service has a dynamic RBIP, which targets the highest-risk premises

The service's RBIP covers a three-year cycle and is focused on the service's highest-risk buildings. The service uses a formula consisting of nationally derived data to categorise fire risk by premises type. This is strengthened using Lancashire data and associated risk weightings to give a combined risk score. It then schedules inspections, with the highest-risk buildings inspected as a priority and the frequency of those inspections adjusted for risk. The service has removed out-of-date data and made sure all information is accurate and up to date, to improve the quality of risk data used for the RBIP.

High-risk residential buildings are inspected annually. Medium and low-risk premises, as well as heritage buildings, are inspected during the three-year RBIP cycle.

Once a premises is inspected, the risk score can be adjusted, which helps the service to continue targeting in a dynamic way.

The service carries out fire safety audits to a high standard

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 RBIP;
- after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies;
- after enforcement action had been taken; or
- 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. For example, if a building's risk score has increased due to aluminium composite material cladding being present, this information will be sent through to control, the risk rating will be changed, and mitigating measures will be added to the system. The information will also be shared with fire station staff to make sure they are aware of the risk.

The audits we reviewed were completed within the timescales the service had set itself. All inspection activity was completed within the appropriate time frame, and according to the service's protection policy and procedures.

The service quality assures its protection activity

The service now carries out proportionate quality assurance of its protection activity. Managers shadow audits to carry out quality assurance. This is then recorded on a form that has been produced collaboratively with the NFCC North West Protection Group. Quality assurance visits are carried out over a three-year period. Fire safety managers also sample files and letters.

The service has 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 protection services that meet their needs. The service carried out an 'enhancing protection activities' project and has evaluated phase one of this project, including the effectiveness of the RBIP. The evaluation found that some of the benefits of the project include:

- a team that has been able to adapt and prepare for new regulatory changes;
- the introduction of a built environment team, which has made sure all tall buildings have been inspected; and
- improved data accuracy, which has helped the service to better target and triage risk.

The service's enforcement activity is 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. We saw good evidence of the service taking enforcement action and pursuing prosecutions where appropriate.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, the service carried out 2,003 audits that were deemed unsatisfactory, and this led to 2,049 enforcement activities being carried out. The service:

- issued 15 alteration notices;
- issued 1,940 informal notifications;
- issued 79 enforcement notices;
- issued 14 prohibition notices; and
- carried out one prosecution.

In the five years from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024 it completed four prosecutions. At the time of this inspection, the service told us it had 19 potential ongoing prosecution cases.

Staff told us about a prohibition notice that had been issued to a care home, where the service worked with the local authority to move over 100 residents out of the premises over two weeks, with additional fire safety measures put in place to support their rehousing. Working together in this way minimised the effect both on the local authority and the residents.

The service has sufficient resources to carry out its protection activity

During our 2022 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should make sure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.

The service has made good progress in addressing this. It has restructured the protection team and improved the IT system to support the RBIP. We have closed this area for improvement.

The service has effectively used the protection uplift government grant to establish new senior manager posts in the protection team, as well as to develop the new online protection portal and improve training for its staff.

The service has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of its RBIP. As at 31 March 2024, it had 21 competent staff and 17 staff in development, and has approved and filled four additional staff positions to support recruitment and retention. A built environment risk management team has also been introduced, to bridge the gap between response and protection. There are three fire engineers in the team, and the service plans to increase this number. This helps the service to provide the range of audit and enforcement activity needed, both now and in the future.

There is fire safety provision in place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with several flexi duty officers who are qualified in fire safety, and a recall facility for specialist protection staff where needed.

Staff get the right training and work to appropriate accreditation aligned to the [National Fire Chiefs Council's](#) (NFCC) competency framework. We heard numerous examples of additional [continuing professional development](#) taking place for staff to maintain their fire safety competence, including tall building seminars.

Protection staff support fire station crews to improve their fire safety knowledge through regular visits. Crews have received e-learning around the legislative changes and the built environment. The service is exploring the provision of fire safety accreditation for crews in collaboration with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

We found that the introduction of business fire safety checks, along with the upskilling of fire station crews in protection, has led to protection activity being accepted and understood throughout the service.

The service has adapted well 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](#). It has 1 member of staff funded by the Building Safety Regulator as 1 of 11 posts across the north-west region. It expects these arrangements to have a limited effect on its other protection activity. The work of assessing building safety case reports is shared among all the inspectors on the regional team. The service has also trained five inspectors so that they can be included on the [contextualised auditors register](#).

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 them of any substantial faults to essential firefighting equipment, such as firefighting lifts.

We found the service has good arrangements in place to receive this information. When it doesn't receive the right information, it takes action. And it accordingly updates the risk information it gives its operational staff.

The service works well with partners to carry out joint enforcement

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety, and it routinely exchanges risk information with them. For example, the service has a memorandum of understanding with the local authority and has shared its RBIP risk information on houses in multiple occupation to support their inspection activity. The service has also provided training to local authority housing officers around fire safety legislation.

The service carries out joint inspections with Trading Standards around Bonfire Night to inspect premises that sell fireworks. It has completed joint training sessions with the Care Quality Commission around care home inspections.

Service staff also attend [safety advisory groups](#) for large events. They then share risk information with the relevant teams.

The service has improved its arrangements for responding to building control consultations

During our 2022 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should make sure it allocates enough resources to respond effectively and in time to statutory building control consultations.

The service has made good progress in addressing this area. It has a new electronic building control consultation process in place and now shares consultation work among all inspecting officers. We have closed this area for improvement.

In 2023/24, the service responded to 95.8 percent of building consultations (921 out of 961) on time. This is an improvement on the previous year when it responded to 78.7 percent (785 out of 997) on time. This means it consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings.

In 2023/24, the service also responded to 100 percent of licensing consultations (468 out of 468) on time.

The service works well with businesses to improve fire safety

The service proactively works with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. For example, protection staff have presented at the chamber of commerce, have had ongoing communications with a supported housing improvement programme, and have held seminars for care home managers hosted at the service's headquarters.

The service is actively involved in Business Safety Week and has a newsletter for responsible persons where information is shared. For example, the latest newsletter at the time of our inspection focused on risks associated with lithium-ion batteries.

The service can provide business fire safety literature in several languages, and the service's website hosts information about how to comply with fire safety legislation.

The service operates a [primary authority partnership scheme](#), with 15 partnerships in place at the time of our inspection.

The service has made good progress in reducing attendance to unwanted fire signals

An effective risk-based approach is in place to manage the number of unwanted fire signals. The service told us that since its last inspection in 2022, it had reviewed and amended its policy and updated the process for unwanted fire signals twice.

In 2022, the service introduced a policy change for non-attendance at non-sleeping risk premises between 8am and 7pm unless a specific risk was identified. The service told us that in 2022/23, this reduced attendances at unwanted fire signal incidents to 961, compared to 1,866 in 2021/22.

In May 2023, the service moved to non-attendance at non-sleeping commercial sites 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The service told us that in 2023/24, this further reduced incidents to 339.

Since the introduction of the new policies, the proportion of automatic fire alarm requests received and not attended has gradually increased. In 2021/22, 37.9 percent of requests weren't attended. In 2023/24, we were pleased to see this had increased to 53.3 percent.

Responding to fires and other emergencies

Good

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

Fire and rescue services must be able to respond to a range of incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies in their 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 aligns its resources with the risks identified in the CRMP

The service's response strategy is linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP. Its 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.

It has a range of duty systems, including [wholetime](#), flexi day crewing, [day crewing plus](#), and on-call stations.

In 2022, the service carried out an emergency cover review. As a result, it made changes to duty systems and redistributed firefighters. It also introduced Dynamic Cover Tool software to optimise emergency cover based on real time risk and demand, to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of its workforce.

The service consistently meets its response standards

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standards in its CRMP. The response standards for the first fire engine to arrive to a critical fire align with the risk level identified using the methodology laid out in the CRMP. The service is committed to responding to:

- very high-risk areas within 6 minutes;
- high-risk areas within 8 minutes;

- medium-risk areas within 10 minutes; and
- low-risk area within 12 minutes.

The service reported that in 2023/24, it consistently achieved its response targets for each risk category.

Home Office data shows that in the year ending 31 March 2024, the service's average response time to [primary fires](#) was 8 minutes and 17 seconds. This is slower than the average response time for predominantly urban services, and is an increase on the service's average response time for the year ending 31 March 2023, which was 7 minutes and 49 seconds. This is mostly attributed to an increase in drive time of 23 seconds.

The service has reviewed this increase in drive time and believes it is due to fire officers having to manually book in attendance at the incident, rather than an actual increase in the time it takes to drive to an incident. The service is working on improving the functionality of its [mobile data terminals](#) so that they are less reliant on manual intervention to record an accurate arrival time.

The service is improving the availability of its fire engines

To support its response strategy, the service aims to have all its first fire engines available at each of its 39 stations 90 percent of the time. The service doesn't always meet this standard. In 2023/24, the overall availability was 82.5 percent, with wholtime fire engine and staff availability at 99.2 percent and on-call fire engine and staff availability at 69 percent.

However, since August 2024 on-call availability has increased. The service told us that in December 2024 this was up to 74 percent. The service has attributed this to its on-call improvement programme, with various projects in place to improve on-call availability, including allowing on-call firefighters to work for their primary employer from a fire station and encouraging non-operational staff to become on-call firefighters. The service's work in this area has been highlighted as [promising practice](#) in the [Making best use of resources](#) section of this report.

The service also plans to make more use of its on-call availability, recruitment and skills (OARS) software, which it hopes will improve the availability of its on-call fire engines.

Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely

The service has trained incident commanders, who are assessed regularly and properly. We found most incident commanders were appropriately trained and qualified, with some senior operational managers' accreditation being delayed due to a lag in appointment and training. Formal incident command assessment and revalidation takes place every two years, and incident command logs are maintained annually.

The service regularly carries out exercises to test out its operational capability. Training and exercises are recorded using an online platform. This helps the service safely, assertively and effectively manage the full 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 \(JESIP\)](#).

Fire control staff are regularly involved in training, exercises and debriefs

The service has a joint fire control with four other fire and rescue services.

We were pleased to see the service's control staff integrated into its command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. Control staff spoke positively about their involvement with multi-agency exercises and debriefs, and said they take part where possible.

Control centre staff have also received training to deal with marauding terrorist attack incidents, and carry out regular business continuity exercises.

Risk information is accessible and up to date

During our 2022 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should make sure that fire control has direct access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.

The service has made satisfactory progress in addressing this. Control operators now have access to risk information via a dedicated mobile data terminal, including hazard zone, firefighter and community risks. They can also access a terminal that holds the full site-specific risk information records. The service's organisational assurance team has also carried out assurance in this area. We have closed this area for improvement.

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

The information we reviewed was up to date and detailed. Staff could easily access and understand it. Over-the-border and short-term risk information was also easily accessed. Encouragingly, it had been completed with input from the service's prevention, protection and response functions when appropriate.

The service has funded an additional mobile data terminal for the rear of all fire engines. This has led to more operational staff accessing and becoming more familiar with risk information.

The service evaluates its operational performance and aligns it with national operational guidance

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included major incidents, fires in tall buildings, road traffic collisions and water rescues.

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 exchanges this information with appropriate organisations, such as local authorities and neighbouring fire and rescue services.

The service has developed a debrief app that is used by operational crews post-incident where learning has been identified. Information can be entered into the app on iPads at the site of the incident. The information is automatically shared with the organisational assurance team, who review and share the learning as needed. The service told us that the team received around 120 debrief submissions per month. There is a good culture of debriefing and sharing learning across the service. The service told us that in 2023/24 using the debrief app saved the service 600 hours.

The service has acted on learning from incidents to improve its service for the public. For example, the service has trained additional fire station crews in swift water rescue to improve its response to water-related incidents.

We were encouraged to see the service is contributing towards, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services or operational learning gathered from emergency service partners. This includes [national operational learning](#), [joint organisational learning](#), learning from cross-border incidents, and multi-agency exercises that are overseen by the organisational assurance team.

The service has completed a [national operational guidance](#) gap analysis with priorities and risks rated. When we reviewed the gap analysis, the service had completed most of the actions, with position statements produced where something didn't align.

The service shares learning through various methods, and tracks it through the electronic learning management system. Staff we spoke to were able to give examples of recent learning they had received, for example in relation to electric vehicle fires.

The service effectively communicates with the public 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 'latest incidents' page on its website and using social media platforms including X and Facebook. The service told us that it also had over 100,000 subscribers to its service email, which it could use to inform people about incidents.

There is a duty media liaison officer on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and all flexi duty officers receive media training.

The service works in partnership with the LRF, and it has 'warn and inform' and major incident communications plans in place.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

Outstanding

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is outstanding 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, it has made plans to respond to wildfire incidents, wide-scale flooding and terrorist threats.

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 such as an incident at a high-rise premises. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. The service uses the [Resilience Direct](#) system and the LRF Microsoft Teams site for sharing and collating risk information, including content that applies to neighbouring services. Premises within 10 km of the service's border are included in the risk management system that operational staff can access through their mobile data terminals.

The service has effective arrangements in place 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. Staff at all levels understand them, and robust training and exercises have taken place to test them. Firefighters and control staff have received training on fires in tall buildings, and immediate building evacuation.

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 a large volume of calls. Staff in the emergency control room, at the incident and in assisting control rooms can share, view and update the actions that result from the individual fire calls in real time.

We observed the system that was in place to manage the transfer of information between the emergency control room and firefighters at the scene of an incident when a tall building was involved in a fire. Specifically, we were shown the electronic system that could be used to relay essential information, such as the people who were at the greatest risk and needed to be rescued. Staff told us that information on the system could be accessed from the control room, the incident command unit and the bridgehead (the position where firefighters are carrying out firefighting operations), and information could be relayed between locations.

The service works well with other fire and rescue services

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. For example, it has formal agreements (under the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), sections 13 and 16) with neighbouring services, which means it attends incidents to supplement the emergency response capability. 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. For example, the service has invested in an underwater drone for water rescue and recovery. This has been deployed nationally. The requesting and deploying of national assets work particularly well at a regional level through the joint North West Fire Control centre.

During 2023/24, the service carried out 40 multi-agency training exercises, 42 national resilience exercises, and 8 other exercises with neighbouring services.

The service is good at carrying out cross-border exercises

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 or ask for help from neighbouring services. Many of the staff we spoke to had been involved in cross-border exercises and found them useful. We were encouraged to see the service uses feedback from these exercises to inform risk information and service plans.

The service supports the north-west fire and rescue services cross-border training strategy, which sets out a clear direction towards cross-border exercises and has a three-year exercise plan covering marauding terrorist attack, breathing apparatus, high-rise, wildfire and road traffic collision incidents. Each of the five services hosts the exercises in rotation. The LRF also has an exercise calendar that is refreshed annually and makes sure the service exercises on the highest-risk premises in the area.

There is a good understanding of JESIP across the service

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

The service could give us strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. Incident commanders routinely use the joint decision model when liaising with other agencies. They have access to the JESIP app on their phones, and an aide-memoire (a laminated sheet that quickly explains the decision-making model) that supports decision-making at incidents. JESIP is also used in incident command training.

We sampled a range of debriefs the service had carried out after multi-agency incidents and 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 organisational assurance team monitors actions that have been generated from multi-agency debriefs using the assurance monitoring system. This results in policies and training being updated promptly.

The service works well with partners as part of the LRF

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with organisations that make up the Lancashire Resilience Forum, which it chairs. These arrangements include information sharing and involvement in various working groups, for example the training and development group and the flooding group. The service is a valued partner, and chairs or attends many of the subgroups and committees that sit within the LRF, including the warn and inform group.

The service takes part in regular training events with other members of the LRF and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

Service staff shared an example of a fire at a recycling site. Prior to the incident, a station manager had identified the risk, and it had been raised at a multi-agency meeting. A tabletop exercise was also carried out. The preparation work carried out by the LRF made sure there was a positive outcome to a challenging incident.

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 and ambulance services. It uses this learning to inform planning assumptions that it makes with partner organisations.

The service's organisational assurance team is a dedicated single point of contact to monitor all submissions and to review and share learning throughout the organisation using the internal learning platform.

The service also shares learning with other fire and rescue services if it may have implications for them. It does this through regional and national operational learning and joint organisational learning, as well as through the range of NFCC groups that it chairs and attends.

The service has invested in new equipment to support its response to major incidents

The service has invested in innovative equipment to improve its response to major incidents such as wildfires and flooding. It is the NFCC national lead for wildfires, canines, and drones and robotics.

The service is working with Sheffield and Bristol universities and has secured funding for a research project using Windracers. These are self-flying drones equipped with thermal imaging that can patrol areas prone to wildfires, detect fires early on and deliver fire retardant directly to a fire to prevent it from escalating. Use of swarm technology means they can self-co-ordinate.

Other innovative technology that the service has invested in to improve firefighter safety and the service it provides to the public includes:

- aerial drones;
- underwater drones;
- a firefighting robot;
- water towers;
- Hagglund all-terrain vehicles;

- wildfire personal protective equipment (PPE);
- new command support units;
- FASTY remote-controlled rescue buoys;
- canines (including cadaver, fire investigation, live casualty search, and urban search and rescue dogs); and
- a 45-metre aerial ladder platform.

Most of these assets are available for regional or national deployment.

Making best use of resources

Outstanding

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is outstanding 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 2025/26 is £77.5 million. This is a 3.1 percent increase from the previous financial year.

Promising practice

The service is improving its on-call availability

The service has an [on-call](#) improvement programme that applies to on-call recruitment, retention and availability. Areas of focus for the programme include:

- a dedicated recruitment vehicle;
- continuous recruitment;
- fit for fire sessions (a fitness and well-being programme for those who are interested in joining the service);
- hybrid working at stations (dedicated spaces for on-call firefighters to work from a fire station to support achieving turnout times);
- non-operational recruitment (encouraging non-operational staff to join as on-call firefighters as their secondary employment);
- alternatives to numerical and literacy reasoning tests;
- employer engagement initiatives;
- offering a range of roles such as crewing the command unit or the aerial ladder platform;

- role adjustment (such as a person becoming a driver or incident commander if they are unable to wear breathing apparatus); and
- on-call availability, recruitment and skills software (newly introduced software that can show where training and local recruitment will make a difference to the availability of on-call fire engines).

The service told us that, since August 2024, through this improvement programme, availability has been increased. In December 2024, on-call availability was at 74 percent.

The service has invested in technology to improve staff productivity

The service is innovative in its approach to new ways of working. For example, it now provides iPads on fire engines, so that crews can use fire engines as a mobile office.

Staff can access e-learning, the debrief app and the post-incident activity log on the iPads, which saves recording time. [Watch](#) managers have found this works well, as they are using their time more productively. They can complete administrative tasks on the fire engine while other crew members are carrying out a [home fire safety](#) or business fire safety check. This allows more time back at the station for training and interacting with their watch.

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 financial plans help it to 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. Its strategic plans are affordable and sustainable over the medium term, and the budget aligns with changing priorities. For example, the service has identified that it needs to invest more in its training facilities, and it has reduced other parts of the revenue budget to cover increased capital financing costs. In its latest capital strategy, the service has plans for £85.9 million of capital investment between 2025/26 and 2029/30, which includes £18 million to invest in learning and development facilities. This will be funded by a combination of reserves, capital receipts and borrowing.

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. In 2022, the service carried out an emergency cover review, which resulted in changes to duty systems. It has also introduced a rota management team and Dynamic Cover Tool software to improve the availability of fire engines and reduce overtime expenditure. It plans to carry out another emergency cover review while developing its next CRMP, which is due to be published in 2027.

The service builds its plans on sound scenarios. They help make sure the service is sustainable and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. There is a clear and defined governance structure for monitoring and reporting on the service's budget performance. Lancashire Combined Fire Authority's resources committee provides oversight and scrutiny of the budget.

The service's corporate risk register details financial risks, but it is detailed rather than strategic, with no assessment overall for each risk area.

The service has improved its productivity through new 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. The service has a set of key performance indicators linked to its CRMP, and it has a robust performance management structure in place. It is developing its use of Power BI to manage performance alongside budget and workforce planning.

The service understands how it uses its wholetime firefighters. It collects data on how they spend their time across day and night shifts. It makes the most of its staff time. Fire station managers use a performance spreadsheet to track activity, and there are staff who lead on each activity. District plans are flexible and align with the local risk. Many officers spoke positively of feeling empowered to plan their days to suit the needs of their local stations.

The service is taking steps to make sure the workforce's time is as productive as possible. This includes putting in place new ways of working. For example, it has invested in technology for firefighters to be able to use the fire engine as a mobile office. It has also reduced calls to unwanted fire signals, which has increased the amount of time that fire station staff have for prevention and protection activity.

The service told us the change of duty systems at some fire stations following the emergency cover review meant that it had increased outputs for prevention and protection by 20 percent.

The service's allocation of resources and effective use of new ways of working are contributing to lower levels of overtime compared to the England rate. For example, in 2023/24 the service's pre-arranged overtime per head of workforce was £386, while the England rate was £692.

The service continues to explore potential new ways of working to increase productivity. For example, it is in negotiations with the Fire Brigades Union about responding to incidents using small incident units and is considering more flexible wholetime duty systems.

The service effectively collaborates with partner organisations

We were pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate. It routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders, for example gaining entry to a private dwelling on behalf of the North West Ambulance Service for a medical intervention, and carrying out [missing person](#) searches with Lancashire Constabulary.

Collaborative work is aligned to the priorities in the service's CRMP. For example, the service has had some success with joint funding bids with Sheffield and Bristol universities to use Windracer drones as part of a joint research project investigating new techniques to resolve wildfire incidents.

The service also makes use of procurement frameworks and joint procurement to make sure it is getting value for money. One example of this is the joint procurement of Microsoft 365 licences with Merseyside and Essex County fire and rescue services through a national framework.

During our 2022 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should make sure 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 in this area since our last inspection. There are multiple examples of collaboration with other emergency services to increase efficiency, for example holding blood donation sessions at fire stations. These collaborations are held on a register and regularly reviewed and evaluated.

Each collaboration is scored on efficiency, effectiveness, value for money, benefit for partner organisations, and benefit to communities. There is little evidence of the service using the register for decision-making. For example, there are some initiatives that have low scores in terms of benefits, but these activities are continuing. The service has, however, made good progress in this area, and we have closed this area for improvement. We look forward to seeing how this work develops at our next inspection.

The service has effective business continuity arrangements in place

During our 2022 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should make sure there is a testing programme for its business continuity plans, particularly in high-risk areas of service.

We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection. The service has good business continuity arrangements in place for areas in which it considers threats and risks to be high. The service regularly reviews and tests these threats and risks so that staff know the arrangements and their associated responsibilities.

The service has introduced a new business continuity lead role and is aligned with ISO 22301, the international standard for business continuity. It has robust business continuity plans in place that include cyber security. It has a static degradation plan and evidence of worst-case scenario planning, including for industrial action. It has completed business impact analyses for all stations and departments.

We also saw examples of regular exercises taking place. Debriefs take place for these exercises, and lessons learned are collated, tracked and reported to the organisational assurance group. Control staff have also been involved in the planning and business continuity exercises.

The business continuity recovery group meets quarterly and includes fire control. There are fallback arrangements for control, including a secondary control room, and the service tests these arrangements regularly. We have closed this area for improvement.

The service shows sound financial management

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. And this scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money. For example, the capital programmes project board meets quarterly to oversee capital budgets, including the service's fleet asset programme for vehicles and equipment.

In 2023/24, the service was below the England rate for total expenditure, at £45.21 per head of population compared to the England rate of £49.54.

The service had previously identified some non-compliant spend from departmental budget holders. It is monitoring this and implementing key performance indicators to improve performance in this area. The finance team works closely with other departments to support them to manage their budgets.

The [fire and rescue authority](#) reviews the service's expenditure on a regular basis.

The service has made savings and efficiencies, which haven't affected its operational performance and the service it gives the public. The emergency cover review increased the firefighter staffing levels by eight. But the service told us that it still managed to achieve savings of £0.4 million by changing the duty systems.

The service has taken part in a [benchmarking](#) exercise with other fire and rescue services and is reviewing areas where its costs are higher than the family group average.

The service is also 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. For example, it has introduced a new recovery vehicle staffed by one person that provides support for minor vehicle repairs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And it has introduced a spares store at its leadership and development centre location. These changes have led to savings as the service has reduced costs for vehicle repair provided by external suppliers. The service told us that the introduction of CCTV on fire engines had resulted in a 34 percent reduction in accidents since 2021, which had led to additional cost savings.

The service told us it had also made changes to how it carried out training to make savings. For example, virtual built-environment training saved 375 hours of travel time, 7.7 tonnes of carbon emissions and £7,000 in staff costs.

The service keeps a procurement and efficiency log that records cashable and cost avoidance savings. This shows that since 2015 the service has made savings of £1.9 million.

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

Good

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

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

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

Main findings

The service understands its future challenges

The service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its main financial risks. The service has ambitious spending plans to invest in its estates over the next few years and has a robust plan to finance this. It told us that it had increased its borrowing costs from £31 million to £49 million to fund its capital programme. It has compared its borrowing costs with other fire and rescue services and is confident about its affordability.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic and sensible. They take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. The service has carried out a sensitivity analysis that has helped it to consider the implications of different levels of funding and spending pressures, such as pay awards, on its financial forecast.

In its latest medium-term financial plan, the service anticipates a revenue budget deficit of £500,000 in 2025/26. But the service told us it had identified savings options to meet this budget shortfall and contribute towards the wider £5 million of savings required over the five years to 2029/30. At the time of this inspection, the service had

plans to hold a strategy day with fire and rescue authority members to consider its proposed savings plan.

The service plans to identify further savings options through an emergency cover review in line with the development of its next CRMP and departmental reviews of its prevention, protection and support services. It also anticipates realising efficiencies through digital innovation and automation as part of its new modern ways of working programme.

The service has a clear plan for using its reserves

The service has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves. In its latest reserves strategy, it has set the minimum level for its general reserve at £3.85 million. And its earmarked reserves include reserves for capital expenditure, insurance and innovation to support improvements around firefighter safety.

The service's estate and fleet strategies align to its CRMP

The service's estate and fleet strategies have clear links to its CRMP and are governed by its capital programmes project board. These strategies include vehicle replacement plans that align with the emergency cover review. Both strategies exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. For example, the fleet and estates teams are working together to identify where electric vehicle charging points can be installed to expand the electric vehicle fleet. This is included in the service's environmental strategy plan, which aligns with the Government's net zero target.

Both the fleet and estates teams are collaborating with partners for efficiency. Examples include the joint procurement of workwear, the joint procurement of a water management system for hydrant checks, and site sharing with the North West Ambulance Service.

The service is carrying out a building assets condition survey across its estate, as well as a decarbonisation survey. Once these surveys are complete, it will use the results to assess whether buildings are fit for purpose.

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 service is transforming the way it works

The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. For example, the service has been awarded [Cyber Essentials Plus certification](#). It has shared organisational learning about cyber resilience with the NFCC. It also looks to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology. For example, it has provided iPads to protection staff, which has reduced the administration associated with inspections and also means staff can easily take photographs of contraventions as evidence.

The service has put in place the capacity and capability it needs to achieve sustainable transformation, including project managers. It also contracts specialist project managers where needed, for example for construction projects. The IT department is heavily involved in projects across the organisation and is regularly consulted by the senior leadership team.

The service has invested in digital systems, data and technology to increase productivity. This includes:

- the development of apps for business fire safety checks, home fire safety checks and debriefs;
- innovative software such as the Dynamic Cover Tool and OARS software; and
- investing in iPads and additional mobile data terminals to support crews.

The service routinely creates opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency and provide better services in the future. Examples of this include:

- the joint North West Fire Control;
- joint procurement of PPE;
- joint emergency service leadership events;
- joint fleet repairs and maintenance; and
- co-location and working with the NFCC across various groups.

The service actively contributes to the NFCC's positive practice portal.

The service completes benefits and impact analyses of investments. For example, it has evaluated the benefits and effects of using the underwater drones. However, it isn't routinely doing this for every investment. The service could do more to assure itself that it is achieving value for money and show that it has improved efficiency and effectiveness.

The service effectively generates additional income

The service actively considers and exploits opportunities for generating extra income. For example, it shares estates with North West Ambulance Service at Darwen fire station, and Lancashire Constabulary at St Annes and Lytham fire stations.

It has cost recovery in place for use of assets such as drones. The service also told us it received some income from training new recruits for Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service.

Where appropriate, the service has secured external funding to invest in improvements to the service it gives the public. These include joint funding bids with Sheffield and Bristol universities for the Windracer project, which aims to reduce risk from wildfire incidents.

Promoting the right values and culture

Outstanding

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

Fire and rescue services should have positive and inclusive cultures, modelled by the behaviours of their senior leaders. 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 has a supportive culture, and staff feel listened to

The service has maintained a positive and supportive culture and continues to have well-defined values, which staff understand. In our staff survey, 98 percent of respondents (220 out of 225) were aware of the service's values. We found staff at all levels of the service showing behaviours that reflect service values. Staff told us that they felt the service was inclusive, supported individuals and took action against those who didn't model the values and behaviours expected. Alongside its own set of values, the service has also implemented the [Core Code of Ethics](#).

Staff told us that the leadership team were role models for the values. They have an open-door policy and are interested in the staff's work. Heads of departments told us they felt their expertise was listened to and they felt involved in the decision-making process for the service. Senior leaders work as a team and empower fire stations and departments to take responsibility and accountability for their areas of work.

There is a positive working culture throughout the service, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they come across them. Managers have training in having difficult conversations, which gives them the confidence to challenge inappropriate behaviours, and the service has a professional standards manager and HR business partners to support managers dealing with poor behaviour.

The service has a proactive approach to staff well-being

The service continues to have well-understood and effective well-being policies in place, which are available to staff. A good range of well-being support is available to support both physical and mental health. This includes:

- the employee assistance programme;
- physiotherapy;
- the Fire Fighters Charity;
- peer-support ambassadors;
- health and well-being information on the intranet;
- [occupational health](#);
- [trauma risk management](#);
- well-being dogs; and
- well-being workshops.

There is a trauma support task and finish group to assess different ways of providing support. The service supplies flexi duty officers with a red bag containing resources such as information about local charities that can offer support to staff who have attended difficult incidents. In 2024, it also piloted a 'responding to trauma and emotions' course. This is now being introduced as a condensed version after positive feedback from attendees.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff well-being. In our staff survey, 92 percent of respondents (208 out of 225) stated that they were able to access services to support their mental well-being, and 89 percent (200 out of 225) felt confident that the service would offer well-being services after a workplace incident. Most staff reported they understand and have confidence in the well-being support available.

The service has a strong health and safety culture

The service has effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. These policies and procedures are readily available on the staff intranet, and the service promotes them effectively to all staff, including through mandatory training.

There is a health and safety plan in place, and the service produces reports every quarter for the health, safety and environment advisory group. There is also monitoring in place for accident reporting. Trends and incidents of note are analysed, and learning is then distributed through a quarterly document. All managers also attend an Institution of Occupational Safety and Health 'Managing Safely' course.

In our staff survey, 86 percent of respondents (194 out of 225) agreed that they were satisfied that their personal safety and welfare were treated seriously at work.

The service monitors staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts to make sure they comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours. HR monitors secondary employment centrally. There are individual fatigue risk assessments in place, and staff log their working hours.

The service has a fitness management policy in place, and all operational staff are assessed for fitness annually with a six-month follow-up. It has invested in new fitness equipment at stations to support maintenance of physical health.

The service takes a proactive approach to managing absence

We found there are clear processes in place to manage absences for all staff. There is clear guidance for managers, who are confident in using the process. The service manages absences well and in accordance with policy. Managers receive absence management training as part of their Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) course, and HR produces a sickness report every quarter.

In 2023/24, the average number of days not worked per firefighter due to long-term sickness increased by 16.1 percent compared to the previous year. In the same period, the average number of days not worked per firefighter due to short-term sickness decreased by 10.5 percent compared to the previous year.

The service has updated its modified duty policy to support staff to return to work following a period of long-term sickness absence.

Getting the right people with the right skills

Outstanding

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is outstanding 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.

Promising practice

The service's training planning is co-ordinated by all departments to make sure they are working collaboratively

The service holds an annual planning day that all departments, including training, health and safety, communications, prevention and protection, contribute to.

They examine the requirements of the service's [community risk management plan](#) and whether there are any gaps in how the service intends to fulfil it.

As a result of the planning day, the service reviewed its policies and firefighting tactics around wildfire risk, as well as introducing new personal protective equipment and specialist equipment. The service then designed training to make sure staff keep their skills up to date.

The corporate planning team monitors the actions from the planning day to make sure changes are implemented.

This means the service identifies and addresses gaps in its training quickly and efficiently.

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

Main findings

There is good workforce planning in place

The service has good workforce planning in place. This makes sure skills and capabilities align with what it needs to effectively carry out its CRMP. For example, the service has introduced development grades across several departments so that staff can be brought in at a lower grade and then be developed into a higher grade. This supports the career progression of internal staff. The service has also reviewed non-operational staff grades and salaries to improve staff retention. Career objectives and retirement plans are discussed at appraisals, and the information received is then used to shape the workforce plan.

Workforce and succession planning is subject to consistent scrutiny in the form of regular meetings to discuss requirements. The service uses a workforce planning tool to review staff shortages, upcoming retirements and training needs that may introduce risk. For example, it has increased the number of drivers in its workforce by sending more staff on driver training.

The service has introduced OARS software, which supports it with workforce planning for on-call firefighters. For example, one station manager used the software to highlight those staff at an on-call station that would have the most effect on improving the numbers of staff available to crew fire engines. He then identified staff to put forward to acquire additional skills. He also used the software to run through various scenarios that showed how the availability of 2 new recruits would improve the service's availability from 52.4 percent to 64.8 percent, if the recruits achieved their breathing apparatus qualification within 3 to 4 months. The software has also been used to identify staff to put forward for the Safe to Command course who will have the biggest effect on availability.

The IT department has started to use a digital skills map to identify gaps in its team's skills. The service is planning to introduce this tool to other teams. We look forward to seeing how this progresses.

The service makes sure staff have the skills and capabilities to effectively carry out their roles

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 but also included training in safeguarding, and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). New recruits receive a week of training in both prevention and protection, and training from Blackpool local authority around the Housing Act 2004.

On-call staff can also access relevant training and follow the thematic training calendar. They can attend different stations and drill nights to complete their training.

Most staff told us that they could access the training they need to be effective in their role, including management skills. The service's training plans make sure they can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, in the service's staff survey in 2023, non-operational staff said that they felt they didn't have sufficient access to leadership training. The service now gives non-operational staff the opportunity to attend the ILM training that is provided for operational staff. Of those who responded to our staff survey, 88 percent (198 out of 225) agreed that, overall, they had received sufficient training to effectively do their job.

Every station has access to dedicated area-based instructors in breathing apparatus, road traffic collisions and trauma care. The service monitors staff competence through the electronic learning management system. Line managers can use the system to generate reports and are empowered to use this information to plan local training to make sure staff are competent.

Some staff told us that they felt the skills profile was difficult to maintain at stations with specialist roles.

The service regularly updates its understanding of staff skills and risk-critical safety capabilities by generating quarterly reports. 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 its needs now and in the future.

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvement

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvements throughout the organisation, and it encourages staff to learn and develop. For example, learning and development is discussed in appraisals, where staff are given the opportunity to have a career conversation. We saw numerous examples where staff had requested and received training or qualifications through external providers that were relevant to their role and that supported career progression.

Departments support each other to continuously develop. For example, prevention and protection staff regularly visit stations to share information and keep up to date with trends and issues. Operational staff who are working in the protection team also ride with their local fire stations every quarter to maintain their operational knowledge.

The service provides annual training for crews at its leadership and development centre, with the focus on trends from learning identified through operational debriefs, such as electric vehicle fires. Also, common themes such as the fire risk associated with emollients are discussed in 'toolbox talks', short presentations for operational crews and prevention staff explaining how the information can be incorporated into home fire safety checks.

The service's talent management gateway includes opportunities for staff to be developed beyond their roles.

We were pleased to see that the service has a range of resources in place for learning and development. These include e-learning modules, and leadership and management training.

Most staff told us they can access a range of learning and development resources. In our staff survey, 87 percent of respondents (196 out of 225) agreed that they had access to the right learning and development opportunities when they needed it. This allows them to do their job effectively.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Good

Lancashire 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 EDI. 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.

Area for improvement

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

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 good at encouraging 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 has five different employee support groups, which it calls employee voice groups:

- race and religion
- women and families
- LGBTQ+

- neurodivergence
- disability.

The groups are chaired by senior leaders.

Staff told us that the employee voice groups influenced decision-making and instigated change. They are consulted on EIAs and policy changes.

The service receives staff feedback in several ways. These include staff surveys, focus groups, staff networks, exit interviews, a 'shout up' feature on the intranet where staff can post suggestions, ideas or questions for the service to answer, and senior leader visits to fire stations. The staff surveys collect feedback in a range of areas, including working for the service, inappropriate behaviour and discrimination, and health and well-being.

The service has taken action to address matters staff have raised, and staff have received these actions positively. For example, the service now offers group trauma risk management sessions as a result of feedback from the staff surveys.

The service regularly consults with staff on issues that affect them. For example when stations are refurbished, the staff located there are asked for their opinions on decoration and dormitory design.

Representative bodies and staff associations reported that the service engages with them well. The service told us that it has good local relationships with unions. For example, when there was the threat of industrial action, the service collaborated with the Fire Brigades Union to make a video about values and behaviours with the chief fire officer.

The service is taking action to prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination

The service has comprehensive EDI, bullying and [harassment](#) and grievance policies in place. Staff have a good understanding of what bullying, harassment and discrimination are, and their negative effects on colleagues and the organisation.

In our staff survey, 14 percent of respondents told us they had been subject to bullying or harassment and 12 percent to discrimination over the past 12 months.

Most staff are confident in the service's approach to tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination, grievances and disciplinary matters. The service has a range of options to make sure staff and members of the public can raise concerns and access confidential support. These include:

- the Safecall confidential reporting line;
- the employee voice groups;
- discipline and grievance procedures;
- whistleblowing;

- compliments and complaints procedures; and
- HR business partners.

The service has also introduced 'reflect and rebuild' sessions that involve senior leaders visiting teams or stations to work with them to resolve local issues.

The service has made sure all staff are trained and clear about what to do if they encounter inappropriate behaviour. Managers receive training on challenging inappropriate behaviours, and expected behaviours are set out in induction training. There is also mandatory e-learning in place. Most of the staff we spoke to felt confident to challenge inappropriate behaviour.

The service also has a professional standards manager to make sure standards are met and decisions are consistent across the service.

The service is improving the way its workforce reflects the community it serves

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, the service uses district profiles that include information about population, demographics and the main languages spoken. Staff work closely with their communities to understand the demographics and target [positive action](#) activity. The service has created two community engagement officer posts to build better relationships with [hard-to-reach communities](#).

The service plans to use its OARS software to understand its communities better and help it to recruit a more diverse pool of candidates.

The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment processes so that they are fair and potential applicants can understand them. The service told us it had introduced 'have a go' days to encourage women into urban search and rescue roles, and it had run sessions specifically for women to attract them into incident command roles.

The recruitment policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. The service advertises most roles both internally and externally, for example in the Guardian newspaper, and on the Indeed, LinkedIn and NFCC websites. It has run targeted positive action campaigns in east Lancashire to encourage Asian applicants, and in Blackpool to attract LGBTQ+ applicants. This has encouraged applicants from diverse backgrounds, including into middle and senior management roles. The service evaluates its recruitment campaigns to learn from them and improve them.

The service has made some improvements to increasing staff diversity at all levels of the organisation. In 2023/24, 7.5 percent of new joiners identified as being from an ethnic minority background (where ethnicity is known). The proportion of firefighters who identified as being from an ethnic minority background has increased from 3.2 percent (32 people) as at 31 March 2023 to 4.1 percent (43 people) as at 31 March 2024. The proportion of firefighters who identified as a woman has increased from 8.8 percent (91 people) to 10.1 percent (108 people) over the same period.

For the whole workforce, as at 31 March 2024, 4.4 percent (57 people) identified as being from an ethnic minority background compared to 16.7 percent in their local population and 8.6 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. A total of 19.7 percent (260 people) identified as a woman, compared to an average of 20.2 percent throughout all fire and rescue services.

The service has taken steps to improve diversity. For example, the service has recently reviewed its essential criteria, including being able to swim, following an EIA. The service is a Disability Confident employer and offers reasonable adjustments to support people with additional needs through the recruitment process. It is considering localised recruitment to encourage under-represented groups to apply.

The service is improving its approach to EDI

The service has improved its approach to EDI. It makes sure it can offer the right services to its communities and can support staff with [protected characteristics](#).

The service has a strategic equality, diversity, inclusion and culture board, which is chaired by the chief fire officer and is attended by the chairs of the employee voice groups. The board is responsible for monitoring the development of the EDI annual report and associated action plans.

The service regularly attends community group meetings, for example to provide reassurance to the Muslim community following the Southport attack.

Staff spoke highly of reasonable adjustments the service had put in place for neurodivergent staff. These adjustments include specialist pens, computer software, and additional time at interviews and for training. All new recruits go through dyslexia screening and are offered a full assessment depending on the results. Staff also told us that they had the option to request menopause-friendly uniform.

The service has introduced a workplace support form that covers individual health and stress assessments. This details the support and adjustments staff may need.

Although the service has a process in place to assess equality impact, we found inconsistencies with EIAs. We found that most EIAs we reviewed had been completed following the completion of a project or activity. Some only had the initial assessment completed, not the full assessment. Although the service has introduced a quality assurance process for EIAs since our last inspection, four out of the five assessments we reviewed hadn't been quality assured.

Where EIAs had been completed, most recommendations weren't transposed into the strategy or document. For example, although an EIA was completed for the prevention strategy, there was no mention of the significant findings or mitigations in the strategy itself. This is an area for improvement.

The service is improving workplace facilities to make sure they are accessible for all staff

The service has a capital programme and is investing in its estate to upgrade the facilities to meet the needs of users. In particular, the service has improved its welfare provisions at some stations and has plans for further improvements, including gender-neutral wash pods, toilets and changing cubicles, and the provision of quiet rooms. At stations where there isn't space available to make improvements, the service has installed Portakabins to provide facilities for women.

Some staff told us that they felt the service could do more in this area and that not all stations were at the same standard in areas such as appropriate bathroom and changing facilities.

The service has identified the need to upgrade the estate including gender-appropriate welfare provisions in its EDI annual report. We look forward to seeing the progress in this area.

Managing performance and developing leaders

Good

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

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

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

Main findings

The service has good arrangements for managing individuals' performance

There is a good performance management system in place, which allows the service to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff.

The appraisal process for staff is completed annually using an electronic system. During an appraisal, staff have the option to discuss career development. Most staff we spoke to felt appraisals were beneficial. The service also uses the information gathered from appraisals for workforce planning.

In our staff survey, 72 percent of respondents (163 out of 225) agreed that the conversations they had with their line manager were helping them to achieve their full potential. 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 also introduced a talent mapping tool. If a staff member is identified as exceeding expectations, they are encouraged to apply for a mentor through the 'lift and climb' coaching and mentoring programme.

The service makes sure that promotion and progression processes are fair

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

The service manages selection processes consistently. All chairs on the interview panels are trained in recruitment and selection. Feedback is offered to those who are unsuccessful in recruitment processes.

The service uses temporary promotions appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps. Operational staff who are successful in the 'talent gateway' process can stay in the talent pool for up to three years and are supported with their development during this time. However, some staff felt that the length of temporary promotions was too long, and hindered progression for staff who were backfilling roles.

The service is taking steps to improve the diversity of its leadership

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, including external advertising for senior positions.

The service has few [direct entry](#) opportunities available and is exploring whether to expand these opportunities in conjunction with the NFCC.

The service is improving how it identifies and develops 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. The service offers ILM leadership training to operational and non-operational staff at various levels to support the development of aspiring and future leaders.

There are talent management schemes to develop specific staff. The service uses a 'talent gateway' process for operational roles. The top performing candidates in a promotion process can advance to the next rank. The service calls this 'springboarding'. For example, a firefighter can springboard to the watch manager development programme. Although the service has shared details of this process throughout its workforce, we found that some staff were still confused about it and the definition of 'talent'.

Career conversations are offered at appraisals, and there is a talent mapping tool that can be used to identify where staff are exceeding expectations.

In our staff survey, 77 percent of respondents (173 out of 225) agreed that there were opportunities to develop their career in the service.

The service has considered the December 2022 Leading the Service and Leading and Developing People fire standards. It has carried out a gap analysis and has a plan for how it will implement them.

